

ARCADIA NEWS



VOL. 34 NO. 2

ARCADIA • BILTMORE • CAMELBACK CORRIDOR

MAY 2026



A VOICE FOR MOMS

Ana Keck turned a life-altering maternal mental health journey into advocacy, helping expand awareness across Arizona.

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FULL THROTTLE THRILLS

This Arcadia teen went from skate parks to balancing college and competition while pursuing her NASCAR dreams.

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IT'S ALL FOR THE ARTS

Shemer Art Center's the Garden and Sparkling Tea event celebrated local artists and future programming.

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Our high school baseball and softball programs stepped into spring with seasoned talent, competitive fire and playoff ambitions across the board.



Ana Keck with
her daughters
Emilee and Kaylee.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANA KECK

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Our latest edition is packed – and I mean packed – with all the goodness that May brings. Not only are we celebrating Mother's Day with lots of bites and sips (if I never see the word 'brunch' again...), there's also Cinco de Mayo specials taking place at Valley restaurants and even a couple of full blown parties with mariachi music, performances and activities for kids.

If Cinco is not your scene, maybe we can entice you with a Kentucky Derby shindig? A few resorts and neighborhood spots will have food and drink specials, and if you have a hat with a giant flower bouquet on top of it, well, this is the time to show it off.

The Arcadia Cares: Food for Kidz Packathon marked a record-breaking year as more than 500 volunteers came together over five packing shifts to assemble 144,480 meals, pushing the decade-long initiative past ONE MILLION total meals packed.



Founded in 2014, the event brings together community members, churches, schools and area organizations to combat food insecurity, with meals distributed locally, across the U.S., and to international and tribal partners. A huge shout out to the organizers and volunteers – we're proud to share what amazing Arcadians are up to!

Speaking of awesome neighbors, Arcadia Little League debuted the Allgood Sportsmanship award, named in honor of longtime umpire Major Allgood. Major was recognized for his 20 years of service marked by integrity, mentorship and dedication to the game. A very cool award, indeed. And before I forget...

Happy Mother's Day to all the mamas out there – we love you! Have the most beautiful May, and thank you, as always, for reading the *Arcadia News*.

mallory
– Mallory Gleich

UPCOMING THEMES:

JUNE

Summer

JULY

Summer II

AUGUST

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**"The world's favorite season is the spring.
All things seem possible in May."** – Edwin Way Teale

ARCADIA'S PETS

Meet **Ary**, a 15-year-old Jackaranian (Jack Russell Terrier/Pomeranian mix). In her free time, she likes to lay by her dad and pretend to like MLB Network. She also loves going on walks, pretending she hasn't been fed yet, and hugs – unless you're hugging someone else, then she barks.

– Gabe T.



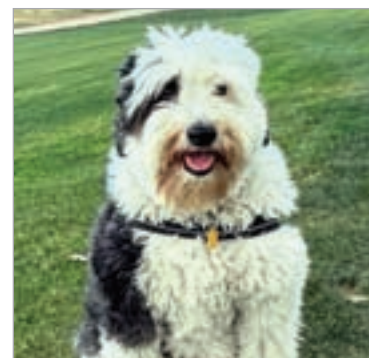
Meet **Sparky**. He is 11 years old but you'd never know it because he's as friendly and frisky as a – well – a rambunctious Labradoodle. We bought him in a live auction at the ASU Football Banquet and thus, his name. And he lives up to it! His favorite hobby is sitting in the window, watching the neighborhood go by.

– Ray A.



Bandit the Sheepadoodle is five years old and has been with us since he was eight weeks old. Bandit loves catching the Frisbee every night as well as meeting his other neighborhood dog friends for Yappy Hour. His tail is constantly wagging as he looks to make new human or dog friends.

– Randy H.



I adopted **Blanca** from Barb's Dog Rescue in Rocky Point 14 years ago when she was six weeks old. She only weighs four pounds but is definitely the boss in our house and gets what she wants. The best companion dog I could ever ask for and loves to get attention from everyone.

– Cindy H.



Would you like to share your pet? Send a photo and a description (50 words max) of your pet to editor@arcadianews.com or text it to 602.840.6379. Include your pet's name and age, along with any fun facts about them you'd like to share. All animals are welcome!



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VOTED BEST TAKEOUT IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2023, 2025
VOTED BEST LOCAL BURGER IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2025
VOTED BEST OF THE BEST SEAFOOD AND TAKEOUT IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2025
VOTED BEST SEAFOOD IN THE GLENDALE STAR 2020, 2023, 2025
VOTED BEST SEAFOOD IN LOVIN' LIFE 2023, 2024, 2025
VOTED BEST LOCAL BURGER IN LOVIN' LIFE 2024
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Food for Kidz Packathon hits one million meal milestone

By Rachael Bouley

Over five packing shifts this March, upwards of 500 community volunteers worked together to pack a record-breaking 144,480 meals for the tenth annual Arcadia Cares: Food for Kidz Packathon.

The 2026 iteration was extra special. They celebrated not only their most successful year yet, but have also packed more than one million meals total over the past decade, a huge milestone for the event organizers and volunteers.

The first Packathon was launched in 2014 by a group of community members, including Steve Crofton and Heidi Staudenmaier, who partnered with Food for Kidz, a nationwide nonprofit that organizes mobile packing events to address food insecurity.

Volunteers help by packing food or donating toward the purchase of ingredients. The impact is widespread, from local food banks and shelters to U.S. disaster relief, refugees, disabled veterans, and those experiencing homelessness.

“From the beginning, we have emphasized families with children working together, a rarity in community volunteer work,” Prince of Peace Pastor Rick Sherrill said.

Roughly 50 percent of the meals have been delivered to local food insecurity organizations for use in the greater Phoenix area, 40 percent were delivered to international relief organizations, and 10 percent went to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HEIDI STAUDENMAIER

The assembly line-style event has expanded with support from churches, schools, families, scouting troops, nonprofits and more.

the Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Rock Point, Arizona.

Over the years, the assembly line-style project has expanded with support from several churches, schools, scouting troops, and Boys Team Charity. Reaching the one million meals milestone represents a decade of commitment and service.

“In a world where social and economic challenges often seem intractable, there was a sense of joy and gratitude at making this type of monumental impact,” Pastor Rick said. “The reaction from the volunteers during

those two days was boisterous. We were all blessed to be a part of it.”

Partnerships with organizations and fundraising gifts from generous donors helped motivate the mission. With 10 years under their belts, the committee knows the keys to success for smooth operations, including awesome dance music and a big goal, helping to motivate volunteers and bring enthusiasm to an all-time high. The positive atmosphere made it possible to pack more meals than ever before.

“The packathon is a shining model of bringing local community organizations

together around a common goal,” Pastor Rick said. “When people of diverse backgrounds and belief systems come together in joy and purpose, it is a snapshot of how we hope the rest of our lives can be.”

As the lovingly-packed meals make a difference to those in need, the event committee and wider Arcadia community are already looking forward to next year.

“My favorite part of being involved is diverse people serving together with joy,” Pastor Rick said. “We have no plans to stop now and hope to top the two million mark in meals packed in the near future.”

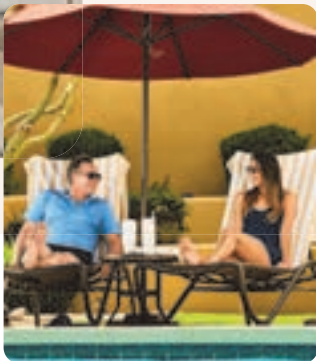


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WHAT'S HAPPENING, ARCADIA?

BRIEFS

Postino is teaming up with Cowtown S.K.A.T.E. to support youth and skate culture. At all Arizona locations, \$1 from every glass or bottle of the Folk Machine Parts & Labor Red Blend sold will be donated to the nonprofit, which provides skate gear, safe spaces, and opportunities for underserved kids to grow through skateboarding and community connection.

postino.com

The **Arizona Cancer Foundation for Children** invites the community to its "Fill the Bus" school supply drive on May 6 from 4-6 p.m. Donations like backpacks, notebooks, and pencils will directly support children and families facing pediatric cancer.

azcancerfoundation.org

Arizona Restaurant Week is back for the spring season! This Valley-wide event offers various dining options for every palate – and from May 15-24, diners can get outside the neighborhood and try something new. Restaurants range from Southwestern favorites, comfort food and snacks, five-star dining, and everything in between. Prices range from \$30-\$50 per person.

arizonarestaurantweek.com

Valley Lutheran High School invites students up to ninth grade to its Summer 2026 Youth Sports Camps, offering a fun, skill-building environment led by experienced coaches. Camps emphasize athletics, confidence and character building. Offerings include basketball, football, cheer, softball and volleyball through two June sessions. Sessions are \$75 per week and include a camp t-shirt.

vlhs.org/camps



Arizona Party Bike partnered with Hotel Solaya to relaunch its **Pool Party Bike Crawl**. Guests choose morning or afternoon rides and start with welcome drinks at Not My First Rodeo before cruising to 50 Shades of Rose on a decked-out party bike. The ride ends at Hotel Solaya with complimentary drinks, music, and a pool party atmosphere, plus perks like skip-the-line access and no cover charges.

arizonapartybike.com

At a fashion show hosted by Studio 93 Creative Academy, graduating design students unveiled their collections in a celebration of emerging talent. **Valley Boutique** joined the event, debuting an interactive pop-up shopping concept that allows guests to browse samples, scan QR codes, and purchase items for direct shipping. The brand plans to expand the experience across local businesses – stay tuned for May's upcoming pop-ups.

shopvalleyboutique.com

Coming soon: **The Beau Collective** is bringing fitness, retail, and community to Phoenix. Founded and run by Arizona natives Whitney White Kozlowski and Sarah Duncan, the concept will offer HIIT-style classes, shopping, and gathering space for events and workshops.

thebeaucollectivephx.com

CINCO DE MAYO

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo at **Joyride** (5202 N. Central Ave., Phoenix) with the queso birria taco, packed with birria beef, Mexican cheese, onion, cilantro, and rich consomé for \$3.50 all day. Pair it with the limited-time Charred Piñarita, a mix of tequila, pineapple amaro, charred pineapple syrup, lime, and pineapple juice, available during all-day Happy Hour for \$6.

joyridetacohouse.com

The **Phoenician Tavern** (6000 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale) will have food and drink specials from 3 to 6 p.m. Enjoy \$9 draft Dos Equis Lagers, \$11 traditional margaritas, or \$3 off all signature cocktails. Snackable bites include \$8 queso fundido with Oaxaca cheese and chorizo, chips and housemade charred tomato salsa, or spicy fried dill pickles; \$10 spicy chicken wings; or \$12 pull apart pretzels with cheddar ale dip.

thephoenician.com

The Mexicano (4801 E. Cactus Road, Scottsdale) will have live DJs spinning throughout the day and night, fire dancers, mariachi performances and a lineup of specialty cocktails and signature dishes. The festivities run Friday through Tuesday.

themexicano.com

Diego Pops (4338 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale) Happy Hour is offered seven days a week from 3-6 p.m. and features half off appetizers, \$2 off beers, \$6 Diego Margaritas made with 1800 Blanco Tequila, and \$6 wine and sangria.

diegopops.com

Pita Jungle (4340 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix) is celebrating Cinco de Mayo at participating locations with \$2 tacos and \$4 house margaritas.

pitajungle.com

EVENTS

SUNDAY 5/2

Derby Day Porch Party

1-4 p.m. at The Phoenician, 6000 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale. The Phoenician's seventh annual Derby Day Porch Party at Mowry & Cotton is filled with Southern-inspired cocktails, cuisine and fun. Guests are encouraged to don their fanciest hats, dresses and suits for a chance to win prizes for several categories. A portion of the proceeds benefit After the Homestretch-Arizona, which protects the legacy of former racehorses through reconditioning, retraining and re-homing. Tickets start at \$225.

thephoenician.com

Derby Day

1 p.m. at the Arizona Biltmore, 2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix. Join the Biltmore for the "fastest two minutes in sports" party – also known as the 152nd Run for the Roses horse race. Sip on traditional mint juleps, hear live music, sample Blade and Bow Bourbon or check out the gourmet Southern-inspired cuisine while wearing your derby best – and don't forget the hat (you could win the best-dressed contest). Tickets start at \$180.

arizonabiltmore.com

Kentucky Derby Party

9 a.m. at R.T. O'Sullivan's, 7575 N. 16th St., Phoenix. Break out the fancy hats and bow ties as the Kentucky Derby comes alive. There will be drink specials like \$6 mimosas and Bloody Marys, or a \$17 bottle of bubbly. Throughout the day, fans can follow the races in real time while dining on classic pub fare, cold pints, and festive cocktails.

phoenix.rtosullivans.com

SUNDAY 5/3

Plated and Staged

3:30 p.m. at Herberger Theater, 222 E. Monroe St., Phoenix. Fine dining and entertainment are in store at Herberger Theater's 11th annual Plated and Staged event. The evening begins at the theater with hors d'oeuvres, a wine pull, auctions and live music. Dinner will follow at another location, but folks won't know where they're dining until they get there. This event benefits the theater's youth outreach programs. Tickets start at \$315.

herbergertheater.org

Arizona Author Book Festival

10 a.m. at Warehouse 215, 215 E. Grant St., Phoenix. This free, family-friendly event celebrates all things books. Meet 40 Arizona authors, explore vendors, and enjoy story time, crafts, and activities in the Children's Corner. There will also be neurodiversity-focused programming,

shopping, food trucks, live music, and raffles. The first 1,500 children receive a free book!

azauthorbookfestival.com

Cinco de Mayo Festival

12 p.m. at 1st Ave. and W. Washington St., Phoenix. Attendees can enjoy a full day of fun with this festival, featuring authentic foods, cultural performances by Baile Folklorico, and live musical performances from Tierra Legacy and Sheila E. There will also be a kid's zone, games and giveaways. Proceeds benefit the Arvizu Scholarships and Grand Canyon University. Tickets are \$15 for general admission and start at \$40 for VIP.

cincophx.com

Cinco de Mayo Celebration

12 p.m. at Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa, 4949 E. Lincoln Dr., Scottsdale. Omni has a Cinco celebration ready to go! On-site at Taqueria Centro, the eatery will offer a tequila tasting, a live mariachi performance, a DJ, piñatas, margarita, taco and churro dishes and a special appearance by mini donkeys. Admission is free.

omnihotels.com

An Evening with Esteban

5:30 p.m. at the Hermosa Inn, 5530 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley. Join LON's at the Hermosa for an intimate evening with Esteban, the legendary guitarist who studied under Master Andrés Segovia. Guests will be treated to a four-course dinner crafted by Executive Chef Brian Peterson all set to the music of one of the Southwest's most celebrated performers. Admission is \$275 per person.

hermosainn.com

TUESDAY 5/5

Mariachi Sol de Mexico

7 p.m. at The Madison Center for the Arts, 5601 N. 16th St., Phoenix. Spend your Cinco immersed in culture with the Mariachi Sol De México de José Hernández Cinco de Mayo celebration. This group – of which each member plays his own instrument – is the first mariachi ensemble nominated for a Grammy. It might be hard to stay in your seats at this performance. Tickets are \$30-\$65.

themadison.org

THURSDAY 5/7

Roars and Pours

5:30-8:30 p.m. at the Phoenix Zoo, 455 N. Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix. It's time to get wild for Happy Hour. Roars and Pours is a 21 and over event that boasts craft brews, wine and food options, and open walking trails. Attendees can also visit special exhibits, play lawn games and hear live music and entertainment. Tickets are \$13.

phoenixzoo.org

WHAT'S HAPPENING, ARCADIA?

Women in Leadership
11:30 a.m. at Hilton Scottsdale Resort & Villas, 6333 N. Scottsdale Road. The Scottsdale Area Chamber of Commerce presents its Women in Leadership luncheon, sponsored by HonorHealth. Featuring transformational leader Sheree Cain-Jones, the event brings professional women together to explore leadership journeys, gain practical tools for overcoming limiting beliefs, and foster meaningful connections. Tickets start at \$90.
scottsdalechamber.com

SATURDAY 5/9
Drunk Shakespeare
7 p.m., at The Rose Theatre, 455 N. 3rd St., Phoenix. The stage is set, the actors are ready, and one of them is...drunk? This comedic take on a Shakespeare play is for guests 21 and up. Sit back and watch as one performer attempts to act out Shakespearean sonnets while the others follow along and try not to break the scene. Guests can purchase beverages and snacks at the show. Tickets start at \$70.
drunkshakespeare.com

Guided Floral Arrangement Workshop
11 a.m. at the Camelback Inn, 5402 E. Lincoln Dr., Scottsdale. Design something beautiful at Rita's Pergola. Guests will select from a variety of flowers, colors, and textures to build a bouquet that reflects their personality. An instructor will be on-site offering guidance, design tips, and feedback. You'll leave with a one-of-a-kind arrangement that's perfect to display at home or gift to someone special. Registration starts at \$125.
marriott.com

SUNDAY 5/10
Mini Ikebana Workshop
9 a.m. at the Japanese Friendship Garden, 1125 N. 3rd Ave., Phoenix. Treat mom to a fun workshop and take home a handmade ikebana arrangement. Guests will learn about the concepts, history and technique of the art form before designing their flowers. Materials are included. Registration starts at \$75 per person.
japanesefriendshipgarden.org

SATURDAY 5/16
Tracks N Tunes
7-8:30 p.m. at McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park, 7301 E. Indian Bend Road, Scottsdale. The railroad park will feature various Arizona-based acts playing classic rock, country, rhythm and blues and 80s and 90s music. This evening's musicians are Dirty Yachtin' Scoundrels playing – you guessed it – all the best Yacht Rock songs. Boxcar Bites, Habaneros Tacos, & Udder Delights will provide the snacks and drinks. This event is free.
therailroadpark.com



Kentucky Derby Party at Arizona Biltmore.



An Evening with Esteban at the Hermosa Inn.

The Art of Wine
1 p.m. at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, 7380 E. Second St. AJ's Fine Foods is hosting its annual Art of Wine event – this year's theme is "Summer to Impress." Guests can explore a selection of spring and summer wines paired gourmet specialties from AJ's while chatting with AJ's in-house cellar masters. There will

also be a silent auction. General admission starts at \$52.
scottsdalearts.org

SUNDAY 5/17
Downtown Phoenix Food Tour
11 a.m. starting at Cactus Cloud Café, 111 W. Monroe St., Phoenix. The Phoenix Food Tour is a 2.5 hour guided outing that

brings guests on a culinary adventure through downtown Phoenix to try five different eateries while stopping at historic landmarks. Guests can try an English delicacy, Thai cuisine, an authentic Mexican street taco, fresh brewed coffee and bites and a Bosa donut to cap the day off on a sweet note. Registration is \$90.
tasteittours.com

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WHAT'S HAPPENING, ARCADIA?

TUESDAY 5/19

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable

6 p.m. at the Scottsdale Public Library, 3839 N. Drinkwater Blvd. This month's Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable will host author Neil Chatelain, who will speak about his novel, "Treasure and Empire in the Civil War: The Panama Route, the West and the Campaigns to Control America's Mineral Wealth." Doors open at 5 p.m. for meeting the speaker, book sale, and viewing Civil War videos. This event is free.
scottsdalecwrt.org

THURSDAY 5/21

Ever After

7 p.m. at the Phoenix Theatre Company, 1825 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. Inspired by the film starring Drew Barrymore, Ever After takes guests beyond the myth to discover the story of Danielle de Barbarac, a fearless young woman who dares to defy expectations, challenge a prince, and write her own ending. With dazzling costumes and music, this is a new take on the Cinderella story. Tickets start at \$100.
phoenixtheatre.com



Stay Well Weekend at The Scottsdale Resort.

SATURDAY 5/23 – SUNDAY 5/24

Stay Well Weekend

Times vary, at The Scottsdale Resort and Spa, 7700 E. McCormick Pkwy. Stay Well Weekend is an immersive wellness experience designed to refresh, motivate, and foster connections. Guests will participate in various outdoor fitness classes like aerial yoga and meditation, tea leaf readings, chakra connection walks and more. Connect with other guests and center yourself. Single day passes start at \$103.
thescottsdaleresort.com

SUNDAY 5/24

Love Letters by A.R. Gurney

2 p.m. at ASU Kerr Cultural Center, 6110 N. Scottsdale Road. Scottsdale Old Town Theatre Company presents its production of the Pulitzer Prize nominated Love Letters By A.R. Gurney, which tells the story of the wealthy Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner, who exchange letters through a lifetime of experiences. Tickets start at \$35.
asukerr.com

MONDAY 5/25

Memorial Day Baseball Clinic

9 a.m. at Salt River Fields, 7555 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Kids aged 5-14 can come to the fields for a morning of baseball. Salt River staff and former major and minor league ball players will teach fundamentals and different hitting, pitching, fielding and catching drills. Players will be assigned to small groups based on age. Cost is \$90 per person.
saltriverfields.com

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What to Expect for this Summer's Housing Market

2026 has been off to a hot start in Arcadia Proper and a little more summer heat isn't going to slow it down.

In 2024 and 2025, the first quarter saw **25 and 27 home sales**, respectively.

This year we saw **33 homes sell in Q1**, marking a clear step up in demand.

Although the Iran war and interest rates have created headwinds, the upper end of the market above \$2,500,000 has **remained resilient** and luxury markets across Phoenix including Paradise Valley and Scottsdale have benefited significantly.

One of the biggest misconceptions about Arizona real estate is that the summer is slow. When in reality, the hard data shows that **the fewest closings occur in January**. This means contracts were slowest in November and December. The summers stay steady because the buyer demographic changes slightly. In the spring we benefit in some markets like the Biltmore from snowbirds looking for warmer weather. In the summer, the buyer pool changes to families moving before school starts, people downsizing as kids head off to college, and the typical corporate relocation crowd.

With the stock market back to all-time highs and interest rates declining, **we anticipate a robust summer market**. We continue to see **significant movement from California and Washington**. So don't let seasonality make the decision for you. Call us to see the other data points you should follow to position your home appropriately regardless of the season.

We hope that you all have a great summer!



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FRIDAY 5/1

Floral Magic Workshop

3 p.m. at Cactus Flower Shop, 10822 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale. Learn expert tips and techniques from the pros for creating beautiful arrangements, including the secret to mastering the floral grid: a tool that transforms any design into a masterpiece. Perfect for beginners and floral enthusiasts, this engaging hands-on experience is as fun as it is educational and creative. All materials included. Registration is \$85.

cactusflower.com

FRIDAY 5/1 – SUNDAY 5/3

Maricopa County Home & Flower Show

10 a.m. at WestWorld of Scottsdale, 16601 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Arizona’s only flower show combines stunning floral displays with more than 1,000 home improvement vendor booths. Guests will find immersive botanical installations, a flower and artisan market, competitions, a large-scale showcase, and remodeling and landscape inspiration all in one place. Tickets are \$10.

mchomeshows.com



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SATURDAY 5/2

Kentucky Derby Lawn Party

1-5 p.m. at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, 7575 E. Princess Dr. Join the resort for its annual “fastest two minutes in sports” party – also known as the 152nd Run for the Roses. The race will be on-screen, and guests can find a southern-inspired menu that includes shrimp and grits and derby pie, plus cocktails, games, raffles, and winner for best outfit and fanciest hat. Tickets start at \$189 per person.

scottsdaleprincess.com

Derby DayClub

7 a.m. at TurfParadise, 1501 W. Bell Road, Phoenix. Celebrate the excitement of the Kentucky Derby without leaving Arizona at the Stella Artois Derby DayClub. This event features live thoroughbred racing and live Derby coverage. Guests can enjoy VIP seating, luxury tables, a jazz band, DJs, champagne and bourbon tastings, and classic Mint Juleps. General admission starts at \$50.

turfparadise.com

SUNDAY 5/3

The Mystery of the Blue Train

2 p.m. at Fountain Hills Theater, 11445 N. Saguaro Blvd. Agatha Christie’s Hercule Poirot faces his most challenging case with the latest performance at FHT. A mysterious woman, a legendary cursed jewel, and a night train from London to the French Riviera... ingredients for the perfect romance or the perfect crime? Tickets are \$40 for adults and \$18 for youth 17 and under.

fhtaz.org

THURSDAY 5/7

Sunsets and Sips

5 p.m. at Taliesin West, 12621 N. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd., Scottsdale. Enjoy the beauty of the Arizona sunset within the beauty of Taliesin West at Sunsets and Sips. Guests can grab a cocktail, tour the campus and discover the history behind one of Wright’s most renowned architectures while also listening to live music. Tickets are \$35 for adults, \$20 for kids.

franklloydwright.org

FRIDAY 5/8

Bogeys & Stogies Charity Golf Tournament

7:30 a.m. at San Marcos Golf Course, 100 N. Dakota St., Chandler. This event unites golfers, businesses, and community members for a day of play and philanthropy. Hosted by Hospitality First Concepts and benefiting Chandler Law Enforcement Charities, this tourney features 18 holes, breakfast, contests, raffles, a silent auction, and an awards luncheon, plus cigar tastings and specialty activations. Admission starts at \$175 per player.

withatwistconsulting.com



The Mystery of the Blue Train at Fountain Hills Theater.

SATURDAY 5/9

Verde Valley Wine Festival

11 a.m. at Riverfront Park, 1284 E. River Front Road, Cottonwood. Vino lovers, this one is for you. Guests can peruse Cottonwood’s wineries, breweries, distilleries and restaurants that are “committed to creating homegrown products.” General admission gets guests a commemorative wine glass, eight tasting tickets, food samples, music, art and live entertainment. There are VIP packages available. Tickets start at \$35.

verdevalleywinefestival.com

FRIDAY 5/15

Jazzbird Nights

7 p.m. at Ravenscroft, 8445 E. Hartford Dr., Scottsdale. O.M.G. (Our Musical Genre) returns for another unforgettable performance. This group, featuring We3, Grammy Award-winning bassist Mel Brown, and internationally acclaimed drummer Dowell Davis, delivers a show that blends everything from bluegrass to jazz, from classical to country. Tickets start at \$35.

theravenscroft.com

SATURDAY 5/16

Rally for Veterans

12 p.m. at Dink and Dine, 1017 N. Dobson Road, Mesa. The Pearce Family Foundation supports Veterans by providing financial assistance and access to service dogs, particularly for Vets facing PTSD and service-related challenges. The inaugural Rally for Veterans will feature 20 two-player pickleball teams with organized bracket matches, a designated warm-up area, sponsor recognition throughout the venue, and awards. Registration starts at \$100.

pearcefamilyfoundation.com

250 Years of America

7 p.m. at North Canyon High School, 1700 E. Union Hills Dr., Phoenix. The North Valley Symphony Orchestra will present “250 Years of America” in celebration of the nation’s 250th birthday. The concert will feature works by American composers Leonard Bernstein, Florence Price, Samuel Barber, George Gershwin and more. Tickets start at \$10.

northvalleysymphony.org

SATURDAY 5/16 – SUNDAY 5/17

Collect-A-Con

10 a.m. at WestWorld, 16601 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Two days of trading card, anime, and collectibles abound at Collect-A-Con. Attendees will find over 900 vendors featuring sports cards, rare Funko POP!s, vintage toys, comics, video games, Pokémon, Yu-Gi-Oh!, and more. Music icon Steve Aoki and voice actors like Kyle Hebert, Dan Green, Eric Stuart and Terri Hawkes will be on-site – meet and greets are available! General admission tickets start at \$44.

collectaconusa.com

SUNDAY 5/17

4 Lads from Liverpool

3 p.m. at Casino Arizona, 524 N. 92nd St., Scottsdale. Step back in time with 4 Lads from Liverpool, a high-energy tribute show celebrating the music and legacy of The Beatles. Guests will hear and see spot-on vocals, costumes, and era-inspired storytelling. Featuring seasoned tribute performers portraying each band member, the show captures the spirit, sound, and cultural impact of the Fab Four. Tickets start at \$15.

casinoarizona.com

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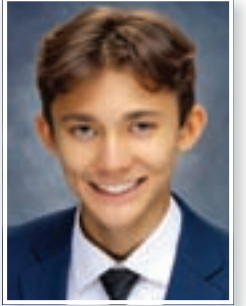
Cian Fehlberg



Muraad Irfan



Ronak Kapadia



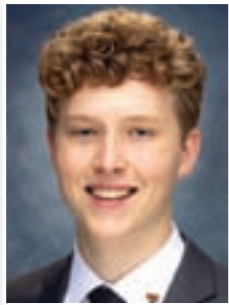
Vincent Laba



Adriana Lauterborn



Todd Rassas



Hayden Short



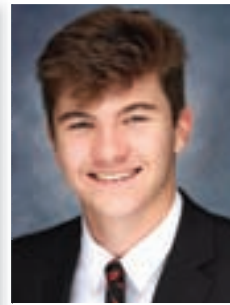
Shane Smith



Yiyi Sun



Lucas Vargas



Carter Walsh



Kennedy Williamson

Area students named National Merit Finalists

By Sherry Sklar

A select group of Arcadia area students is celebrating a significant academic achievement after years of focus, hard work and dedication.

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) recognized this year's National Merit Finalists from Arcadia, Brophy and Xavier as top scholars in the nation. The competition features a lengthy qualifying process that bridges a student's junior and senior years.

Students qualify for the program by scoring in the top one percent on the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test) taken in October of their junior year. About 1.3 million students take the exam annually. Of these, roughly 50,000 earn recognition based on the highest scores in each state. To continue, students must submit an application, write an essay and receive a recommendation from their school.

About 16,000 students are named semifinalists early in their senior year, and roughly 95 percent advance to become finalists. From that group, a committee of college admission officers and high school counselors selects about 2,500 students nationwide for \$2,500 National Merit

Scholarships. Corporate and university sponsors offer additional awards. In its 71st year, the program expects to award almost 7,000 scholarships totaling \$26 million. Here are this year's finalists:

ARCADIA HIGH

Arcadia High had three finalists: William Carroll, Tess Dwyer-Kim and Cian Fehlberg.

"The National Merit Scholarship has given me the opportunity to attend the University of Alabama debt-free," William said. "I plan to study mechanical engineering and eventually pursue a master's degree."

Tess said managing the workload for the scholarship was challenging but fulfilling.

"It has been an incredibly rewarding experience, especially after balancing my academics, extracurricular activities, and social life," she said. "I plan to attend Loyola Marymount University in California, and becoming a finalist has made that goal possible."

Cian reflected on the opportunities that come with being named a Merit Scholar.

"The generous scholarship support and academic opportunities will help me make the most of my college experience," he said.

BROPHY PREP

Ben Cherny credits the teachers who helped inspire his love of learning.

"I'm grateful to the supportive teachers I've had from kindergarten at Madison Traditional Academy to today," Ben said. "They've given me a love of learning that I will take with me to college and beyond."

For his classmate Muraad Irfan, family and school provided the encouragement that helped him reach this point.

"Being named a National Merit Finalist is an honor because it reflects the support and discipline I received from my parents and the Brophy community," Muraad said. "This recognition sets a foundation for me to continue pursuing excellence."

For many students, these scholarships are opening doors to future opportunities. Sebastian Cevallos is eager to explore engineering in college and see what projects he can build, while Lucas Vargas plans to study urban planning and public policy to help make cities like Phoenix more livable.

Todd Rassas appreciates his school community's support and plans to soar.

"It is an honor being named, and a reminder of how much I've benefited from the help of teachers and classmates," he said. "Next year, I will be attending the United States Air Force Academy to become a pilot."

Hayden Short was surprised and honored to receive the good news.

"This award will support me as I attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall, studying mechanical engineering," he said.

Vincent Laba shared his pride in receiving the award, expressing gratitude for his family and the opportunities he's had at Brophy. He looks forward to continuing his journey and studying engineering in college. Shane Smith echoed that sentiment, saying he is grateful to be part of the long-standing tradition and hopes this recognition will help him achieve his dreams.

Yiyi Sun described the honor as both encouragement and motivation, seeing it as a push to continue working hard and striving

for excellence. Carter Walsh added that being a National Merit finalist has already opened doors for college and acknowledged the reward of a summer spent studying and preparing.

VERITAS PREP

Senior Ronak Kapadia earned a perfect 36 on the ACT, a feat achieved by fewer than 0.2-0.5 percent of test takers nationwide. He's also a National Merit Finalist.

"I bought this Princeton review ACT book and I took a practice test just on my own and I graded it myself and I tried to find where my weak spots were," he said. Math has always been a strong subject for him, so he knew he would do well.

"In the science section, I noticed I had some trouble. So, I worked on the science section," he said, taking practice tests with the intention of bumping up that science score. The hard work paid off.

After graduation, he plans to major in aerospace engineering. His top choices for college include Georgia Tech, Purdue, and Texas A&M College Station.

XAVIER PREP

NMSC also named seniors Kennedy Williamson and Adriana Lauterborn National Merit Finalists.

"This is a great honor," Adriana said. "Recognition for my dedication to academic rigor makes me eligible for a variety of scholarships, which will help me pursue my future aspirations."

A competitive swimmer, Adriana will continue her academic and athletic career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this fall. She plans to join the swim team and is considering a major in nuclear science and engineering.

These awards mark an important achievement for students as they prepare for college and future careers. Their accomplishments reflect both individual determination and the strong educational foundations built within Arcadia's schools.

nationalmerit.org



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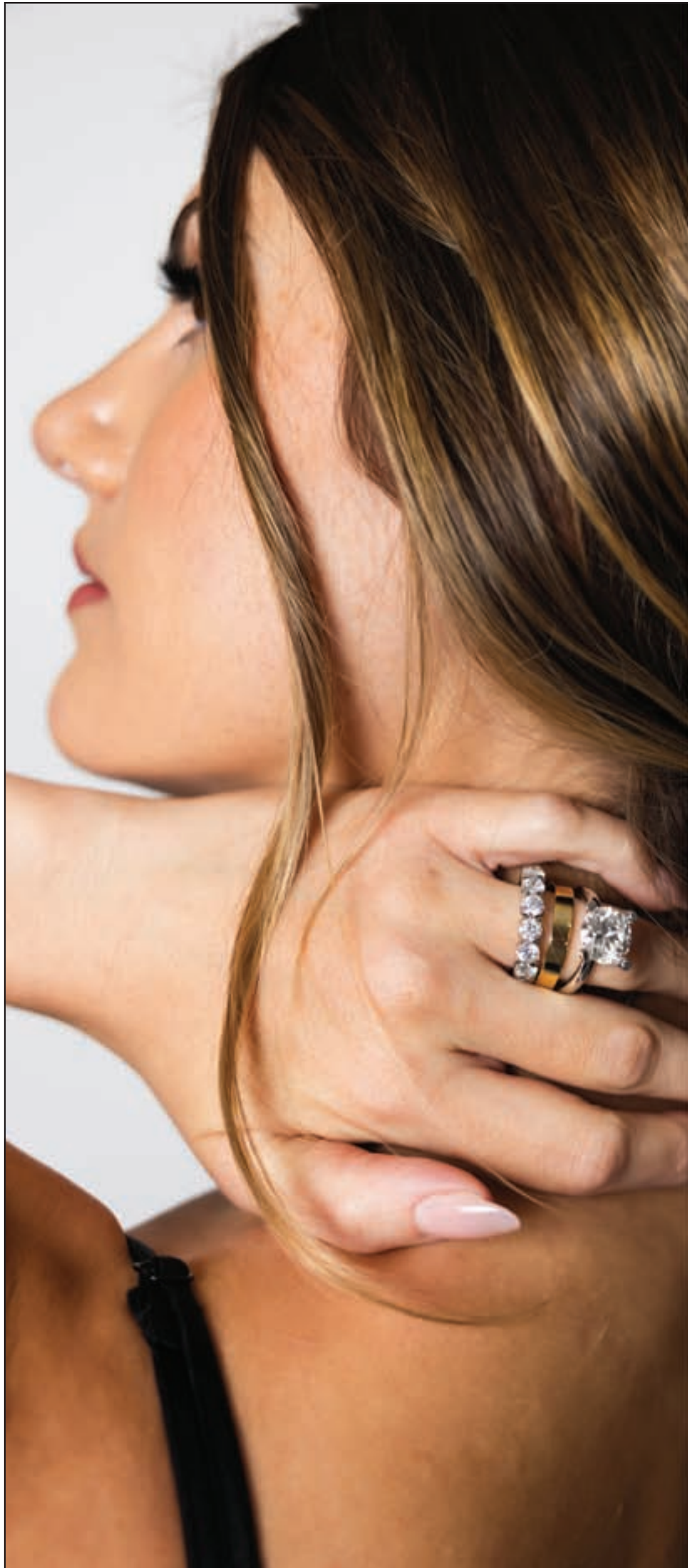
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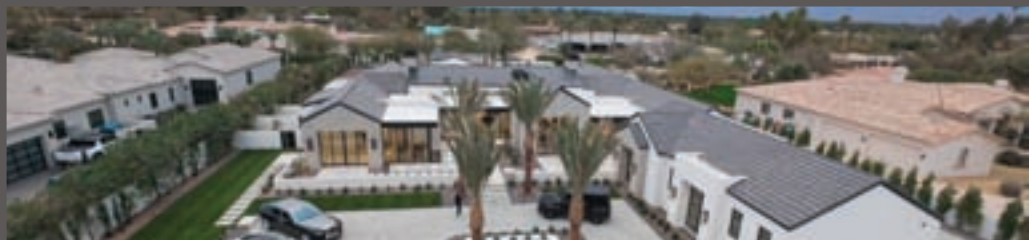
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In the Kitchen

In the Kitchen with **Executive Chef Richard Rodriguez** of Mastro's City Hall

6991 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale • mastrosrestaurants.com

From flipping eggs with his dad to leading one of Old Town Scottsdale's most well-known kitchens, Chef Richard Rodriguez's journey to the culinary world started with family, passion and a love for keeping things simple.

Where are you from originally?

I was born in New York and moved to Arizona – after a short stint in Florida – when I was 12. My family and I lived in Globe and after graduation, I moved to the Valley to attend culinary school and I've been here ever since. I attended Scottsdale Culinary Institute.

My dad was a machinist, meaning he built machines that made stuff, and my mom worked in retail.

Do you think your growing up in NYC had any effect on your cooking techniques today?

I've always loved the hole-in-the-wall restaurants that you can only find in New York. It always brings me back to basics. I don't think a dish needs 35 ingredients, I think four or five that are really well done is perfect.

What cemented your interest in the culinary industry?

I was a junior in high school and my family had gathered together for breakfast. As I was cooking, we were all chatting and I mentioned that I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school. I had an uncle that was a chef and my grandfather was a cook in the Army, and we were reminiscing about that as I'm cooking breakfast and it kind of dawned on all of us... culinary school!

What was your favorite class?

It was the restaurant portion. The last few classes all students would learn about each section of a restaurant – front of house, back of house – and that was really my first taste of fine dining.

The first half of my line cook career I was always the sauté guy. I liked the action of it; it's like being an octopus with having all the pans moving at one time. Once you do that for a while, you

'graduate' to grill cook or broil cook, and you're slingin' steaks.

Is breakfast the first meal you remember cooking?

It is! When I was a kid I would help my dad in the kitchen when he'd be cooking eggs for the family. He'd show me how to make everything and I'd make a little omelet before I sat down to watch cartoons.

What other restaurants have you worked at?

I've been all around the Valley – I've actually only worked in Arizona – but I was at Fleming's, Tommy Bahama's, Kona Grill. I worked at Ocean Club for five years, and I was the chef at O.H.S.O. in Arcadia and I opened the PV location. I ran a few Copper Blues locations before coming to Mastro's – I've been here in total for seven years.

My roots are definitely in fine dining, especially after attending a French culinary school. I feel like that's where I thrive. I think, from a guest's perspective, whether it's nachos or filet mignon, they expect a level of execution and care. On my end, I always want a hand in the higher-end dining.

What's your favorite food profile?

When I'm cooking for myself, I like taking Asian ingredients and cooking them with French techniques. It lets me flex my culinary school muscles [laughs]. An example would be tuna *au poivre* (prepared or served with coarsely ground black pepper) paired with a wasabi and sesame blended into a French style sauce. Those are two of my favorite types of cuisine.

Explain the dishes at Mastro's.

Well, our menus don't change much [laughs] – actually the biggest rollout I've seen in the company happened last month when we added three items. We like to keep dishes simple but made with top of the line ingredients. The most popular items are – of course – the filet mignon and the butter cake. You can't forget about the butter cake.

For Mother's Day we're hosting a



brunch with a full buffet that's got items like strip loin and ham carving stations and full breakfast items – bacon, eggs, sausage, omelets – plus desserts and pastries. It's going to be delicious.

What do you cook when you're home?

I have a 10-year-old, so I have to keep it kind of basic but I like to go to the grocery store and just see

what pops out at me; there could be a pork tenderloin over here and some fresh veggies over here and I create something I love.

My son is at the 'chicken tenders and fries' stage, but he's slowly coming out of it and being more open to trying new things. He's very picky about steak – he won't eat it unless I cook it or I show him and he cooks it himself. He likes to cook at home!

What’s one dish that represents you as a chef, and why that dish?

Our Japanese A5 wagyu steak, without a doubt. For me, it really bridges the gap between the classic American steakhouse and elevated global cuisine.

What’s something guests might not realize goes into executing a “standard” menu at a high level?

Precision. No matter how busy it is or how you’re feeling that day, there’s zero room for error. Every item has to be perfect, every time.

If you were going to create a class for kids to learn about the industry, what would that class entail?

The basic skills are so important. Knife techniques, or how to roast a chicken or how to reduce a sauce. They’re all techniques that if you have them in your mental toolbox, you can make anything. Figure out the ingredients later – if you know how to *brunoise* (to dice very small) carrots, that can translate to any vegetable.

What’s one item in the kitchen you use all the time?

The sharpest, cleanest knife I can carry with me. Whether you’re at home or a professional chef, that’s one item that you’ll always use.

Who are some other chefs that inspire you?

Every day after school, I used to watch *Emeril Live*. Emeril Lagasse was my hero and his passion for the industry was just... he loved cooking and he loved talking about cooking and that really vibed with me early on.



Even if it’s the 10,000th time you’ve made a dish, you treat every plate as if you’re signing your name on it. That’s what makes every dish special.



If you could cook for one person, who would that be and why?

My grandmother. She did a lot of cooking when I was younger, and she passed when I was just coming up in the industry. I’d love to show her what I can do now versus when we were making eggs in the kitchen on Saturday morning.

How do you keep yourself calm when things get crazy in the kitchen?

Organization! It’s all about organization. When the rail is full of order tickets, you can’t look at the whole thing and go, ‘Oh no, what am I going to do?’ You have to focus on the first few in front of you and build on that. One step at a time.

If you could travel anywhere in the world to cook, where would you go?

Right now, I’d say France so I could do a deep dive into French cuisine and learn in the place that these techniques were developed.

What restaurant would you recommend to someone who is new to the Valley?

Oh, besides Mastro’s City Hall [laughs]? I don’t get out much so it’s hard to answer, but I’ve always loved Christopher’s at Wrigley Mansion. Uchi in Scottsdale is really good if you like sushi!

What’s the key to making a consistent dish feel special every time it’s served?

The key is passion. Even if it’s the 10,000th time you’ve made a dish, you treat every plate as if you’re signing your name on it. That’s what makes every dish special.

What role do restaurants play in bringing a community together?

The dinner table has always been a place for people to come together. Great food sparks great conversation and gives us something to bond over, whether it’s at grandma’s house or a fine dining restaurant.

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“Meet Mr.” | Ray Artigue

Tom Kirkegaard

There are coincidences, and then there’s the unexplainable.

As a youngster, Tom Kirkegaard always wondered how he wound up with his difficult-to-pronounce last name (kirk-guard). When he got older, he decided to investigate and went right to the source, asking his mom what gives.

Turns out Tom’s grandfather was a longtime caretaker for a church cemetery in Vester Hassing, Denmark. The Danish name literally means “church yard,” so it turns out that the person was one and the same with the profession.

Tom grew up in an ardent Catholic family with three brothers, a sister, and a loving and watchful mother. It was a given that he and his siblings would grow up under a Catholic doctrine and education. Tom graduated from the former parochial Gerard High School where he played on the 1980 state championship football team. His older brother also won a championship there.

“I have to say, me and my brothers were pretty good athletes,” Tom said with unmistakable pride.

After high school, Tom played football and ran track at Scottsdale Community College, but the classroom quickly became an obstacle that he couldn’t clear.

“I wasn’t very interested in school, so I quit. I just didn’t want to waste my dad’s money,” he admits. Shortly thereafter, he started Camelback Landscape

“It’s important we appreciate people for who they are.”

and Maintenance and 40 years later the commercial landscaping business is still going strong.

“When I was eight, my dad made my brother and me go to work landscaping yards. In high school I trimmed palm trees for \$20 a tree and I thought I was rich,” he laughed. “I didn’t really care for the work but it taught me how to work hard, and it’s been a good business. I enjoy it and especially my clients.”

Tom’s real passion is football – and more specifically, coaching. He began coaching Pop Warner football when his son, Colby, was six and continued coaching him until he graduated from Arcadia High School with All-City and State honors.

“It was stressful trying to call the right plays at the right time, more stressful than running a business,” he said. “But I loved coaching and had a special bond with my players. I still see some of them today.”

Tom bought a house in Arcadia when he was 26 and has never left. These days he splits his time between work, his three grandchildren and looking out for his 92-year-old mother.

“I talk to her most every day and take her to breakfast on Sundays. I also enjoy time with my son and my daughter, Jordan,” he said. Asked about retirement and he frowns.

“I don’t think I’ll ever stop working because I like it. And who knows, if I was asked, I might be tempted to coach again.”

Tom becomes introspective when thinking about relationships.

“It’s important we appreciate people for who they are, and not necessarily for what they do. I stay in touch with 18 of my high school buddies and we meet



up once a year. One guy drives a UPS truck, another is CEO of a corporation. All the same as they’re just my friends,” he said.

Ask around and anyone who knows Tom will tell you he’s the real deal. And that’s no coincidence.

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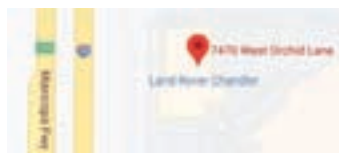
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Mental health event raises awareness for maternal support

By Sherry Sklar

Ana Keck believed she had the know-how to navigate any mental health crisis. Motherhood, however, can bring unexpected risk and trauma, often hidden from view, affecting not only women but their families and even the community. Access to the right support and care can make a life-saving difference.

Ana, her husband Chuck, and two young daughters, Emilee and Kaylee, reside in Arcadia, where the girls attend Hopi Elementary. "There's no better place to raise kids and be part of this spirited, close-knit community," she said.

That sense of stability would soon be tested.

Ana was in her third trimester when she received a severe medical diagnosis that nearly took her life and necessitated a premature delivery. Kaylee, born by emergency C-section, spent two months in the NICU. Ana recovered in the hospital for a week following the birth. It marked the beginning of a harrowing mental health journey.

"I had a 3-year-old at home, so I had to be present for her while visiting my baby in the NICU twice a day and calling in as well; it was overwhelming," she said.

The blur of the weeks that followed made it difficult to recognize that her rapidly shifting emotions were outside the norm. Her reluctance to hold Kaylee signaled that she needed care beyond what the hospital could provide. Specialized treatment is not often accessible, and diagnosis is tricky – postpartum depression can present differently in each woman. And fear of judgment can delay that recognition.

Ana admits that her struggles did not become apparent immediately. Although she was an experienced youth and family counselor, she could not connect the dots.

"Being a therapist myself did not give me the tools I needed to get better," she said.

Suffering in silence and not understanding why she felt so disconnected from her



Moms and WHI supporters Kelly Rickard, Ana Keck, Sarah Katz, Kallie Rebich and Kelly Brown.

daughter, she eventually sought counseling at Women's Health Innovations of Arizona (WHI), which helped turn her life around.

Founded in 2015, WHI focuses on a gap that often goes unseen: mental health care for women, children, and families. The Valley nonprofit offers specialized support, from perinatal mood disorders and childhood wellness to ADHD coaching and trauma recovery, meeting women and their families at different life stages.

Its team of licensed therapists, coaches, and mentors provides a more holistic approach to care, with training to recognize perinatal mood and anxiety disorders often missed in general practice. The goal is both practical and cultural: expand access to care, reduce stigma, and ensure families do not have to navigate these experiences alone. In Phoenix, it remains one of the few organizations focused specifically on maternal mental health.

Executive Director Michelle Lacy

emphasized the consequences of leaving these needs unaddressed. "When challenges like depression or anxiety go untreated, the impact can have multi-generational effects," she said.

Maternal mental health challenges are the most common complication of pregnancy, yet more than 75 percent of women experiencing these conditions do not receive the treatment they need, according to the Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance.

After her successful treatment, Ana became an advocate for the organization, serving on its board. "Ana brings a powerful sense of perspective and authenticity to this work," Michelle said. "Her personal experience, along with her commitment to expanding awareness and access, has helped us reach more families who need care."

Speaking from her own perspective, Ana explained why these issues are often overlooked.

"Women are routinely screened for mental health during pregnancy and postpartum, but

they're not actually getting the specialized care they need," she said. "That's because this issue sits between systems: OB, pediatrics, and mental health, and no one truly owns it."

WHI marked a turning point, helping her heal and restoring her relationship with Kaylee, which she describes as incredible. Her experience led her to support other mothers facing similar challenges.

Ana organizes and hosts WHI's annual April fundraiser, NOURISH: Maternal Mental Health Brunch, Caring for Mind, Body & Soul. She sees firsthand how the center is changing and how postnatal emotional well-being is understood. The funds raised have enabled mental health services for 500 families over the past year.

Through its fundraising efforts and Family Support Fund, WHI offsets costs to provide therapy for mothers without mental health coverage, treating women who otherwise may not be able to afford care. Ana encourages women not only to reach out to friends but also to partners and the community without fear of stigma.

"I wished that what was going on in my head would just go away, but my husband clearly was able to see that something was wrong and validated me," she said.

Pregnancy and the postpartum period mark one of the most vulnerable chapters in a new parent's life. Mental health challenges are the most common complication, affecting one in five mothers and one in ten fathers. Support matters. No one should navigate this alone. For the community, the message is simple: mothers need mothering too.

That begins with recognizing when specialized mental health care is needed and ensuring it is within reach. A meal, a kind word, a moment of understanding. Small acts, offered with intention, can make all the difference.

whi.org

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Former Tavan crossing guard serves his community

By Sherry Sklar

One unassuming gentleman walks a familiar route, extended grabber tool in hand, deftly snatching debris – papers, plastic, cups and other refuse – to bag and clear from the sidewalks and pathways he loves to call home.

Along the way, he may pause to chat with neighbors or offer words of encouragement or spiritual comfort to the less fortunate whom others overlook, sharing the deep faith that sustains him.

Retired Tavan Elementary School crossing guard John Lussing is a cherished figure and neighborhood fixture. This quiet act of service binds him to the community and demonstrates how one person and one conversation can make a difference.

His daughter, Krista Braden, is an Arcadia mom of two sons who attended Arcadia High. Her eldest played baseball at the school and could depend on his grandfather – affectionately known as *Papa Horse* – to cheer from the stands.

“He would come to all of the games, where everyone knew him,” Krista said.

“I’ve seen Mr. Lussing out on the greenbelt and even in the adjoining street for months now, faithfully picking up trash and keeping the path beautiful for the rest of us,” friend Cheryl Murphy said.

Being involved with family and community comes naturally to John, who, with a total of 22 years of experience as a crossing guard – four at Tavan and 18 in California’s Bay Area – has managed to extend his career. He first retired as a Teamster at age 62, then later completed his second turn as a crossing guard last year at age 84. While living on the West Coast, John relished his role as a mentor and religious instructor.

“I taught Sunday and Vacation Bible School in California,” he said. Anticipating that he might eventually

need more help as he aged, John moved closer to Krista and her family in 2020. Leaving California was difficult, but he believes the move was the right one.

“The biggest blessing is that I’m close to Krista, who helps me a lot. But I miss California, especially the ocean and the beaches,” John said. “I live by faith and trust that God’s got me right where He wants me.”

Krista encouraged her father to stay active and helped introduce him to Tavan’s administration, who were impressed with his experience and offered him the job. Starting the day bright and early, John would ride his electric tricycle to the corner of Osborne and 46th Street, set up his folding signs, and begin ferrying students safely across the street to school.

After a few hours’ rest, he returned in the afternoon, checking in with his regulars and asking how their day had gone. He always offered positivity and encouragement to the young students, especially the ones who were struggling.

“Kids love him,” his daughter said. “And I think being around younger people keeps him feeling younger, too.”

John agrees. “I used to coach my daughter’s soccer team and baseball team,” he said. “I always enjoyed being around the kids.”

Even though John is officially retired, he continues to serve the community by picking up trash and volunteering with Hospice of the Valley. Once again, encouraged by Krista, he began spending time with hospice patients – an experience that has had a profound impact.

“It is a blessing to meet these people,” he said, many of whom he finds a lot in common with.



John Lussing



PHOTO COURTESY OF KRISTA BRADEN

John always had a kind word and smile for the students he met each day.

Although his time is now his own, John finds connection and meaning in modest acts of service.

“I used to go out in the evening for walks, and I kept seeing the same trash on the streets, which bothered me,” he said. “So finally I started picking it up. Many people stopped to thank me.”

With every purposeful walk and every conversation along the way, John quietly demonstrates the power of simple action – paying forward faith, kindness, and dedication to the community he calls home.

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ACMNA + volunteers help keep Camelback clean

By Lorelai Hampton

While many come to Camelback Mountain to take in the views, the Camelback Cleanup Crew is there to give back to the place they call home. This team of Arcadia neighbors and nonprofits come together to help clean up the area and create a sense of community.

Scott Zielinski, a board member of the Arcadia Camelback Mountain Neighborhood Association (ACMNA), has been part of the group since its first meetup about five years ago. The ACMNA created the Camelback Cleanup Crew that runs from 44th Street over to 64th Street as part of the Adopt a Street program.

“We’re just all about keeping Arcadia’s charm true and intact. It’s designed as an activity for the neighbors,” Zielinski said.

At that first meet-up, Zielinski was the person who brought the most participants – since then, every fall and spring, he has been promoting meetups.

At the most recent clean up in April, 22 community members participated, allowing the group to expand its regular route.

“We meet at Shemer at around eight a.m. on a Saturday and we have different sections that we divide up and conquer,” Zielinski said. “We use neon vests and pickers and trash bags.”

Some outreach members on the board started door-knocking to help spread the word



Clean-up Crew volunteers canvas Camelback Road from 44th to 64th Streets.

on the cleanups. The City of Phoenix provides the group with all the materials needed for a successful event.

“The overall response has been extremely positive. We’ve had people actually see us out there and ask how they can participate,” Zielinski said.

He’s had dreams of living in Arcadia since

he was in college, and was fortunate enough to end up here. He describes it as a “sense of community,” the perfect place to raise his kids, and wants to give back wherever he can. The future vision for the group is to continue the outreach and increase participation.

Zielinski said he would like to identify

areas in the community that need additional help to “overall participate at a higher level.”

He mentioned that some areas aren’t being picked up by any Adopt a Street, and places where there’s less community outreach, which he would like to address as the group grows.

acmna.org

Retired detective revisits real Valley case in new book

By Sherry Sklar

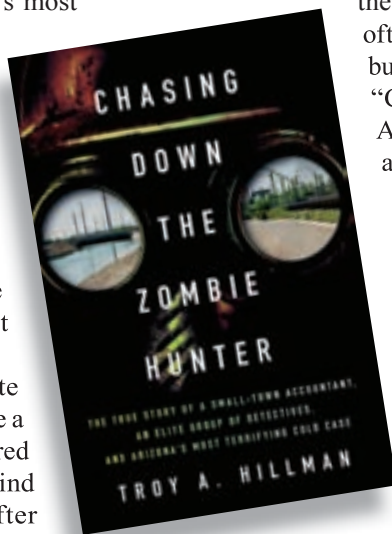
It is said that fate is written in the stars, and that each one of us mirrors the universe, guided on a path. For Bryan Patrick Miller, a Valley cosplayer known as the “Zombie Hunter,” this reckoning arrived through familial DNA sequencing, which traced his family tree from North Carolina to North Phoenix and ended at the edge of a canal path.

The answers to one of the Valley’s most infamous cold cases came long after the events themselves, and justice emerged through tenacity and innovative detective work.

Retired Phoenix Police Department detective and Arcadia resident Troy A. Hillman published his book, “Chasing Down the Zombie Hunter,” which chronicles his time heading the cold case homicide unit within the Violent Crimes Division.

Hillman assembled a team of elite detectives and outside experts to solve a haunting case that had gone unanswered for decades. His determination to find answers stayed with him long after the criminal was brought to justice. Written over five years, the book marks the beginning of a new chapter in Hillman’s career as an author.

The case at the center of Hillman’s book involved the deaths of two young women, 22-year-old Angela Brosso and 17-year-old Melanie Bernas, discovered months apart along the Arizona Canal in the early 1990s. Though investigators quickly determined the crimes were connected, years passed without answers.



The book vividly recounts the details step by step. Yet its deeper focus is on what unfolds over time: the forensic genealogy that points them in the right direction, the psychology behind profiling, the patience required to revisit old evidence, and the conviction that justice, however delayed, still matters.

“It was like drinking water through a fire hose,” Hillman said. Fighting tooth and nail to assemble the resources needed to move ahead, Hillman often felt he was swimming against the tide of bureaucracy. He even started his own nonprofit, “Cold Case Investigators Association in Arizona,” to help communicate information among police professionals.

His approach was systematic, with agility more often found in the private sector. Hillman followed a circuitous path into the sleuthing profession through a spreadsheet. He moved to the Valley in his early twenties, leaving behind the staid accounting profession as a certified public accountant and fraud specialist to join the Phoenix Police Department’s financial crimes division. The warm weather and palm trees were a bonus, providing a strong contrast to freezing winters. Moving laterally, he joined the Violent Crimes Division and, in 2008, started the cold case squad.

“We produced a formula for managing and working these cases, and we were solving about 12 to 15 cases per year in our heyday, dating back to the 70s,” he said. “And that’s significant, when we were up against about 2,500 cold cases, but we were still making progress.”

Hillman spent his police career working the ins and outs of the force, with the Canal Murders – which reopened



Troy A. Hillman

in 2011 and were solved in 2015 – among his toughest and most high-profile cases. Bryan Patrick Miller was found guilty after an extensive trial and currently sits on death row awaiting his appeals.

Hillman retired from the force in late 2021 to enjoy Arcadia life with his wife and two young daughters. He is an advocate through his platform and serves as a volunteer expert for The National Organization of Parents

of Murdered Children and on the Silent Witness Board. He often presents at national conferences, highlighting the need for increased staffing, funding, and a coordinated national network.

“Violent crime, particularly against women, remains a serious concern,” he said. “We have a huge problem, and nobody seems to want to confront it.”

Hillman estimates he was responsible for resolving at least 100 cases, which brings him pride. Behind his desk hangs a sign reading “Cold Cases Matter®,” which inspired the book. His desire to provide families with the answers they deserve drove him.

“We could have easily listened to naysayers and agreed, ‘yes, the canal murderer is probably dead; let’s work on the other 2,498 cases we have,’” Hillman said. “We ended up solving what people said was unsolvable.” He asserts, “It’s important work, and this case is a prime example of why cold cases matter.”

troyhillmancoldcase.com
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FROM SKATE PARKS TO SPEEDWAYS

Arcadia teen takes her talents to the racetrack

By Rachael Bouley

Nineteen-year-old Mia Lovell was once a flourishing junior skateboarder – and although she hasn't put the board away just yet, she's fallen in love with another four-wheeled adventure: auto racing. More specifically, Nascar-style auto racing.

Mia said she was drawn to the excitement, risk, and thrill of both. After watching her dad run laps at a track when she was 13, she took a turn behind the wheel and couldn't resist. Making the switch between sports has introduced her to a whole new world of technical and strategic planning.

"That mental challenge is really what makes me tick. I've always been driven to put 100 percent of my effort into whatever I'm doing – whether that's in racing, skateboarding, school, or family – because I always strive to be my best," Mia said. "The worst feeling is knowing that you've left something on the table. I never want to feel like I should've trained harder, or studied more races, or just be outright lazy or complacent."

Mia currently competes in the ARCA Menards West Series, a NASCAR-sanctioned event about three tiers down from her ultimate goal, the NASCAR Cup. There are 13 races across the West Coast, including Arizona and California, and her team, Nitro Motorsports, provides transportation, maintenance, setup, and engineering for her car.

Skateboarding helped her develop hand-eye coordination from an early age, and now she finds laser precision and mental demand the keys to success when she's on the track.

"You fight your mental limitations and doubts as much, or more, than the physical ones, so keeping a strong mind is critical," she said.

Last year, Mia earned multiple podiums in the Trans



PHOTO COURTESY OF STACY LOVELL

Mia became a professional auto racing driver after watching her dad drive laps. Now, she's competing in a NASCAR-sanctioned series.

Am 2 West Series and is now turning her focus to oval racing.

"My biggest goal is to learn and gain as much experience as possible, as I am late getting into the sport relative to most of my competitors who have been racing since they were five years old," Mia explained. "I only got into the sport when I was 13, and didn't start pro racing until I was 16. Of course, the goal is always to collect wins and championships, but that only comes as you learn and gain experience."

While Mia sets her sights on racing glory, she's also juggling her college education. Being proactive about school work and planning absences ahead of time has helped balance these endeavors. Her biggest challenge so far has been finding the correct mindset.

"As a competitor, I was so focused on winning that I

would put unnecessary pressure on myself and expect myself to obtain wins right away. That's not how the sport works," Mia said. "You have to put in your time, refine your craft, and then become a champion. Shifting my focus from results to execution has been the biggest game changer to progression and happiness."

Mia said she is honored to inspire other young competitors and show that seemingly impossible dreams can become real possibilities.

"The greatest advice I can give an ambitious athlete is to not be so fixated on the end result. It's much more productive to focus on the process, execution, and learning, which will equip you to win those championships," Mia shared. "Plus, you'll find yourself being more content with the hard days and have better longevity in the sport."

Over the years, Mia's sporting ambitions have not only earned her spots on the podium but also on the big screen. She had a role in the film *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, as well as two seasons of the Woodward Skateboarding show on YouTube. She's also been in several commercials, including Nike, Arizona Department of Health, and Arizona Coyotes Hockey.

Her parents and siblings are her biggest fans.

"When your kids find their passion and enjoy doing something they love, you want to support them in every aspect," mom Stacy Lovell said. "It is stressful to watch Mia go over 140 miles an hour while cars rub paint with her. I actually cover my eyes and hold my breath sometimes while she is racing."

Despite the dramatic, nerve-racking races, the Lovell family is thrilled Mia has found her true passion. She hopes to eventually race in the NASCAR Cup Series and earn the respect of competitors and fans.

mialovell.com

An event rooted in community, creativity and lots of color

By Michael P. Murphy

It's a very pleasing atmosphere. A clear, springtime day in Arcadia. The grass is bright green and easy on the feet, soft jazz notes are floating from the strings of an electric guitar, happy people are chatting with artists and appreciating their work. Tinker Bell is painting the faces of children and adults...everywhere you look there is color-color-color!

In April, Shemer Art Center held its annual Art in the Garden and Sparkling Tea event, where 20 selected artists displayed and sold their art, which includes oil paintings, glass, mosaics and more. On Saturday, in another part of the property, guests enjoyed a fellowship and tea in a creative environment, making for a nice day in a colorful setting.

"All of our events are designed to draw a specific audience," President and Executive Director Shonna James said. "We created our first spring event because we had so many people walking by that had never been in before."

These events have become so popular that one would think they've been around forever. Well, not quite. When Shonna began her tenure as president in 2016, the event was called Fine Art in the Garden. She was told that it began back in the 1970s, and there were already at least two other neighborhood events bearing the name Art in the Garden.

Those events eventually faded, and the name became synonymous with Shemer, where supporting Arizona artists is their mission. There is a process to select which artists can display and sell their art. It begins with a call out to see who may want to participate.

"We have a juror who comes in and helps us. It's never just me," Shonna said. "They will look at the event artists based on different kinds of mediums. This year

we initially selected 24 artists, and 20 were able to join us during the weekend."

The Sparkling Tea event was added in 2019. It's a welcoming social occasion where guests enjoy a sparkling beverage and catering provided by Arcadia Farms. Guests enjoyed presentations by professional painters and live music provided by Rivera Strings, all under a canopy of colorful umbrellas. Best of all was the artistic hat competition, and the theme of this year's winning hat was "Easter at Shemer."

These events raise funds for summer camps. The artists pay to participate and each one contributes a work of art for a silent auction. Spring is always a busy time, kicking off with the May 20-July 9 exhibit *Let's Play*, featuring artwork evoking playfulness and joy.

Later events will include an exhibit of Emma Florence paintings and *Inside Perspectives*, showcasing art by instructors, students and team members. And in November they will host the Arizona Arts Festival. Art in the Garden and Sparkling Tea wonderfully embodies what defines Shemer Art Center, creating and nurturing a community of artists, young and old, and sharing their art in the best of ways.

shemerartcenter.org

Art in the Garden and Sparkling Tea wonderfully embodies what defines Shemer Art Center.



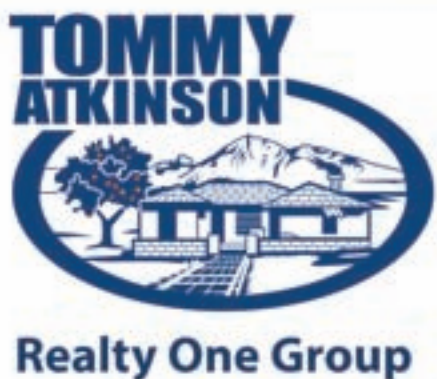
The Sparkling Tea, held under colorful umbrellas, had a competitive element this year as attendees vied for the title of 'Best Artistic Hat.'



Artists showcased paintings, glasswork and mosaics, and kids even got in on the action with coloring stations and face painting.

NOW ON DISPLAY

Now through May 14, two exhibitions include *Parallel Ground*, featuring 63 works by 16 Arizona-based Japanese artists across diverse media rooted in Eastern aesthetics, and *A Legacy of Spirit*, Tamara Poff's 14-painting series exploring women's resilience, empowerment, and intergenerational strength themes.



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Hidden in the Bradshaws: The magic of Castle Hot Springs

Seven miles of winding dirt through the Bradshaw Mountains... it's bumpy, quiet, and just remote enough to make you wonder what could possibly be waiting at the end.

As we drove in with our *Arizona Highways Television* crew, cameras packed and dust trailing behind us, the anticipation built with every turn. At one point, we



Robin's Adventures

BY ROBIN SEWELL

Robin is the host and executive producer of the *Arizona Highways Television*, Saturdays and Sundays on CBS.

slowed to a stop because of the wild burros crossing casually in front of us, as if they owned the place. And then, just like that, the desert changed.

The dry, rugged landscape gave way to something entirely unexpected, a lush, palm-lined sanctuary tucked into the mountains. After the long approach, Castle Hot Springs doesn't just appear, it reveals itself. Being there, you immediately understand why people have been making this journey for more than a century.

Originally established in 1896, long before Arizona became a state, Castle Hot Springs has always been a place people came to reset. Today, after an extensive restoration by owner Mike Watts,

the 1,100-acre property feels preserved and reimagined, grounded in history but designed for a modern kind of escape.

"The biggest inspiration was bringing it back to life and sharing it with other people," he said. As I spent



the day on property, what stood out most wasn't just the beauty, it was the intention behind every detail.

I walked through the resort's on-site farm, where much of the food served to guests is grown just steps away from the kitchen. One of the team members handed me a tomato straight off the vine. It sounds simple, but tasting it right there, surrounded by the garden it came from, made the entire experience feel grounded in a way that's hard to replicate.

That connection carries through to the dining experience itself. Sitting down for lunch, everything felt curated yet completely unpretentious, with fresh ingredients, clean flavors, and a sense that what you're

eating is directly tied to the land around you. It's not just farm-to-table as a concept, it's something you actually see, walk through, and taste.

At the heart of it all are the hot springs themselves. Producing over 200,000 gallons of mineral-rich water daily for more than 11,000 years, they quite literally shape the entire experience. There's no harsh sulfur smell, just warm, clear water flowing down from the hillside into a series of pools.

Walking through the resort's history room reminded me that this secluded oasis once attracted some of the most prominent families in America: The Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, even President Theodore Roosevelt. Back then, getting here meant a train ride followed by hours in a stagecoach. Standing there now, after our comparatively easy drive, it's hard not to imagine what that journey must have felt like.

The history here isn't only glamorous. During World War II, the property became a rehabilitation center for injured soldiers. One of them was a young John F. Kennedy, who stayed and wrote letters that are still on-site today.

Today, that legacy continues in a different way. Castle Hot Springs blends wellness, food, and outdoor adventure into a fully immersive experience. Guests can hike desert trails, try Via Ferrata climbing, or soak in the springs and take in the quiet.

One of the most intentional choices? There are no televisions in the rooms. It's a small detail, but being there, it makes sense. The goal isn't distraction, it's presence. For more than 125 years, that feeling of being present may still be the reason people come... not to mention, it's just off an Arizona highway.



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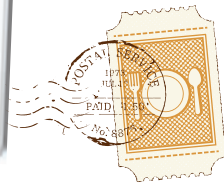
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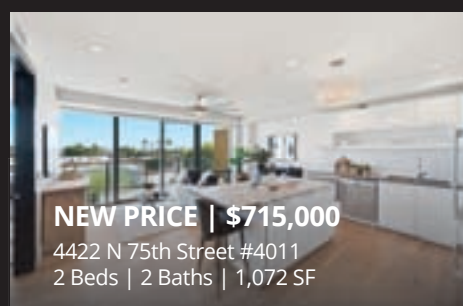
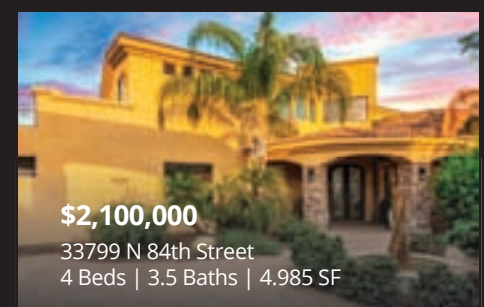
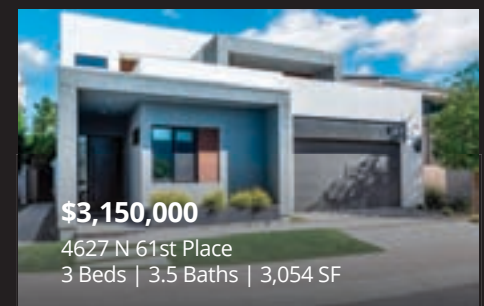
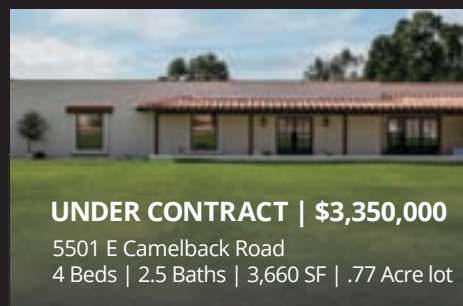
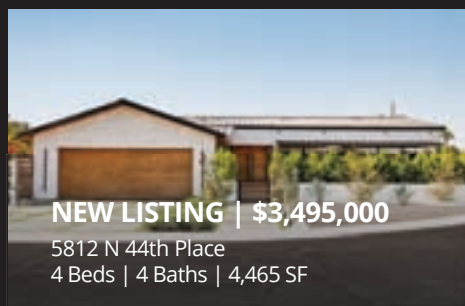
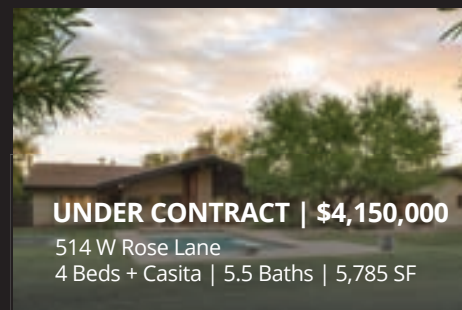
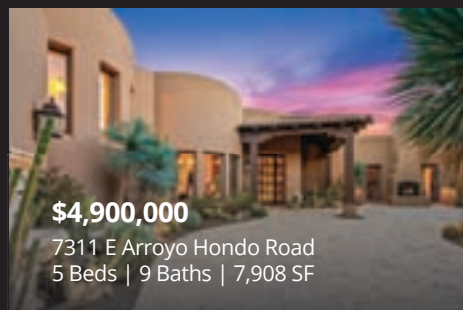
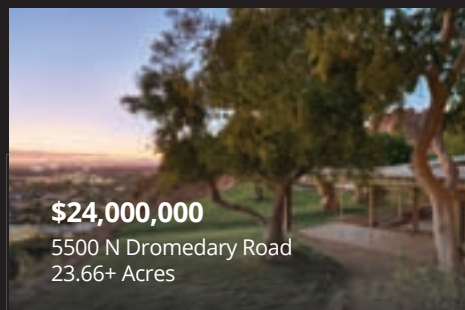
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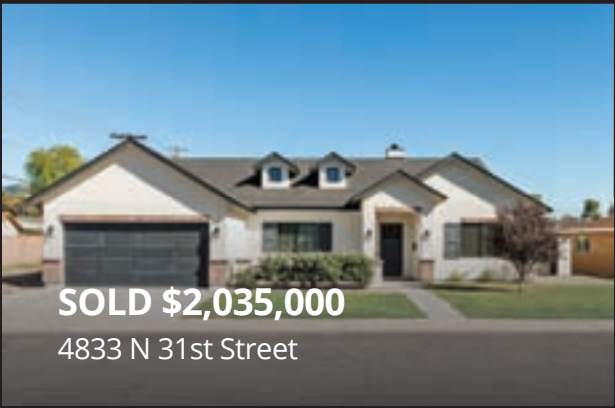
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A historic honor for PV's Christ Church of the Ascension

By Michael P. Murphy

On 40th Street just north of the canal, painted letters on a large flat rock read *Cudia City Estates*. It has been a single-family home community since 1974, but once upon a time Cudia City existed as a studio for movie and TV westerns before closing in the early 1960s. Then, in 1963, a church parish moved in.

Those parishioners gradually grew into Christ Church of the Ascension. In 1965 they bought 8.5 acres of land on Lincoln Boulevard, half of which was donated by the Margaret "Peggy" Goldwater Trust. The first building, now used as the office, saw completion in November 1967. A new sanctuary followed in 1975. Other additions, including the Parish Hall, Ascension Chapel and a school, were added to the campus later on.

This January, the church campus had the honor of receiving the Town of Paradise Valley's Historic Property Recognition Award. The Reverend Father Rod Hurst is keenly aware of the church's history and played an active role in receiving the award.

"One of our members is on the Paradise Valley Historical Advisory Committee and suggested it," he said. "We started the application process last November and submitted materials and photos. We also provided information on the age of the property because one of the qualifiers is that it must be 50 years old."

Architectural style and connection were also important. Famed architect Bennie Gonzales designed the entire campus in his trademark Southwest Regional Modernism style, reflecting traditional Native American and Mexican



structures. Even though the campus was constructed over several years, it looks as though it came about at the same time.

"Another important part of our campus is what we call the Memorial Garden and Columbarium," Hurst said.

"It's the largest I've ever seen, with 3,000 niches and 1,000 occupied. It's in the center of our campus and has the best view of Camelback Mountain."

An affiliation with Senator Barry Goldwater was an important part of the historical designation, as he was once a member of the church. He and

his first wife are interred in the memorial garden. His home still sits atop Scorpion Hill, overlooking the campus.



Christ Church of the Ascension was honored with the Town of Paradise Valley's Historic Property Recognition Award.

"After the application process I gave a presentation to the Paradise Valley Historical Advisory Committee. They asked questions about the architectural style as a part of Gonzales' greater work."

Gonzales died in 2008. His son Barney offered the committee insights to his father's work as it related to the church. At age 14, he had even helped with the construction.

With the approval of the historical recognition, Mayor Mark Stanton delivered a proclamation and presented a brass plate to an attending church delegation. The plaque will be installed at the sanctuary entryway of Christ Church of the Ascension, a fitting tribute to the parishioners that first met at Cudia City and the enduring legacy of the church's presence in the Paradise Valley community.



Reverend Father Rod Hurst with the plaque that will eventually hang at the entryway.

Author brings Belize to life in new fiction novel

By Mallory Gleich

Arcadian Lisa Binsfeld's path to publication wasn't exactly linear. A self-proclaimed 'quiet' kid, she loved to read and retreat to imaginary worlds. While she considered herself more of an artist growing up, she pursued a degree in marketing and advertising to combine writing and visual creativity in a career.

"I held a couple of different marketing positions that required writing and graphic design. Then I got married and decided to 'stay home' with my kids, never imagining that my school volunteer jobs would turn out to be the bulk of my resume," Lisa said. "I started working part time in the Ingleside library in 2010. I absolutely fell in love with that job – those awkward tweens reminded me of me – and that's when I started dabbling in fiction writing again."

Over the next several years, Lisa honed her craft, completing three novels before her debut novel, *Little Pink Houses*, was published in March.

Her first book was more experimental, her second showed significant improvement but didn't land with publishers, and the third – her Belize story – became the book she was determined to share.

"I felt early on that *Little Pink Houses* I would publish first, regardless of how I had to make it happen," she said.



Lisa Binsfeld

The inspiration for the novel came from a real source. On her first trip to Ambergris Caye in January 2022, Lisa stumbled upon an abandoned resort unlike anything she'd seen before:

"Grecian columns, angels and animal statuary, little pink casitas, all guarded by a 20-foot-long Jonah's whale," she said. "This

being Belize, people actually live there, kind of like full-time camping. I did some research, and the history (what little exists) is every bit as bizarre as the place itself."

Intrigued, she studied the property and immediately imagined a story centered around it. To add dramatic tension, she paired two very different characters: a hardened, childless female executive and a precocious orphan boy. The setting itself – a rumored Y2K prepper colony – added the perfect element of mystery and adventure.

Lisa approached writing differently this time. After "pantsing" her first two novels – writing by the seat of her

pants – she decided to outline *Little Pink Houses* in March 2024. She allowed the characters to evolve naturally.

"For women's fiction, especially for book clubs, the reader has to get immersed in the characters," she said. "And to do that, I have to be immersed, too." The process included multiple rounds of edits and revisions, allowing her to truly inhabit the world she was creating.

While the protagonist shares the author's fear of the ocean and germophobia, the little boy is inspired by her younger son. The story balances authentic color with the imaginative elements that she hopes make it a fun, engaging read.

For Lisa, publishing this novel is a milestone in her personal and professional journey. Approaching her 59th birthday, she reflects on the lessons learned along the way: "If there's something you always dreamed of doing, go for it, no matter your age, no matter how scary it seems," she said. "The only thing worse than failing is knowing you gave up too easily."

Lisa is welcoming the public to her book signing on May 9 at 10 a.m. at the Poisoned Pen Bookstore in Scottsdale. *Little Pink Houses* is available at bookshop.org, lisaalisa.com or on Amazon.



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La Fogata

The Dining Scoop

Whether you're planning a cozy brunch or an elegant dinner for that mother figure in your life, many restaurants are offering enticing specials to make May 10 unforgettable. Here are a few spots – some down the road, some just a bit of a drive – offering Mother's Day dining this May:

At **Arizona Biltmore** (2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix), Renata's Hearth will host an afternoon tea from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The prix fixe experience features sweet and savory bites, from tea sandwiches and scones to pastries, with options for children and vegetarians. Guests can enjoy the resort's amenities, including Tierra Luna Spa and a full lineup of wellness activities, creating a relaxing, all-day event.

arizonabiltmore.com

J&G Steakhouse at The Phoenician (6000 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale) is serving a menu of herb roasted prime rib, honey roasted pork loin, and citrus roasted arctic char, along with seasonal salads and sides. There will be a chilled seafood and raw bar, hand rolled sushi and sashimi, breakfast and brunch items, a bruschetta station, artisanal pastries and sweets, and more. Price: starting at \$190 for adults and \$95 for children ages 3 to 12.

jgsteakhousescottsdale.com

LON's at the Hermosa (5532 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley) treats moms to an elegant three-course brunch from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., beginning with

house-made madeleines and a choice of six starters such as rock shrimp cocktail, smoked salmon sliders or French toast bread pudding. Entrées include croissant eggs benedict, pan-roasted salmon and beef tenderloin, followed by dessert. Price: \$110 for adults, \$25 for children ages 4-12.

hermosainn.com

32 Shea (10626 N. 32nd St., Phoenix) is celebrating Mother's Day weekend with shareable brunch specials served on its dog-friendly patio. Highlights include a Brunch Tower for two featuring pancake bites, lox and avocado toast, plus seasonal cocktails and churro pancake bites. Champagne options and festive menu items round out the celebration.

32shea.com

T. Cook's (5200 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix) has a three-course prix fixe menu with brunch starters such as a Bloody Mary Bar, scrambled eggs, seafood display, and assorted focaccia and pastries. Entrées include lemon and arugula ravioli, short rib, and banana foster French toast. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., **Royal Palms** guests can enjoy a waffle and French toast station, greek yogurt, smoked salmon, breakfast pastries, bruschetta, sushi, paella, and kid-friendly items. Price: \$175 for adults; \$75 for ages 6-12, free for children under 5.

royalpalmsotel.com

When dining with **Pita Jungle** (4340 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix) on Mother's Day, moms can receive their

choice of walnut baklava or chocolate dipped walnut baklava for dessert for free with the purchase of an entree. Moms can also enjoy a complimentary glass of select wine or a non-alcoholic option.

pitajungle.com

From May 8-10, those using the **Over Easy** (4730 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix) app can purchase a \$50 gift card and receive a \$10 bonus card. For those dining in, the breakfast restaurant will have a family-friendly table activity where kids can fill out a special "All About My Super Mom" card.

eatatovereasy.com

Through May 10, **Village Spa** (4444 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix) guests can purchase gift cards and receive a \$20 bounce-back reward for every \$100 spent. The featured Spa Duo Package includes a 60-minute Village Signature massage, a lavender martini body scrub, and a choice of lunch with champagne or a smoothie for \$240.

villageclubs.com

Throughout May, **AWAY Spa** at W Scottsdale (7277 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale) is offering treatments like the Berry in Bloom Facial, the Mother-to-Be Massage and the Ultimate Spa Day package that includes complimentary valet, access to the adults-only WET Deck pool, and spa amenities, along with seasonal beverages and take-home skincare.

awayspawscottsdale.com

La Fogata (7700 E. McCormick Pkwy., Scottsdale) will host brunch from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Indulge in a range

of breakfast dishes, including yogurt parfait, homestyle breakfast potatoes, silver dollar pancakes, and omelets. Additional highlights include a gnocchi station, poke station, corvina bass, spring risotto, and seasonal sides. Price: starts at \$105 for adults, \$49 for children 6-12, and free for children under 5.

thescottsdaleresort.com

Maple & Ash (7135 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale) will offer a seafood tower, prime tenderloin chateaubriand, omelet station, charcuterie boards, breakfast sandwiches, salmon lox platter, eggs benedict, avocado toast station, potatoes, scrambled eggs, bacon, parfaits, fruit station, French toast bread pudding and assorted pastries and waffles. Price: \$125 for adults, \$65 for kids.

mapleandash.com

Celebrate with a performance by Esteban on May 10 at **Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort** (7500 E. Doubletree Ranch Road, Scottsdale). Beginning at 3 p.m., the outdoor concert will feature Esteban's signature blend of Spanish flamenco and contemporary rock alongside his full band and violinist Teresa Joy. Tickets start at \$100.

hyatt.com

The **REMI Scottsdale** (4415 N. Buckboard Tr., Scottsdale) has options that span from brunch to elevated dinner. Daytime festivities take place at F/Sixteen, where families can enjoy favorites like pancakes, chicken and waffles, and mimosas. In the evening, Kauboi offers a refined dinner experience with Japanese steakhouse-inspired dishes and live-fire cooking.

marriott.com



Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass



D.A. Ranch



Organ Stop Pizza

Trade traditional flowers for something new with a sushi bouquet from **Mixela** (3410 N. 24th St., Phoenix). Available for preorder 48 hours in advance, these handcrafted arrangements feature premium nigiri and sashimi styled as blooming roses. With tuna, salmon, hamachi, and shrimp artfully arranged, each bouquet doubles as an edible centerpiece.

mixelaphx.com

From 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., all **Mastro's** (6991 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale) locations will offer a buffet featuring a seafood tower and breakfast selections, hand carved NY Strip, honey smoked ham, signature sides, plus mini butter cakes for dessert. The experience also includes one complimentary beverage per adult. Price is \$150 per adult, \$45 per child.

mastrosrestaurants.com

Indulge at **Virtu Honest Craft** (3701 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale) with asparagi, made with grilled asparagus, duck egg, feta crumbles, bacon candy, foie gras hollandaise and a truffle drizzle and Italian crepes with cotto ham, gruyere, eggs and parmigiano fonduta. Each mom will be welcomed with a rose and a special sparkling toast in her honor.

virtuscottsdale.com

Moms are invited to enjoy an Irish-pub-inspired brunch at **R.T. O'Sullivan's** (7575 N. 16th St., Phoenix) available until 3 p.m. On special are \$6 mimosas and Bloody Marys or a \$17 bottle of bubbly. The menu features brunch favorites like eggs cooked to order, breakfast burritos and quesadillas, alongside house specialties like the signature corned beef hash.

phoenix.rtosullivans.com

The Italiano's (9301 E. Shea Blvd., Scottsdale) buffet features chef-crafted stations filled with spring salads, hand-made pastas, carving selections, pastries and desserts. Reservations are available from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Guests can also order a custom champagne bottle label paired with a handwritten note. Price: starts at \$99 for adults and \$39 for children.

theitaliano.com

The Montauk (4360 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale) is celebrating with brunch from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., complete with live music and a special offer: a \$1 mimosa with the purchase of any entrée.

themontaukaz.com

Head to **The Delicatessen** (12811 N. Tatum Blvd, Phoenix) for a ready-to-go treat designed for mom. The custom drink carrier includes a Mother's Day-themed 16oz coffee cup and a seasonal strawberry matcha muffin. The Delicatessen will also debut a special Mother's Day-inspired bagel of the week feature.

thedelicatessen.com

Families who dine in at **Brody's Italian** (10810 N. Tatum Blvd., Phoenix) will receive a complimentary mini cannoli for mom with mention of the promotion.

brodysitalian.com

Sweet Paris Crêperie & Café (15147 N. Scottsdale Road) will gift complimentary roses to all mothers who dine in on Sunday.

sweetparis.com

Bring mom to **Picazzo's Healthy Italian Kitchen** (4669 E. Cactus Road, Phoenix) on May 12 and in addition to

lunch or dinner, she'll be treated to a gift card. Just let your server know you're there with the mom-figure in your life, and she will receive a \$20 card to use on a return visit.

picazzos.com

The **Joy Bus Diner** (10401 N. 32nd St., Phoenix) will be gifting a flower to every mom who dines in on Mother's Day. The nonprofit will also feature a special from founder and chef Jennifer Caraway: Chula Seafood smoked salmon benedict with tarragon hollandaise, spinach and two poached eggs atop house made toast, served with rosemary potatoes and fresh fruit.

joybus.org

Palo Verde Restaurant at **The Boulders Resort & Spa** (34631 N. Tom Darlington Dr., Scottsdale) has a festive brunch in store, featuring live music, complimentary champagne for mom and a chef-crafted spread. Highlights include seafood displays, cheeses, salads, pastries and omelet and eggs benedict stations, alongside entrées like prime short rib, beef tenderloin, Chilean bass, ravioli and chicken. Price: \$115 per adult, \$55 per child.

theboulders.com

Park West (9744 W. Northern Ave., Peoria) has a free indoor event taking place May 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Bloom Bar will provide floral bouquets + personalized card workshops, and guests can capture memories at a photo booth. Attendees can also enter raffles for prizes like Harkins Theatre passes and gift cards.

shopparkwest.com

Ko'sin at the **Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass** (5594 W. Wild Horse Pass Blvd., Chandler) will host a brunch from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., featuring seasonal dishes, chef-crafted egg specialties, carved selections, harvest displays, artisanal charcuterie, desserts, and signature cocktails. Price: \$85 per adult and \$38 for children 12 and under.

marriott.com

Treat mom to brunch at **Silver Pine Restaurant & Bar** (2515 E. Butler Ave., Flagstaff) from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This buffet-style meal features spring salads, a seafood and raw bar, omelet and crêpe stations, plus hearty favorites like prime rib. Kids get their own menu.

flagstaff.littleamerica.com

D.A. Ranch's (1900 Dancing Apache Road, Cornville) annual Mother's Day brunch returns with seatings at 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. The event features a catered menu by Savories, vineyard views, live acoustic music, and a build-your-own bouquet bar. Guests can also enjoy complimentary family photos, seasonal beverages, and optional wine purchases.

daranch.com

Organ Stop Pizza's (1149 E. Southern Ave., Mesa) Musical Luncheon takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Guests can enjoy an all-you-can-eat pizza and salad buffet with unlimited soft drinks while taking in a lively organ performance. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 9 and under, with additional treats like ice cream and alcoholic beverages available for purchase.

organstoppizza.com

DISTRICT 6 UPDATE

What's new in Phoenix

There's a lot happening across Phoenix in May, and whether it's new community resources, road safety updates, or opportunities to make a difference, this month is bringing a mix of informative and impactful changes worth knowing about.

A newly launched "Know Your Rights" webpage is now live through the City of Phoenix, designed to give residents clear, easy-to-understand information about civil rights and what to expect during encounters involving federal employees. The goal is simple: make sure the community has access to reliable information in one place, helping residents feel informed and prepared.



KEVIN ROBINSON

Councilman
District 6

602-262-7491
District6@phoenix.gov

On the community front, there's also a meaningful opportunity to get involved in local education through the AARP Foundation Experience Corps Phoenix program. With just 27 percent of Phoenix third graders currently reading at grade level, the need for support is clear.

This volunteer-based literacy program connects adults age 50 and older with young students, offering one-on-one or small group tutoring designed to build confidence and strengthen reading skills. Beyond academics, it's creating powerful intergenerational connections by pairing wisdom and experience with curiosity and growth in a way that benefits everyone involved.

Meanwhile, the city is also seeking public input on a proposed ordinance that would establish guidelines for medical treatment and food distribution activities in city parks. Residents are encouraged to weigh in before the proposal heads to Phoenix City Council later this month, making it a chance to have a direct voice in how public spaces are used to support those in need.

And if your daily drive takes you along Camelback Road, take note: new photo safety cameras are now active between 24th and 32nd Streets. Installed in areas with higher rates of traffic collisions and near school zones, the program is designed as a reminder that sticking to the posted speed limit is the safest choice for everyone on the road.

From policy to public safety to education, it's a busy season in Phoenix – with plenty of ways to stay informed and get involved right where you are. Happy May!

– Kevin

30 YEARS AGO



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Like their two older brothers, both Annie and Molly went on to graduate from Arcadia High School. Annie and her husband Lucas are raising five boys in Gilbert – we'd say Annie has more than earned her Mother's Day crown!

Molly and her husband Owen, a physical therapist in the area, are still living nearby and raising their two daughters in the same Arcadia neighborhood she grew up in.

Bernie and Jackie have since relocated to Mesa, and when they did, they parted ways with the 1929 soda fountain that served as the



memorable backdrop for their cover photo. Last the family heard, it found a new home as part of the collection at the Sanderson Ford museum. Some things don't change, though. Nearly three decades later, Molly and Annie still say their mom is the best!

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Tavan held its annual March Madness basketball game for fifth graders at Arcadia High.

Tavan takes center court in long running basketball tradition

By Mark Hays

Fifth graders at Tavan Elementary School traded their classrooms for the court in a tradition known as “Tavan March Madness.”

Held at Arcadia High, the event transforms students into basketball players for the day, complete with the energy and atmosphere of a varsity-level game. According to PE teacher Ellen Young, the event has deep roots within the community.

“March Madness has been an event at Tavan for over 20 years,” Young said. “It is a great time. Our fifth graders get to play against each other in an environment complete with announcers and cheerleaders, plus parents and the rest of the school come to watch the action.”

This year’s event featured 22 student

athletes and 15 cheerleaders, all of whom contributed to fun. The game itself mirrored a traditional tournament.

“They play four quarters, and we did a little half-time dance off with all the students and teachers,” Young said, highlighting the event’s emphasis on fun and participation in addition to competition.

A key element of the program’s success is its connection to the community. For the past three years, Arcadia sports figures have volunteered their time to help prepare the students.

“We have had Brian Frey and David Alfaro from Arcadia Sports Central coach our basketball players,” Young explained.

“They take time to coach students every day for two weeks.”

The event also benefits from the involvement of Arcadia High School staff and athletes, further enhancing its authenticity.

“We get a lot of help from the Athletic Director, Drew Ammon and his Administrative Assistant, Randee Romero,” Young said.

Gameday itself featured notable contributors who helped bring a professional feel to the experience.

“Michael Fay, the Arcadia varsity basketball announcer for their home games, was our official announcer, and AHS varsity

players Wesley Fay and Zach Smith were our referees,” Young said.

Despite the structured competition, the focus remains on community and shared experience rather than just the final score.

“The game was great, and the kids did such a great job,” Young said. “Yes, there is a winner, but in the end, we all come together and take pictures and celebrate having a wonderful day.”

The annual “March Madness” continues to serve as a milestone for Tavan’s fifth graders, giving them a memorable sendoff as they prepare to transition to middle school. By combining athletics, school spirit, and community collaboration, the event reflects the values that have sustained for more than two decades.



Arcadia Little League umpire recognized for 20 years of service

By Bridget Edgell

A coaches’ dedication impacts the lives of their players, parents, and overall environment of the team. Major Allgood and his crew of umpires have served Arcadia Little League for two decades, bringing structure to the game and mentorship and character development to the community.

Major Allgood was presented with the Allgood Sportsmanship Award during Arcadia Little League’s opening night ceremonies in March. The award represents the values he has embodied throughout his 20 years of service—integrity, respect, leadership, and a deep dedication to developing better athletes and better people.

Coach Danny Openden, who recently retired his ten-year coaching career for Arcadia Little League, emphasized Allgood’s welcoming presence: “He’s the umpire you’re hoping you get when you show up to the field,” he said. “He’s got a great disposition and an energy that’s infectious.”

Beyond his role as an umpire, Allgood has built relationships with the league’s players. He fosters these relationships through patting kids on the head, congratulating them, explaining the rules when things aren’t quite right, and even giving them a collective nickname “bubba” when speaking to each player.

Allgood also tends to leave an impression on families and coaches. Openden shared that Allgood encouraged him to continue coaching, despite his sons aging out of little league. That encouragement reflects his dedication to

overall success beyond the players and toward the mentors guiding the athletes as well.

Allgood has remained committed to Arcadia, despite his involvement in higher levels of baseball—including college-level games.

“I think he enjoys the community and watching these kids get older, better, and become better competitors,” Openden said. “He doesn’t play favorites. If a player was out, he called him out. If a player was safe, he called him safe.”

Another distinct characteristic that contributes to Allgood’s impact is his dedication to sportsmanship and fair play. This level of integrity is an essential aspect of the game, and Allgood instills it in the league’s athletes. The Allgood Sportsmanship Award reflects these same principles, recognizing players who demonstrate respect for the game and those around them.

“When you see Major, you see a great combination between playing by the rules and having fun,” Openden said.

Created by Board Member Mike Hampton, the Allgood Sportsmanship Award marks the beginning of a lasting tribute to his legacy. It will be presented annually within the league to individuals who exemplify the same character, leadership, and commitment to fair play that Allgood has demonstrated throughout his years of service.

arcadialittleleague.com



The Allgood Sportsmanship Award will be presented to athletes who demonstrate the values Major Allgood has exemplified.

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Congratulations to the many Arcadia Little League Softball alumni now making an impact at their high schools. Their achievements include Academic All-State honors, all-conference and all-state selections, state championships, and college scholarship offers. Best of luck to each of you as you head into the playoffs—we're cheering you on every step of the way!

Arcadia-area teams shine on the diamond

By AJ Stone

With spring comes the return of baseball and softball, and Arcadia-area teams took to the field with experienced rosters, high expectations and several key matchups. Teams at Arcadia High, Brophy and Xavier were ready for a season full of excitement and new highs – and that's just what they found!

ARCADIA HIGH SCHOOL

BASEBALL

After narrowly missing the playoffs in 2025, Arcadia baseball returned this season with a motivated roster and renewed focus. Head Coach Jeffrey Fierro was optimistic about what the team could accomplish.

"I empathize with players because I remember how challenging the game can be from time to time," Coach Fierro said. "What I have no nonsense for is lazy behavior that harms the culture of what we are trying to build at Arcadia."

The senior class was stacked this season, returning players Brock Segui, Grant Erickson, Hank Jensen, and Nico Leale. Juniors Hayden Oleshansky and Harrison Ladner, who were both key contributors in 2025, returned. Coach Fierro also noted that the Titans brought in some transfers he was excited about. For him, the most anticipated games on the schedule are the team's region matchups.

"We play in a very challenging region with Saguaro, Cactus Shadows, Mesquite, and St. Mary's, so I looked forward to those games," he said. As of press time, the Titans were at 8-14 in the 4A Desert Sky division.

SOFTBALL

Arcadia softball returned for the 2026 season with high hopes and a determination to build on last year's experience.

"Our main goal for this season was to win our region," Coach Jason Foster said. "We learned a lot from having a very tough schedule last year."

Senior pitcher Abby Verstegen (Seton Hall commit) lead the Desert Sky region in ERA, wins, batters struck out, and no hitters, while senior third baseman Olivia Baumgardner (Hope College commit) and junior shortstop Sydney Kelley also helped lead the team's successes.

"Sydney possesses great speed on the bases and excellent defense, and junior centerfielder Jane Ord is widely regarded as one of the best defensive outfielders in the state," Foster said.

The Lady Titans were on track to make a run to the 4A state playoffs at press time, with a 21-5 record, ranked seventh in conference and first in their region – with hopes to win region for the second time in two years. They were also runners-up

at the Apollo High School Cool Nites tournament. In a fitting tribute to the end of the season, this year's team all participated in Arcadia Little League – most even played together at some point.

BROPHY PREP

The Broncos finished 16-13 overall (5-3 in region) last year and aimed to carry that momentum forward with another strong campaign. Alumni Coach Josh Garcia was at the helm.

Preseason rankings had Brophy at No. 2 in Arizona, and they lived up to the hype by slaying the dragon that is nationally ranked Casteel by a score of 5-2 in March.

"Casteel is a really good program and well-coached, so getting a win like that early in the season was a good challenge for our group," Garcia said.

On offense, Brophy returned junior shortstop Dre Eithier (Miami commit) and senior catcher Jonah Castle (St. Mary's commit). Both headline a Broncos lineup that started with a 7-0 record for the first time since 2015. Ronan O'Brien has shone on the mound. After a 2025 season in which he went 4-1 with a 1.87 ERA in 11 appearances, he's gotten off on the right foot in 2026 by starting 2-0.

The Broncos entered the final two weeks of the season among the top five teams in the state. They were 14-5 as of press time, competing in the All Faiths Classic in Las Vegas and hosting the 35th annual Adam Donnenfield Classic, with their final three games against Desert Vista, Sunnyslope and Notre Dame Prep.

"We hope to be the type of team that will be successful when we play with discipline and compete the way we expect," Garcia said.

XAVIER PREP

Xavier softball was off to a strong start in 2026, picking up early wins over Horizon and Casteel. Co-head coach Sydnie Steffen said the team learned a great deal from last year's games.

"We learned lessons of perseverance and are continuing to grow," she said. "We learned that winning a State Championship takes everyone, and that everyone on the team has an important and valuable role." Xavier looks to take this newfound approach and apply it to upcoming games. According to Coach Steffen, the coaching style presented is "positive and encouraging."

Returning players included Sydney Root, Angie Falls, Sariah McNabb, and Joie Ramos, all of whom contributed to the team's success of 23-4 at press time. The Gators are ranked first in the 6A Central region and hope to make a successful run as AIA playoffs begin May 2.



Jerry's



@jerrysfillingstation

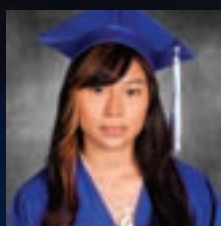


40th St & Camelback Rd.

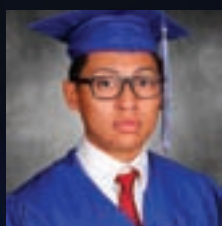


CONGRATULATIONS

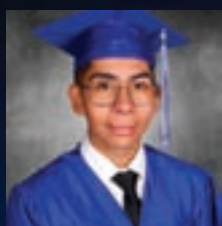
class of 2026!



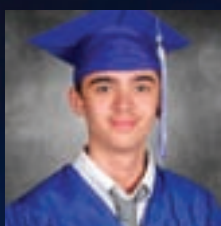
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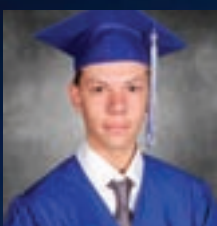
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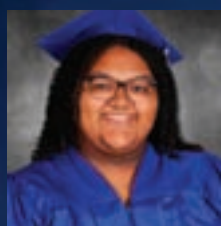
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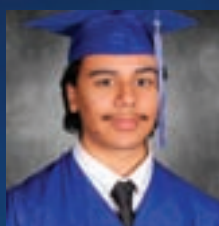
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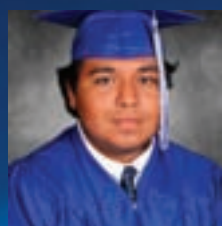
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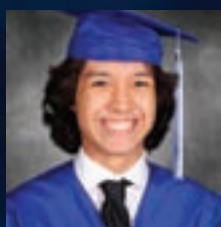
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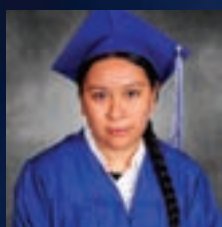
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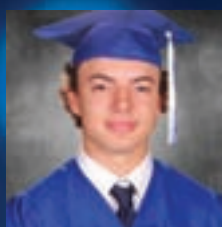
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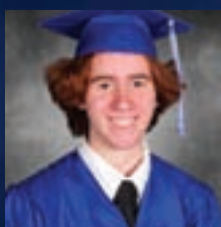
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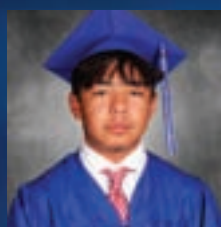
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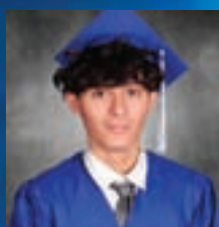
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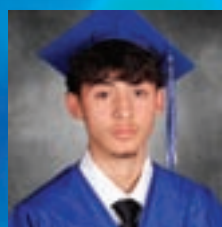
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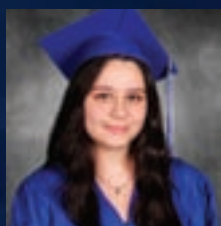
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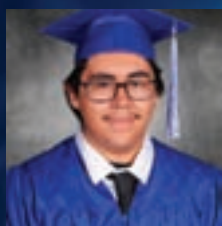
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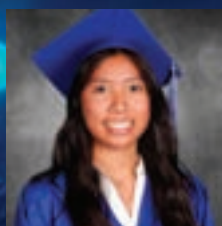
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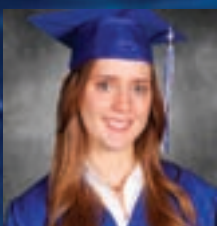
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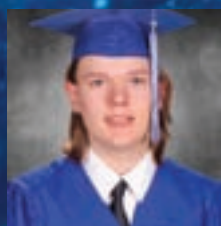
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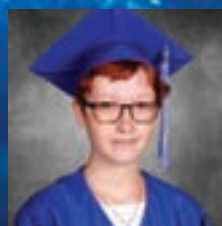
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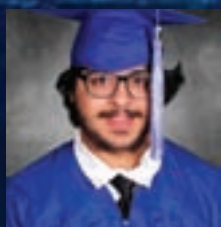
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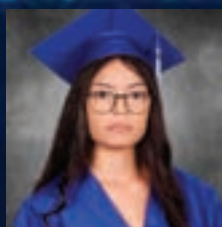
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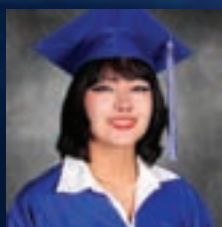
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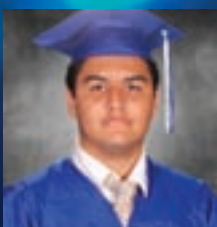
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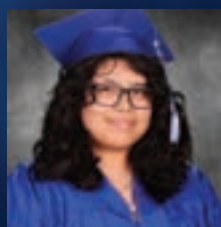
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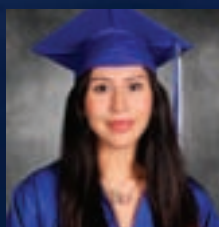
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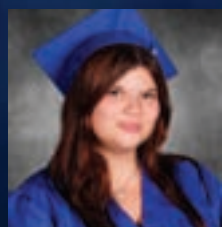
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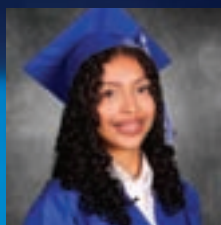
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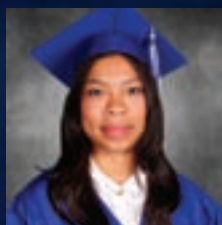
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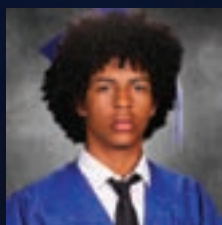
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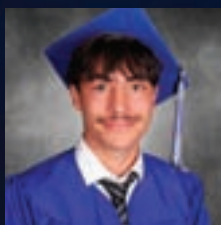
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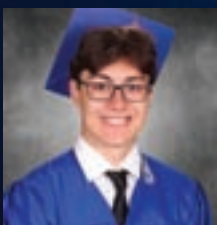
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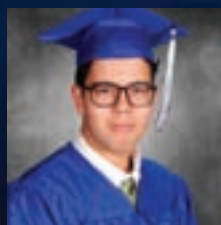
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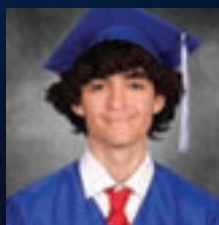
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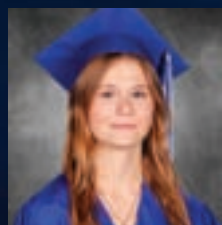
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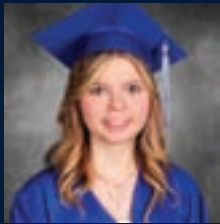
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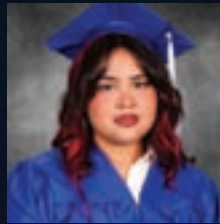
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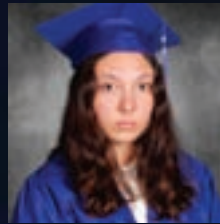
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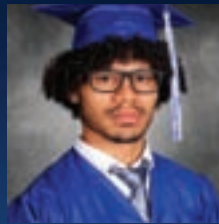
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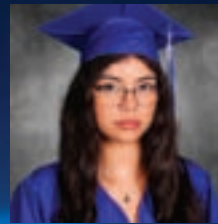
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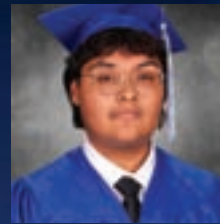
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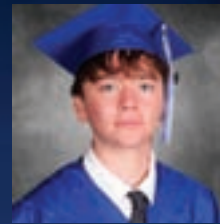
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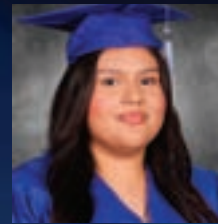
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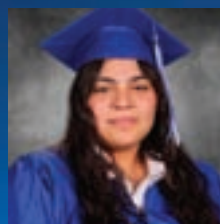
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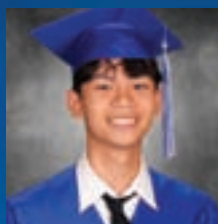
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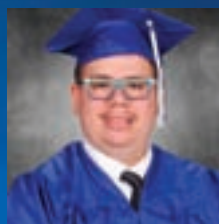
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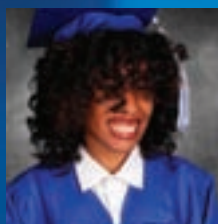
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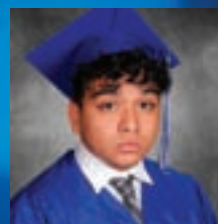
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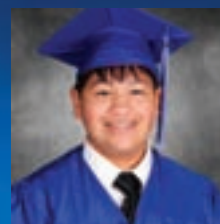
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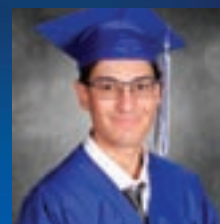
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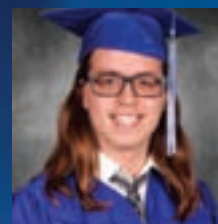
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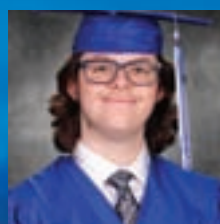
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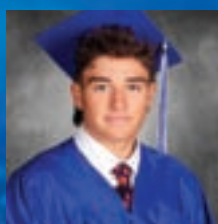
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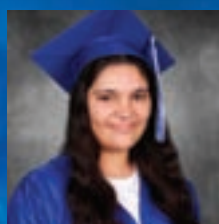
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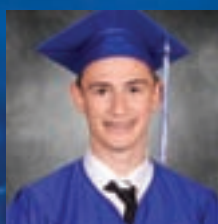
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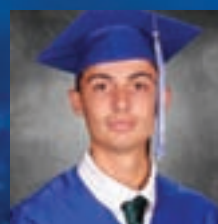
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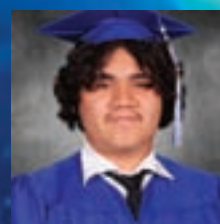
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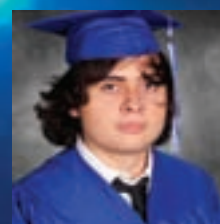
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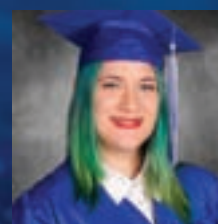
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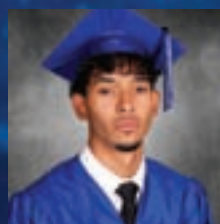
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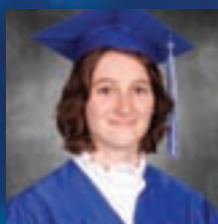
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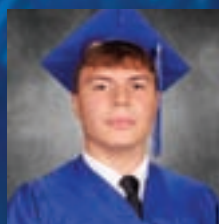
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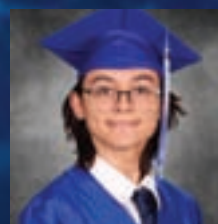
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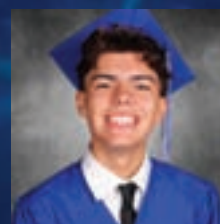
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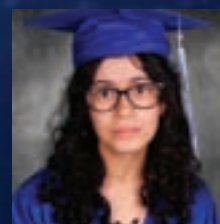
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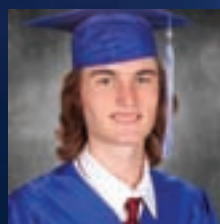
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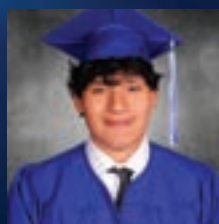
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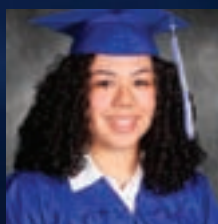
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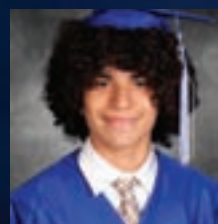
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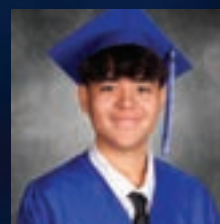
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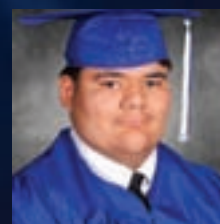
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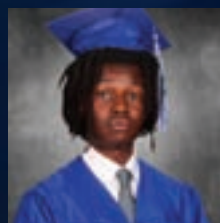
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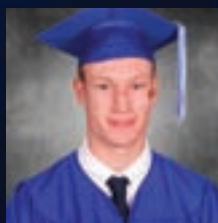
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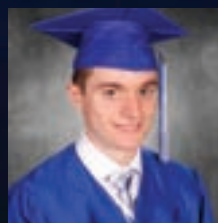
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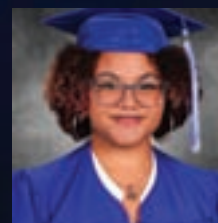
Filip Weinkein



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BROPHY PREP

(front) Darren Zell, Lev Jaffee, Brady Nelson, Tyler LeCount, Justin Wood. (middle) Mark Kaplan, Haan Lee, Samir Sumar, Layton Fincham, Teague Walker, Ezekiel Jaffee. (back) Head Coach Chris Campbell, Landon Conrad, Brendan Linstrom, Assistant Coach Matt Rollins and Assistant Coach Larry Ford.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF XAVIER PREP

XAVIER PREP

(front) Sylvia Vercellino, Cali Pennell, Makena McLachlin, Stella Helm. (middle) Victoria Sott, Leighton Champagne, Sofie Sott, Paolina Stender. (back) Coach Dani Dyer, Head Coach Joy Rodey and Assistant Coach Khristen Vanderwey.

Tennis teams conquer the court in 2026 season

By AJ Stone

This year's tennis teams wrapped up an exciting season marked by resilience, growth, and impressive victories. Whether a title defense was underway or a program was climbing the ranks, Arcadia, Brophy, Veritas, and Xavier each carved out a unique story on the court.

ARCADIA HIGH

BOYS

Boys' tennis at Arcadia has had a very successful campaign by any metric. Coach James Vercellino spoke about the Titan's biggest win of the season as a headlining moment.

"Most memorable moment was going to Shadow Mountain and winning 5-4 against a ranked team, allowing our Titans to become ranked. If you could have seen the smiles and overall elation from the team, it was a vibe," he said.

"Coach V," as the players call him, referred to the team as "dawgs." The record at the end of the regular season was 10-3, with wins against Metro Tech, Coronado, Horizon High and Verrado. The final match against McClintock saw the Titans win 9-0, securing their run at State.

"We have a never-give-up type of effort. In fact, we beat teams because we have the mentality of 'One More Ball.' That's all it takes. Never give up, never chill, and keep fighting to the end," Vercellino said.

When met with adversity, the players and coaches recite a famous quote from philosopher Carl Jung: "I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become." They're choosing to become champions, it would seem!

GIRLS

Coach Dean Lamppa was adamant that even though there were specific moments



PHOTO: DEAN LAMPPA

ARCADIA HIGH

Avery Liu, Sasha Ambrosion, Tessa Atkinson, Siena Stearns, Kennedy O'Connell, Sydney Peterson, Chloe Seidenberg, Caitlin Attwood, Cadence Phelps, Lauren Harper, Lilly Tighe, Lola Mazanek, Abby Hamilton and Sasha Cohen.

that stood out, the season has been very successful – with a 12-2 record as of press time – on and off the court.

The team had consistent 9-0 scores against Buckeye Union, Central High, Coronado and Metro Tech, with other matches coming in just shy – aside from one anomaly against Notre Dame Prep.

"What I will remember are the road matches. I really enjoy the time on the bus and having dinners with the team. It's been great for everyone to spend more time together off the court and to get to know each other a little better," he said.

Team morale has been high throughout. Coach Lamppa talked about how the new varsity players have demonstrated leadership while JV players have shown eagerness to refine their skills.

"The team has played so well this season! When we have had varsity players out, the next player up has come in and done an outstanding job covering for her," he said. "It is a joy to coach this team. I'm really proud of

how they conduct themselves as teammates and how they represent Arcadia athletics."

BROPHY PREP

With Coach Chris Campbell at the helm, the Broncos had another promising year with a 13-1 record at press time. The squad is currently second in the Division I Premier league.

Brophy returned one player from their top six last year and remained competitive, speaking volumes to their winning culture. Coach Campbell specifically highlighted Samir Sumar and Brendan Linstrom.

"Samir and Brendan are both very good tennis players with different skill sets. Brendan was successful in the All-American Invitational that he was named a high school All-American – he won all four of his matches playing No. 2 singles," Coach Campbell said. "Samir is our high-octane freshman and, like Brendan, has a very bright future at Brophy playing tennis."

Each win had the Broncos coming back for more, with exciting matches against

Chaparral, Perry, Pinnacle and Red Mountain cementing their path to playoff glory.

VERITAS PREP

Veritas Prep has had plenty of ups and downs throughout a lengthy season. Head Coach Juan Gomez Vetta has built a team based on consistency and determination. According to him, they showed up every day ready to work to be one percent better than the day before.

"This season has been defined by growth and competitiveness," Coach Vetta said. "We have had several strong individual performances, along with several matches that came down to tiebreakers."

Veritas hasn't been able to avoid the struggles that come with a tumultuous season. Limited court time and scheduling constraints made things difficult. As of press time, the boys were working with a 4-6 record; the girls at 4-7. Both play for Division III.

"Both teams have stayed focused and adaptable. Players have stepped into

different roles when needed and have continued to show a strong commitment to improving and competing,” Coach Vetta said.

Coach Vetta said he has talent across both teams in a competitive program. Several players stood out: August Engel was a strong presence at the top of the lineup, especially as a freshman, while Ethan Nguyen, Andrew Haden, and Peter Gignoux have made important contributions in singles and doubles.

For the girls, Cate Schneider was a

consistent contributor, and players like Wren Borazanci, Valeria Salazar, and Lauren Ledesma have stepped up in key moments. Overall, what stands out most is the collective effort and growth of the entire team.

XAVIER PREP

The Gators had a strenuous season with many trials and tribulations. The program dealt with significant injuries and health issues throughout.

“Losing most of our top six players at one time or another for weeks at a time has created huge coaching challenges and line-ups,” Co-head Coach Joy Rodey said.

Even plagued with hurdles, Coach Rodey’s squad accumulated some memorable moments, including a 10-4 record and top 10 spot in Division I Premier.

“Senior night is always memorable, honoring Ava and Cali with speeches, gifts, and watching them play their last doubles match together,” she said.

According to Coach Rodey, sophomore Leighton Champagne consistently played at a high level. Junior Sylvia Vercellino played a big part in showing the freshmen the expectations and traditions of Xavier tennis through her leadership and experience on varsity.

With all the injuries, “I can play!” has become the key slogan of Xavier’s season, demonstrating the team’s perseverance, even when met with adversity.

Strong sets and bonding moments define beach volleyball season

By Kylie de Best

Arcadia High, Veritas and Xavier Prep have put in the work this season, balancing intense weekly practices with all-out efforts at tournaments. Along the way, players have built lasting friendships and unforgettable memories, and as the final matches approach, seniors are preparing for college while a new group of captains gets ready to step up.

ARCADIA HIGH

The Lady Titans hit the sand with high expectations after last year’s state runner-up finish – and they’ve backed it up. Sitting at 8-2 and ranked among the top teams in the state, Arcadia won its first playoff game against Deer Valley, 3-2.

Despite returning just two seniors – Priya Jain and Brenna Satran – and adding Trinity Thompson from the indoor program, the Titans leaned on a roster filled with freshmen and sophomores. While the lineup was young, the upside was undeniable, and Head Coach Adrian Chang saw a bright future for the program.

Team chemistry was a key part of the ride.

“Some of my favorite memories so far have been spending time before our games bonding with my teammates,” teammate Alitza Turley said.

With their sports seasons at Arcadia coming to an end, Trinity will continue her indoor career at Benedictine University Mesa; Brenna will take her talents to MiraCosta College for beach volleyball, and Priya is still exploring her next step.

VERITAS PREP

The Falcons battled through a tough schedule this season, using strong team chemistry and relentless energy as its foundation. Ranked seventh in Division II Skyline, the squad embraced every challenge, posting a 3-10 division record while continuing to grow.

The team thrives on a balance of fun and fierce competition, bringing constant communication and high energy to every match. Even with shifting lineups and busy schedules, Veritas stayed resilient, leaning on adaptability and support for one another to stay competitive.

One of the season’s most memorable moments came during a road trip to

Payson. Battling cold, rainy conditions far removed from the usual Arizona heat, the team found a silver lining.

“Although they didn’t win, they found it such a fun and unique experience,” Coach Analyn Martinez said. “It brought the team closer together.”

Off the court, that bond shows just as much. Sophomore Emma Mulvihill recalled a standout moment: “Playing in the sprinklers during spring break – it was so wet you couldn’t even see through your glasses, and we were still trying to hit.”

Senior Kadan Dubina, the team’s lone senior, plans to attend the University of Arizona and pursue a career in the medical field after graduation.

XAVIER PREP

Xavier continues to dominate the sand, storming through the season with an undefeated 13-0 record heading into the final stretch of regular-season play. With a roster of 26 athletes and multiple pairs competing, the Gators have showcased both depth and consistency all season long.

That dominance was on full display at the CatBox Classic Invitational in Tucson, where Xavier claimed the team title. Kate MacDonald and Viv Hickman captured the pairs championship, while several other teams made deep runs into the semifinals and finals.

Experience has been the driving force behind Xavier’s success.

“Focused practices centered on technical precision, smart decision-making and strong communication have helped the team maintain its edge,” Coach Tim McHale said. “Just as important, the players have built a tight-knit culture through team bonding and road trips.”

“Being a part of this program has meant so much to me because it has provided me with relationships like no other,” teammate Delaney McHale said. “This team isn’t just a group of girls, it’s a family.”

With a senior class that’s battled through big matches and defining moments, several players are set to continue their beach volleyball careers at the collegiate level – a testament to years of hard work both in the classroom and on the sand.



ARCADIA HIGH

Jade Smith, Priya Jain, Trinity Thompson, Brenna Satran, Breanne Eustice, Vida Cramer, Ellery Ducharme, Sienna Knight, Alitza Turley, Chloe Kurtzman, Georgia Fouts, Reagan Roether, Violet Bourgeois-Conti and Dalicia Ford.



VERITAS PREP

Zoe Felix, Margaret Haley, Kadan Dubina, Natalie Gilbert, Caroline Jonhson, Coach Analyn Martinez, Corinne Gilbert, Linnea Alley, Sofia Madigan, Katherine Huse, Brooke Gaintner and Emma Mulvihill.



XAVIER PREP

Scarlett Armstrong, Kylie Barr, McKenna Bjelic, Alia Dement, Fallon Fig, Leighton Fig, Monroe Fig, Elle Freeland, Gracie Graf, Chloe Harwell, Marcela Hickman, Vivian Hickman, Scarlett Ide, London Johnson, Mackinley Konderik, Sophia London, Kate MacDonald, Delaney McHale, Gina Monfeli, Emery O'Connor, Perry Osland, Sofia Peterson, Addison Putz, Emma Recuber, Kamryn Reeg and Emma Robescu.

Easy meals for May days

There’s something about May in Phoenix that just hits different. It’s warm, there’s still a breeze, and you actually *want* to be outside, which, let’s be honest, won’t last long. Plant-based meals are perfect for this kind of day. Light enough that you’re not weighed down, colorful enough to actually look exciting on the table, and energizing in a way that makes the afternoon feel easy.

These three recipes are perfect for this time of year. The kids can get in on it too, assembling flatbreads, picking their own grain bowl toppings, or going straight for the corn dip with a chip. Low stress, good food, good company. We’re starting with a fire roasted corn dip that comes together in minutes and doubles as a snack or side. A tzatziki flatbread with baked tofu and cool,

Plant-based Wellness



BY MIRIAM HAHN

Owner of YouCare-SelfCare, a private wellness practice specializing in plant-based lifestyle and disease prevention.
youcare-selfcare.com

creamy tzatziki is a fun handheld and full of flavor. A sweet potato grain bowl with quinoa, roasted sweet potato, and a drizzle of tahini dressing ties everything together beautifully.

Join my monthly membership for printable recipes, health videos and live Zoom cooking classes – spring classes are available now! Only \$10 a month!

Fire roasted corn dip Serves 6



• INGREDIENTS •

- 1 (16 oz.) bag frozen fire roasted corn
- 1 jalapeño, diced
- ½ cup cilantro, chopped
- ¼ cup dairy-free feta cheese
- 2 scallions, chopped

• DRESSING •

- ¼ cup vegan mayo
- Juice from one lime (or 1 tbsp. lime juice)
- ½ tsp. each: garlic granules, pink salt, Tajín

• DIRECTIONS •

1. Cook the corn according to package instructions. Cool for a few minutes.
2. In a small jar, mix the dressing ingredients together.
3. Add the corn to a bowl with the jalapeño, cilantro, and feta cheese.
4. Toss with the dressing and top with scallions.

Tofu tzatziki flatbread Serves 4



• INGREDIENTS •

- 1 block super firm tofu
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. each: olive oil, maple syrup
- ½ lemon, juiced
- 1 tsp. each: cumin, smoked paprika
- 1 tomato, finely diced and drained
- 2 tbsp. fresh dill, chopped
- 1 cucumber, seeds removed and finely diced
- ¼ cup sliced red onion
- 4 flatbreads
- Premade vegan tzatziki

• DIRECTIONS •

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. In a small bowl combine the soy sauce, olive oil, maple syrup, lemon juice, and spices.
3. Using a potato peeler, slice the tofu into thin sheets and place into a bowl. Pour the soy sauce mixture over and toss lightly.
4. Lay the tofu on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes.
5. Warm the flatbread and layer on the tofu, veggies, and tzatziki.

Sweet potato grain bowl Serves 2-4



• INGREDIENTS •

- 4 cups dino kale, chopped and de-stemmed
- 2 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 sweet potato, cubed and roasted (425 F, 20 minutes)
- 1-2 cups chickpeas
- ½ cup purple cabbage
- ½ cup grape tomatoes, halved
- ½ cup shredded carrots
- 3 sliced radishes
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 1 lemon

• DRESSING •

- ½ cup tahini
- Juice of one lemon
- ½ tsp. pink salt
- ¼ cup water, or more, to reach a pourable consistency

• DIRECTIONS •

1. Layer the kale into two bowls. Top with remaining ingredients arranged in sections.
2. Mix the dressing ingredients together and drizzle over the bowls. Add extra lemon juice to taste.
3. Or add everything to a large bowl, toss together, and serve family style!

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DID YOU KNOW? ORCAS

WHERE?

Killer whales inhabit all oceans of the world. Next to humans and perhaps the brown rat, killer whales are the most widely distributed mammal. Populations have been documented foraging for long periods of time in shallow coastal and inter-tidal flats in just a few feet of water.

They are much more common in highly productive areas of cold-water upwelling (an oceanographic event where deep, nutrient rich water rises to the surface); including the Pacific Northwest, along northern Norway's coast in the Atlantic, and the higher latitudes of the Southern Ocean.



HOW HEAVY?

15 LBS

Killer whales have the second-biggest brains among all ocean mammals, weighing as much as 15 pounds. It's not clear whether they are as well-endowed with memory cells as humans, but scientists have found they are well-wired for sensing and analyzing their environment.

Scientists are trying to better understand how killer whales are able to learn local dialects, teach one another specialized methods of hunting and pass on behaviors that can persist for generations – longer possibly than seen with any other species except humans.

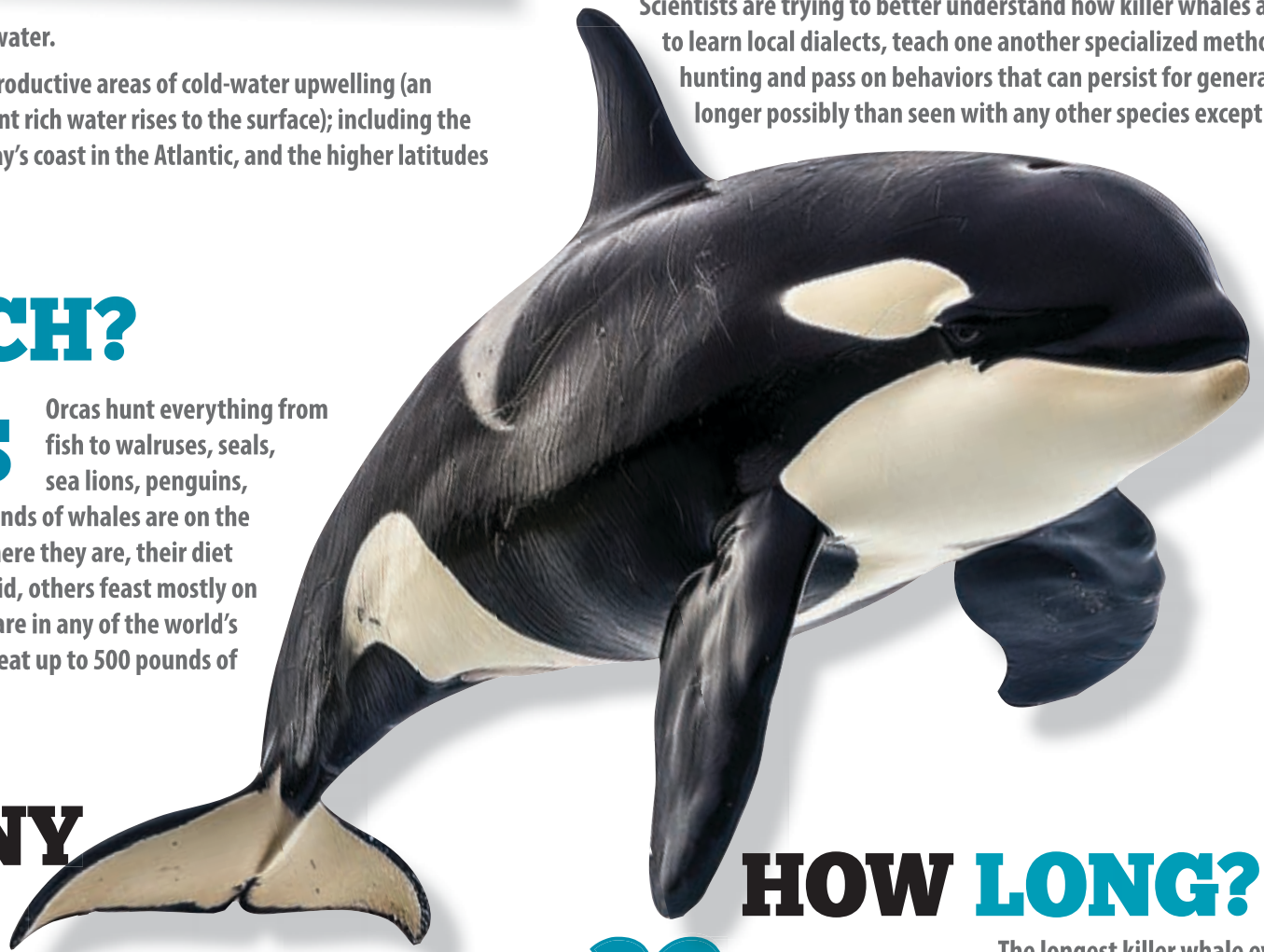
HOW MUCH?

500 LBS

Orcas hunt everything from fish to walrus, seals, sea lions, penguins, squid, sea turtles, sharks...even other kinds of whales are on the menu. Depending on the season and where they are, their diet varies – some eat plenty of fish and squid, others feast mostly on seals and penguins. But wherever they are in any of the world's oceans, average-sized killer whales can eat up to 500 pounds of food a day.

HOW MANY SPECIES?

Orcas were long considered one species, but now it appears that there are several species (or at least, subspecies) of orcas. As researchers learn more, they have proposed separating the whales into different species or subspecies based on genetics, diet, size, vocalizations, location and physical appearance.



HOW LONG?

32 FEET

The longest killer whale ever recorded was a male measuring 32 feet in length. This record was established in 1959, and it is estimated that this male could've weighed over 22,000 pounds. Females can typically reach lengths of up to 28 feet.



Kitty Maloney Langmade with her mom, Mary Maloney

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DID YOU KNOW? ORCAS

Orcas – also known as killer whales – are the largest member of the dolphin family.

As of 2024, there are approximately 53 killer whales held in captivity worldwide.

Some scientists consider them to be smarter than chimpanzees.

They have been around for roughly eleven million years.

Orcas are one of only three animal species on the planet to go through menopause.

There’s never been a record of wild orcas killing humans.

They can live 60+ years.

They stay in tightknit groups led by older females.

Orcas do not have smelling organs or a lobe of the brain dedicated to smelling, so it is believed that they cannot smell. They do have good senses of sight and hearing.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, it would take 21 orca whales to produce the same amount of oil as one sperm whale.

A female gives birth to one calf every five years, and she averages five per lifetime.

Orcas cannot completely go to sleep, because they have to go up to the surface to breathe. Instead, they sleep with half of their brains. If a killer whale’s left eye is open, that means the right side of its brain is awake and the other asleep, and vice versa.

Killer whales have around 45 teeth.

They spend 60 percent of their time foraging for food.

They are among the fastest swimming marine mammals, and can get up to 30 MPH, but they usually cruise at much slower speeds, around 2-6 MPH.

SAY WHAT?

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Orcas stick with mom for life, and it turns out that bond can be a matter of survival. In a 36-year study of Pacific Northwest killer whales, researchers found that males over 30 were eight times more likely to die within a year of losing their mothers. Scientists believe moms may help their sons find food or step in during conflicts with other males.

Females are affected too, but less dramatically, with about a threefold increase in mortality after their mother’s death.

These highly social animals use clicks, whistles, and pulsed calls (think squeaks and squawks) to communicate, coordinate, and hunt, spanning a wide frequency range from 0.1 to 40 kHz. Their clicks, used for echolocation, can fire off at an astonishing rate of up to 5,000 per second. Different populations – and even individual pods – have their own distinct dialects.



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Without the past, the present would lose sight of the future

Nostalgia has a silent way of tiptoeing into the picture due to it being a universal human experience that adheres itself to everything. Why does the past seem more appealing than the present? Is it simply a trick of memory, or does nostalgia serve a deeper purpose? Interesting that some vegetables are named after their appearance, where they're from, or because they resemble something else – things named after things named after other things, a type of cat named after a type of fabric named after a city in India, or the name of a pepper named after someone or something in Mexico – Puebla, Poblano.

When spider mites invaded 11 of my large garden planters filled with hybrid tomatoes three years in a row, the decision was made to plant something that would be less susceptible to their gritty webbing habits. Out went the soil, containers were thoroughly scrubbed and dried, new potting soil was added followed by the purchase of every color of sweet bell and armfuls of poblano peppers. Wish a crystal ball had been within reach to enlighten me as to the success I was about to experience. Quizzically every bell pepper starts off green and only with time and patience brings you face-to-face with the colors anticipated. Peppers

and poblanos can be harvested at different maturity stages, offering immense flexibility. Sweet and hot peppers have been cultivated since prehistoric times and used as a secret ingredient in flavorful feasts. Archaeologists have found chili peppers at sites dating to 7000 BC. The Aztecs, Incans and Mayans all cultivated peppers. The Incas used them as a form of currency. Columbus, on his several voyages to the New World, collected many varieties and brought them back to

Spain. They immediately gained popularity and spread to Africa, India and the Far East before becoming popular in the rest of Europe and North America. In Central and South America, peppers are considered perennial plants, growing four to six feet in height. In North America peppers are grown as annuals due to being sensitive to frost.

The humble green poblano pepper is a member of the nightshade family and is believed to have originated from the mountains of Cholula, one of Mexico's oldest and most famous cities. Since they grow naturally in the wild, the pepper became the prime ingredient for traditional dishes for Mexicans living off the land. Puebla is also the birthplace of mole poblano, a dark red-brown sauce which contains the poblano as a key ingredient.

Poblanos are rich in antioxidants and have anti-inflammatory qualities. They thrive in warm climates and are wonderfully adaptable. Whether you have a sprawling backyard with an abundance of raised beds or five-gallon containers with adequate drainage holes, you can grow them successfully. Whichever method fits, make certain the roots have ample room to spread. They are sun worshippers so pick the sunniest spot in your garden – six to eight hours of direct sunlight each day. Moisture must be consistent, but not to the point of giving them soggy roots. Water deeply once or twice a week depending on the weather. A balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) is great to use when plants start growing, then switch to fish emulsion or a low-nitrogen, high-phosphorus fertilizer when they begin flowering.

While poblanos don't get as tall as some other pepper plants, they still benefit from early staking or caging, especially when they start producing heavy fruit. No clock



ticks nearby so if you leave them on the plant longer, they'll simply turn red and develop a richer, smoky sweetness. Pick them when they're four to six inches long and have a firm, glossy texture. If you wait too long the dried version becomes an ancho chili.

Poblanos have transcended borders and are more than just a staple in Mexican kitchens. They're a canvas for tradition and texture. When compared to a jalapeño, the poblano is two to eight times milder. Poblanos are the perfect entry for someone looking to venture into a pepper with complex flavor. They bring a subtle kick without overwhelming the taste buds and their international popularity is a testament to the irresistible and delightful combination of earthy and slightly sweet floral notes. Their thick and sturdy walls retain their shape and hold up well to generous amounts of ingredients when grilled, fried or baked. As heat levels mellow via any of these techniques, the flavors slowly intensify. The poblano has a smoky essence, while jalapeños have a grassy flavor and Anaheim's have a sweet, tangy heat. Appearance, as well as their spiciness, sets them apart, so be mindful when substituting them in recipes.

The poblano is the ingredient; *chiles relleños* is the dish. The traditional version that originated in the city of Puebla in 1858 was not battered and fried but a living archive of soil, season, migration, and memory. Over time, *chiles relleño* has seen numerous variations, each reflecting the culinary creativity of different regions. China has their street version using eggplant and sausage. Italy has their Calabrian recipe with breadcrumbs, cheese and tomatoes. Egypt with rice and herbs; India with cooked meat, potatoes, onions and seasonings; and the Middle East version made with vegetables.

In Guatemala the "pimiento" pepper is stuffed with shredded pork and vegetables, covered with egg batter and fried. In the Romanian cuisine stuffed peppers are usually prepared with bell peppers stuffed with ground pork, rice, onion, and other vegetables and spices and then boiled in a sauce made from cream, tomatoes, and spices. When North America entered the conversation, stuffing options exploded, offering mixtures of rice, eggs, fruits, nuts, herbs, cheese, ground meats and vegetables. Smooth fat peppers are easier to stuff than peppers that are curled over with kinks in them. From experience, taste the raw

chili beforehand and adjust the filling once, twice, three times until it speaks back to you. Home-roasting releases the peppers' flavor and preserves, the subtle anise notes and the dried-fruit depth that defines its character. When you roast over a medium-high gas flame, watch for its skin to blister. Using tongs, rotate the peppers for one to two minutes per side until the skin blackens evenly.

Avoid excessive charring as the goal is to blister, not carbonize. Transfer the peppers immediately into a brown paper bag. Do not use plastic. Fold the bag to seal and let the peppers rest ten to fifteen minutes. This loosens the skin without losing flavor. Peel the peppers with your fingers, not a knife, and listen for the quiet sigh of steam to drift upward. That's the moment tradition enters your kitchen, not as instruction, but as an invitation. Remove the charred skin, cut vertically and discard the seeds and veins – but keep the stem cap, which adds rustic character when serving. A well-thought-out filling will enhance the overall flavor of the poblano pepper and make it the highlight of the meal.

Stuffed poblano peppers

OVEN 350°F
BAKE 10-15 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS:

- 8 POBLANO PEPPERS, ROASTED, SLICED VERTICALLY (RETAIN STEM)
- 1 LB. COOKED GROUND PORK
- 1 LB. COOKED GROUND BEEF

ADD TO THE MEAT:

- 1 MEDIUM RED ONION, CHOPPED
- 2 GARLIC CLOVES, MINCED
- PINCH OF CLOVE
- 1 TSP. CUMIN
- 1 TSP. CHILI POWDER
- 1 TSP. OREGANO
- 1 TSP. CORIANDER
- ¼ TSP. CINNAMON
- ¼ TSP. BLACK PEPPER
- ¼ TSP. SALT
- MIX THOROUGHLY

IN A SEPARATE BOWL ADD:

- 2 CUPS WHITE RICE, AL DENTE
- 1 15-OZ. CAN BLACK BEANS, RINSED AND DRAINED
- 1 CUP WHOLE KERNEL CORN
- 4 EGG YOLKS, BEATEN
- 1 TBSP. RUM-SOAKED GOLDEN RAISINS
- 1 TBSP. DRIED APRICOTS, CHOPPED
- 1 15-OZ CAN FIRE-ROASTED DICED TOMATOES, UNDRAINED
- 1 TBSP. CILANTRO, CHOPPED
- 1 TSP. PARSLEY, CHOPPED
- 2 OZ. TOASTED WALNUTS, FINELY CHOPPED
- 1 ½ CUPS SHREDDED QUESO CHEESE (DIVIDED)
- MIX GENTLY INTO MEAT MIXTURE

ASSEMBLE:

1. ADD ONE CUP OF SAUCE TO A 9X13" BAKING DISH
2. STUFF PEPPERS, CAP WITH STEM AND SECURE WITH TOOTHPICK (FOIL STEM IF NEEDED)
3. PLACE PEPPERS IN BAKING DISH SEAM SIDE DOWN
4. DRIZZLE WITH WILDFLOWER HONEY, COVER WITH FOIL
5. REMOVE FOIL LAST FIVE MINUTES
6. SCATTER ½ CUP QUESO CHEESE OVER PEPPERS
7. REMOVE WHEN CHEESE MELTS



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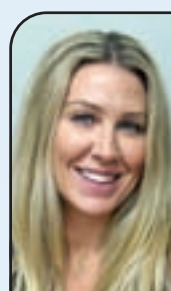


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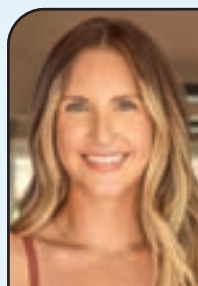
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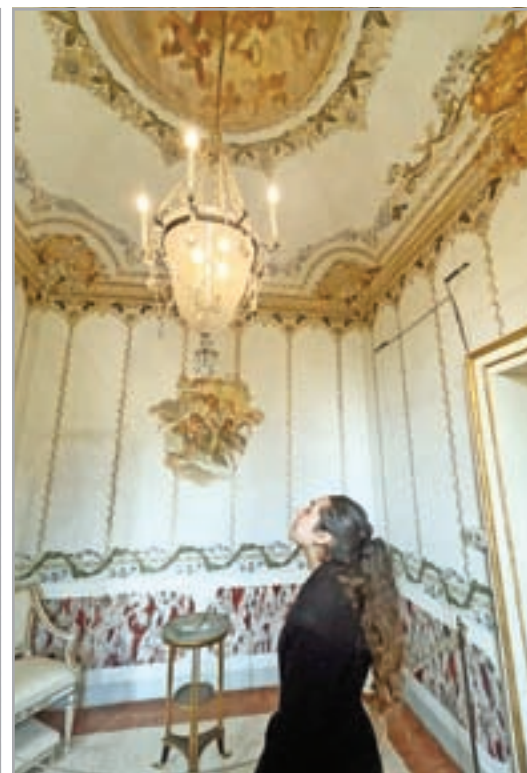
VOL. 3 NO. 7

MAY 2026

From the students of Arcadia High School



A SPRING BREAK FOR THE BOOKS



By Ana Redzic

With finals fast approaching, Arcadia Titans were keen on a chance to escape their hectic everyday lives and enjoy a week off school. Here's what a few of our students did to enjoy their spring break vacation.

Everyone was eager to avoid the unexpected heat wave we received mid-March, and many had exotic travel destinations.

"I was lucky enough to visit Venice, Florence, and Rome!" senior Sophia Elena Mignacca said. "It was my first trip to Italy, though I'd love many more to continue connecting to my Italian roots."

Sophomore Samantha Gagnon,

overhearing this conversation, jumped in enthusiastically, saying, "I went to Paris with my mom and her friend! It was the most amazing experience of my entire life. I ate everything there was to try and visited Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, and the Louvre."

"My favorite part of my trip was the amount of art that was available to see," Sophia said. "I always make it a point to see new museums any time I travel, but the antiquity and scale of the art in Italy blew me away."

Others chose destinations closer to home. Senior Cassandra Gonzalez visited Rocky Point, Mexico with family and a few friends.

"We spent time at the beach, got some very much needed massages, visited the Malecon, and probably spent too much money on food," she added with a laugh.

Every student needs rest, and spring break gives the whole school the perfect opportunity to release their daily stresses and immerse themselves in new cultures and experiences.

A WAY FOR STUDENTS TO GROW CLOSER

When the current sponsor of the Arcadia Garden Club, Mr. Matthew Mauk, began to work at AHS five years ago, the Garden Club did not exist. These days, however, the club is prospering, with 40 members and the ability to produce 350 bags of produce on average every year.

Our garden club is so successful that it is difficult to imagine what the campus would be like without it. It's become an integral part of core classes, such as biology, where students grow sunflower seeds in the class as part of an experiment, then transfer the flowers into the garden where they're displayed for all to see.

Speaking of making things prettier, the garden also plays a role in Arcadia's art classes. Students have created amazing mosaics for the garden's bricks and have also used its plants as references for their art.

Beyond that, it also adds vibrancy

and atmosphere to the campus with beautiful plants growing all year round. The Arcadia Garden Club hosts fall and spring planting events that students always look forward to.

The club also hosts a harvest lunch twice a year – a sort of potluck where students can take home the produce they grew and prepare it to be eaten the next day with their fellow students.

The students run a big part of the garden, which is something that Mr. Mauk loves about it.

"The most satisfying thing about having been involved with the garden here at Arcadia is watching students go through the process of helping to plant things in the ground, then harvesting them, and then taking them home, creating a meal out of that, and sharing that on Instagram or sharing with their friends," he said.

Having a place on campus that creates food for students and staff to take home to their families is something incredible for everyone on campus. This unique and amazing thing is getting better every year because of all the help from the school administration, PTO, students, and from generous family donations as well as seed donations from Berridge Nurseries. As the garden grows, the strength of the community will grow right alongside it.

– Hutch Corey

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