ARCADIA NEWS

VOL. 34 NO. 6 — ARCADIA • BILTMORE • CAMELBACK CORRIDOR — SEPTEMBER 2026



SUMMER VACATION

Check out this year's summer vacation photo spread to see where Arcadia families traveled in 2026!

PAGE 30

NEW ROOM TO GROW

St. Thomas the Apostle School is transforming its campus with a $28 million project to bring everyone "under one roof."

PAGE 5

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

A new locally-made film celebrates the West's Most Western Town through a story of love and acceptance.

PAGE 10

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SEPTEMBER

Did you know? *Dinosaurs (page 44)*

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Arcadia, Brophy, Veritas and Xavier volleyball teams enter the new season with big goals, fresh talent and plenty of determination to make their mark.



Shya and Madison Pethtel with Jessica Enriquez and Yaya the elephant at Phi Phi Islands in Thailand.
PHOTO COURTESY OF JESSICA ENRIQUEZ



EDITOR'S NOTE



Season 8, episode 4 of *Seinfeld*, "The Little Kicks," became famous for a particular scene in which Elaine decides to let loose at the company party – and her dance moves were more "kicks" than actual moves. Now, I'm not saying I'm that bad a dancer, but I'm closer to Elaine than I am PCDS student Jiya Birdi, who actually uses her dance skills for good.

Jiya's nonprofit, Dance4Dreams, hosts workshops for girls in underserved communities across the U.S. and India. One hundred percent of funds go toward supporting under-resourced schools.

"What I love most is seeing the students come into class and light up," Jiya said. "Knowing that their participation is also helping provide educational opportunities for children who may not have access to basic school supplies makes the experience meaningful."

Our September edition is for the students. We've got previews on volleyball and golf teams at area high schools; profiles on award-winning students; renovations at St. Thomas – have y'all driven past the new digs? The building at 24th and Campbell is massive and beautiful.

Arcadians have made it clear they know how to work… and play! This year's summer vacation photo spread is so fun – I noticed that a lot of families spent time under waterfalls, which is understandable seeing as Phoenix has, ya know… minimal natural water features.

It has been such a pleasure watching our neighbors – especially the little ones – grow. We're glad you're back home with us! Have a wonderful September, and thank you for reading the Arcadia News,

Mallory

– Mallory Gleich

UPCOMING THEMES:

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Halloween	*Veterans*	*Happy Holidays*

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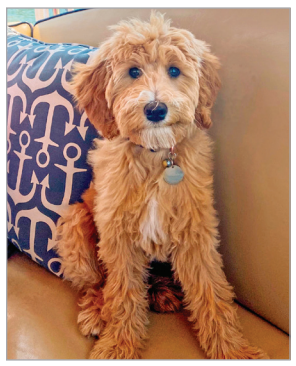
ARCADIA'S PETS



I am **Tofu**; I'm two years old and my favorite thing is my dad! I meow loudly when I hear my dad pull into the parking lot; I always know when it's him. I love being on the patio and listening to the sounds of nature. I trade pets for treats!

– Dylan G.



Meet **Bowie**! She is a 4-year-old mini golden doodle. She loves making new friends and chasing bunnies! She is very silly and her favorite thing is watching golf with her dad.

– Lauren D.



Buck has been in our family since June 2019. I was recovering from an accident; in the examination of my injuries a brain tumor was discovered. I thought that was the perfect time to ask my wife for a new puppy – how could she say no? I wanted to name him Tumor; to that she said no. Of the eight dogs I've had in our 50-year marriage, Buck is my wife's favorite. He has this smile of excitement where he bares all of his teeth, it's comical!

– Rosie R.



Bowie came to me via the Arizona Humane Society in 2019. His original name was Chandler. He's a purebred Maltese. I visited the Sunnyslope campus after our chihuahua passed away and needed a hypoallergenic pet due to my husband's allergies. They didn't have one, so I went on a list in 2018 and Thanksgiving weekend 2019 they called about Bowie. He's been the best thing to have by my side the past seven years!

– Lisa S.

*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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One campus, one mission, one school – under one roof

By Michael P. Murphy

"Under One Roof" was the perfect name for St. Thomas the Apostle Roman Catholic School's jubilee capital campaign to upgrade and expand the campus on the very property where it has served the community since 1950. In September 2024, old classrooms came down and construction began on a new $28 million multi-level building on the north end of the campus.

It will eventually be a place where the entire school, classrooms, offices, cafeteria, and more, will function literally – you guessed it – under one roof. New principal Katie Zeches shared her staff's excitement as the first phase of the new building, administrative offices, and K-2nd grade classrooms opened just in time to begin the new school year.

"Everything had to be approved by the Diocese of Phoenix," she said. "It was designed by Hamilton Architecture, and they did a beautiful job of making sure the building aligned well with the rest of the campus. It was important to Father Steve Kunkel that the building was not taller than the church tower."

To build on the footprint of the school's longtime location, the construction crews had to take down a row of older second and third grade classrooms. Those students moved to modular structures while construction went ahead on the new building. Upgrades were minimal since the original structures were built in 1954, so there were plumbing and sewer issues to work around and other minor problems that can be typical of construction projects once digging started. Beyond that, the construction issues were few.

When completed, the new building will eventually hold K-8 classrooms, but it's the basement that Katie is most excited about. Downstairs will feature a cafeteria with a full kitchen, a stage for programs and presentations, an art room, and a STEM lab.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE

St. Thomas the Apostle is transforming its campus with new classrooms, offices, dining, arts, STEM and student support.

"The teachers are really excited about the updated facilities, but also about the different opportunities students will be able to have in the new building," Katie said. "We'll have classrooms for students who will need a little extra support. Hopefully, they'll look forward to all the opportunities students will receive from the new building."

As construction continued, there were certainly some growing pains for the families to deal with, such as losing much of the school's parking while construction was underway, but when the new building is completed next year, the sacrifice will be well worth it. It will be like moving into a new home!

With this new structure, Principal Zeches is looking forward to the future, but the school's mission stays clear. "We're excited to continue the amazing tradition of St. Thomas the Apostle in a new facility," she said.

If everything continues as it should, the modulars and rest of the old structures will be gone and all the St. Thomas the Apostle students will move to the completed building in the spring. There will be a celebration, and the school's ministry of learning and community will, at last, gather under one roof.



WHAT'S HAPPENING, *ARCADIA?*

BRIEFS

Hospice of the Valley's Dementia Care and Education Campus is hosting **Helping Hands**, a volunteer group designed for people living with dementia and their caregivers. On September 11 from 11 a.m.-12 p.m., the group will participate in crafts and activities geared toward the interests and abilities of the participants. One example is making and painting bookmarks for the library. This event is free.

dementiacampus.org

Arizona Restaurant Week is back for the fall season. This Valley-wide event offers various dining options for every palate – and from September 18-27, diners can get outside the neighborhood and try something new. Restaurants range from Southwestern faves, comfort food and snacks, five-star dining, and everything in between; participants include Tesota, Chula Seafood, El Chorro Lodge, Sexy Roman, and more. Prices are $33-$55 per person.

arizonarestaurantweek.com

The Shemer Art Center (5005 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix) is now accepting entries for Arizona artists interested in participating in its 2026 **Shemer Arizona Arts Festival**, to be held November 7-8, 2026. This annual event features fine art created by juried artists from across Arizona, as well as chalk artists and blacksmiths. Those interested can reach out to Shonna James for more information.

shemerartcenter.org



Chelsea's Kitchen (5040 N. 40th St., Phoenix) is kicking off its 10th annual **Green Chile Festival** at 10 a.m. on September 26. Chelsea's will offer craft cocktails, a Young Guns green chile-inspired menu – including green chile queso dip, green chile French Dip sliders, gluten-free green chile corn bread – and freshly roasted chiles to take home.

chelseaskitchenaz.com

On September 15, the **Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable** (3839 N. Drinkwater Blvd.) will host Dr. Cecily Zander on the topic, "Second Bull Run: Pope's Blunder, Politics, and Partisans." Doors open at 5 to meet the speaker, browse the book sale, and view Civil War videos. The lecture begins at 6 p.m.

scottsdalecwrt.org

Roaring Fork (4800 N. Scottsdale Road) is celebrating Labor Day with its returning **"Dinner on Us"** promotion on Monday, September 7, from 4 to 9 p.m. Guests who purchase one entrée will receive a second entrée free while enjoying the restaurant's signature wood-fired cuisine. Reservations are recommended.

roaringfork.com

The **National Latine Playwrights Award Ceremony & Festival** will take place at 5 p.m. at the Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 W. Rio Salado Pkwy. Arizona Theatre Company will honor playwright, screenwriter and actor Evelina Fernández as the recipient of the 2026 National Latine Playwrights Award for her new work, *Blow Away the Clouds*. Guests are invited to hear a reading and enjoy the awards ceremony, live mariachi performance, and post-show discussion. Admission is free but donations are welcome.

atc.org

EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 9/2

Paint and Sip

6 p.m. at Greenwood Brewing, 922 N. 5th St., Phoenix. Join Andrea M. Art and the team at Greenwood Brewing for an evening of paint and sip. Attendees will be guided by a professional artist in creating a masterpiece while enjoying tunes, craft beer and good vibes. Materials are included. Prices vary. Secure your spot by calling the brewery.

greenwoodbrews.com

THURSDAY 9/3

Candlelight: Tribute to 90s Hip Hop

6:30 p.m. at Phoenix Art Museum, 1625 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. Candlelight concerts' latest gig transforms music into a multi-sensory experience. The Sweetwater string quartet will perform some of the greatest hits of the 90s under a warm candlelit glow. Get ready to hear a Fugees and Lauryn Hill medley, Outkast medley, Wu Tang medley and more during this 60-minute show. Tickets start at $46.

feverup.com

FRIDAY 9/4

Saguaro & Skate

6 p.m. at Desert Botanical Garden, 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix. Roll into the last days of summer with Saguaro & Skate, a three-day outdoor roller-disco celebration. Guests 21+ can lace up and hit the rink with the Zoni Girls, hear live music, snag some treats and explore Desert Oasis Garden After Dark. There's a kid-friendly event happening September 5. Skate rental is included or BYO. Tickets are $35.

dbg.org

FRIDAY 9/4 – MONDAY 9/7

Saboten Con

Times vary; at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown, 340 N. 3rd St. Saboten (cactus in Japanese) is the largest anime convention in Arizona – and they're celebrating their 18th anniversary this year. Dress in your best anime costume for panel discussions, contests, a talent show, fashion and photo ops, music, themed cafes, workshops and vendors. Events vary from day to day. Ticket prices are $20-$450.

sabotencon.com

SATURDAY 9/5

9/11 Memorial Stair Climb

5-9 p.m. at Salt River Fields, 7555 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. The 10th annual 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb honors the people who lost their lives during the attacks on the World Trade Center. Participants will climb the bleachers for an equivalent of 110 stories – the same amount in the WTC – to raise funds for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation programs. Registration starts at $35.

saltriverfields.com

SUNDAY 9/6

The Tortoise and the Hare

2 p.m. at the Great Arizona Puppet Theatre, 302 W. Latham St., Phoenix. This afternoon's performance focuses on the classic Aesop tale of the Tortoise and the Hare – with a twist! This version is set in "old time Arizona" and features desert animals, table-top puppets, and lots of audience interaction. Tickets are $16 for adults and $11 for kids.

azpuppets.org

MONDAY 9/7

Labor Day Baseball Clinic

9 a.m.-12 p.m. at Salt River Fields, 7555 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. This holiday clinic is for kids ages 5-14 and will focus on hitting, fielding, pitching, catching and base running techniques while learning the fundamentals of baseball. Make sure that your child brings their equipment – glove, bat, helmet and water bottle. There could also be a special guest appearance. Registration is $85 per person.

saltriverfields.com

THURSDAY 9/10

The Art of the Roll

5:30 p.m. at Ora Café, 5402 E. Lincoln Dr., Scottsdale. Join The Spa at Camelback Inn for an interactive sushi making event. There will be a welcome reception featuring a sunset margarita and charcuterie board, followed by a hands-on class where guests learn to create a vegetarian edamame roll and a tuna poke bowl roll. Registration is $99 per person.

marriott.com

SATURDAY 9/12

Saturday Sweat Series

11 a.m. at Caesars Republic Scottsdale, 4747 N. Goldwater Blvd. The Saturday Sweat Series features a guided group workout for all fitness levels. The session is held in a rooftop or ballroom setting and focuses on a structured, high-energy experience. Afterwards, attendees can head to the Cleopatra pool party until 5 p.m. Don't forget your mat, athletic shoes and a swimsuit. This event is for grown-ups only. Tickets are $20.

caesarsrepublicscottsdale.com

Grand Time Together

10 a.m. at the Heard Museum, 2301 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. This special event honors grandparents! Bring Gma and Gpa to foster intergenerational connections through learning and creativity. Families with children of all ages can check out engaging activities, hands-on art projects, special guests, and interactive experiences inspired by the museum's exhibitions. Admission is $26 for adults, $10 for kids.

heard.org

FRIDAY 9/18

NICU High Tea and Luncheon

11 a.m. at the Grand Hyatt Scottsdale Resort, 7500 E. Doubletree Ranch Road, Scottsdale. September is NICU Awareness Month, and in honor of the resilience and innovation of the HonorHealth NICU team, guests are invited to the eighth annual High Tea Luncheon. The event will start with a reception and silent auction before attendees are treated to lunch, a special program and live auction. Tickets start at $300 per person.

honorhealthfoundation.org

FRIDAY 9/18 – SUNDAY 9/20

Junk in the Trunk Vintage Market

10 a.m.-3 p.m. at WestWorld, 16601 N. Pima Road. More than 160 local and national artists, curators and vendors will be on-site showcasing everything from vintage to handmade – clothing, jewelry, décor and more. There will also be live music and food trucks. A VIP event on Friday is also available for $50. Tickets are $10.

junkinthetrunkvintagemarket.com

SATURDAY 9/19

Parks and Rec Rewind

6 p.m. at Civic Center Park, 3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd., Scottsdale. Parks and Rec Rewind is back and celebrating 75 years of Scottsdale! Join in a night of throwback fun, nostalgia, and all-ages good vibes. Attendees will find a DJ dance party, live music, historic exhibits, craft stations, arcade zone, movie-themed photo ops, food and drink vendors and more. Admission is free for this all ages bash.

scottsdaleaz.gov

WHAT'S HAPPENING, *ARCADIA?*

SATURDAY 9/19 (CONTINUED)

9/11 Heroes Run

7 a.m. at Mountain America Stadium, 500 E. Veterans Way, Tempe. Now in its 19th year, Travis Manion Foundation's 9/11 Heroes Run encourages participants of all ages to come together to honor the fallen and ensure their legacies live on. There will be a one mile, 5K ruck and 5K run available – and each attendee receives a commemorative t-shirt. Registration prices vary.

travismanion.org

SUNDAY 9/20

The Phantom of the Opera

6:30 p.m. at ASU Gammage, 1200 S. Forest Ave., Tempe. The Phantom of the Opera tells the tale of a disfigured musical genius known only as 'The Phantom' who haunts the depths of the Paris Opera House. Mesmerized by the talents and beauty of a young soprano, The Phantom lures her in as his protege and falls in love. The Phantom's obsession sets the scene for this passionate performance. Tickets start at $130.

asugammage.com

TUESDAY 9/22

Devour Summer Chef Series

6 p.m. at Virtu Honest Craft, 3701 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale. Two top chefs have come together to create a four-course menu featuring local ingredients and seasonal flavors. This evening, Stephen Jones of The Larder + The Delta (Southern cuisine), and Gio Osso of Virtù Honest Craft (Mediterranean-inspired cuisine) are behind the kitchen counter. Tickets are $250.

devourgoodfood.com

THURSDAY 9/24

Tasty Thursdays

5:15 at Mini Milestones, 2805 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix. Join instructor Jordan Cowardin for a sensory based cooking class for the kids. Attendees will practice fine motor skills like pouring, scooping, chopping, and more while exploring tastes, colors, textures and info about kitchen tools. These sensory classes take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for $30 per class.

minimilestones.com

FRIDAY 9/25

An Evening of Jazz

7:30 p.m. at Wrigley Mansion, 2501 E. Telawa Tr., Phoenix. Heart & Soul: An Evening of Jazz is a celebration in support of the American Heart Association. Don your cocktail attire, grab a glass of champagne and listen to the smooth sounds of live jazz. VIP packages include caviar and an exclusive performance before the main event. General admission starts at $100 per person.

wrigleymansion.com



***Saguaro & Skate** at DBG.*

SATURDAY 9/26

Animals in Focus: Photography Class

8:30 a.m. at the Phoenix Zoo, 455 N. Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix. Join Phoenix Zoo for a 90-minute walk, where attendees will learn the basics of photography including composition, lighting and capturing emotion. Experts will explain how to photograph through fences, glass and foliage in addition to learning more about the zoo and the animals that call it home – with a few other nature facts thrown in. Admission is $70 and registration is required.

phoenixzoo.org

Bricks for Bravery

4-7 p.m. at 17050 N. Thompson Peak Pkwy., Scottsdale. Beanie Love Foundation's annual fundraiser is part building, part fun! Attendees are given a base plate to build their LEGO Courage City. Once everyone is done, all the parts are put together to make a giant city that honors Beanie Love's warriors. All proceeds go toward the organization's programs to spread hope to children and young adults fighting life altering diseases. Registration is donation based.

beanielovefoundation.org

SUNDAY 9/27

Behind the Flames Dinner

5 p.m. at Mastro's City Hall, 6991 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale. The 27th annual Behind the Flames brings together supporters for Scottsdale Firefighter Charities' fundraising event. KTAR News host Jim Sharpe will emcee the program, which includes dinner, recognizing Scottsdale's Firefighter of the Year, presenting C.A.R.E. Awards, and hearing from honorees and firefighters. Tickets start at $500.

scottsdalefirefighters.org

True Crime Ghost Tour

7:30 p.m. starting at 1221 N. Central Ave., Phoenix. True crime aficionados, this one is for you. Spirit of Arizona Tours will take guests to some of the most haunted locations in Phoenix. Learn dark historical facts and urban legends while maybe experiencing supernatural sightings, psychic encounters, and unexplained moments. If you scare easily, you might want to sit this one out. Tickets start at $70.

spiritofarizonatours.com

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OUT OF THE AREA, *BUT WORTH THE DRIVE*

THURSDAY 9/3 – SUNDAY 9/6

Tucson Gem and Mineral Show

10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Tucson Expo Center, 3750 E. Irvington Road. If you're in the market for gems and jewels, head down to Tucson for the Gem and Mineral Show. Here, guests will find more than 60 vendors from 26 countries selling jewelry, beads, chains, coins, gemstones, diamonds, tools and more. Registration starts at $20.

colorsofthestone.com

FRIDAY 9/4

Jazzbird Nights

7-9:30 p.m. at The Ravenscroft, 8445 E. Hartford Dr., Scottsdale. Fridays are good days to get jazzy! This evening welcomes Phoenix's "Queen of Motown," Sandra Bassett, as she showcases a mix of gospel, R&B, soul and more. Guests can revel in the music while sipping on a glass of vino and enjoying catered dinner options. Tickets are $35-$50.

theravenscroft.com

SATURDAY 9/5 – SUNDAY 9/6

Arts & Crafts Fair

9 a.m. in downtown Prescott, 120 S. Cortez St. Spend Labor Day weekend in the cool breeze of Prescott. Guests can enjoy over 100 arts and crafts vendors showcasing décor, home goods, baked goods, clothing, jewelry and more. There will be food available for purchase, plus live entertainment. Admission is free.

prescott.org



Pickin' in the Pines Music Festival *at the Pepsi Amphitheater in Flagstaff.*

SATURDAY 9/5

Fiesta de Septiembre

11 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Wickenburg Community Center, 160 N. Valentine St. This colorful event celebrates Wickenburg's early Hispanic pioneers. Guests can enjoy entertainment from the Mariachi Azteca De Oro and Barrio Latino, kid activities, and food and beverage vendors. There will be salsa, guacamole, and margarita contests – may the best one win! This event is free.

wickenburgchamber.com

SUNDAY 9/6

Salsa, Tequila & Taco Challenge

6 p.m. at El Conquistador Tucson, 10000 N. Oracle Road. In its 18th year, the Salsa, Tequila & Taco Challenge returns as an expression of Southern Arizona's culinary and creative energy. This event brings together chefs, mixologists, and artists who will showcase their best salsas, tacos, and cocktails. There will also be live entertainment. Tickets start at $100.

artstateaz.org

FRIDAY 9/11

9/11 Tower Challenge

7 a.m. at State Farm Stadium, 1 Cardinals Dr., Glendale. This event honors the paramedics, firefighters and law enforcement who lost their lives during the attacks on the World Trade Center. Participants will climb 2,071 steps, the same number found in each of the Twin Towers, to raise funds for The 100 Club of Arizona and its programs. Registration starts at $30.

desertdiamondarena.com

SATURDAY 9/12

Sip & Soiree

11 a.m. at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, 7575 E. Princess Dr. Fresh Start Women's Foundation invites the community to its annual Sip & Soirée, a luncheon celebrating the strength of Arizona women changing their lives. Guests will find a vendor marketplace, handbag and super raffle, lunch, live entertainment and community partner, volunteer, and fundraising ambassador celebrations. Tickets start at $275.

freshstartwomen.org

FRIDAY 9/18 – SUNDAY 9/20

Pickin' in the Pines Music Festival

9 a.m., at the Pepsi Amphitheater, 250 Garrison Road, Flagstaff. Escape to Flagstaff for three days of bluegrass and acoustic music. The annual Pickin' in the Pines Festival features camping, dances, workshops, contests, activities and music from acts like The Infamous Stringdusters, Blue Highway, Kitchen Dwellers, Mountain Grass Unit and more. Tickets are $228 for a three-day pass and $90-$102 for single-day passes.

pickininthepines.org

MONDAY 9/21

Fire & Fairways Golf Tournament

8 a.m. at Kierland Golf Club, 15636 Clubgate Dr., Scottsdale. Golfing for a cause! The fourth annual Fire & Fairways Tournament will benefit Alice Cooper's Solid Rock Teen Centers. Registration includes golf, a Kasai lunch buffet, complimentary beverages, raffles and prizes. Single players are $250; foursome is $1,000.

alicecoopersolidrock.com

FRIDAY 9/25

Fish and Sips

5-9 p.m. at Odysea Aquarium, 9500 E. Vía de Ventura, Scottsdale. Try a new happy hour and drink with the fishes. Guests can enjoy craft brews, cocktails and food while touring the aquarium. There will also be lawn games and live music. Guests can get close to sharks and sea lions through one exhibit and may even get a behind-the-scenes look at a few other creatures. Tickets start at $35.

odyseeaquarium.com

FRIDAY 9/25 – SUNDAY 9/27

Mexican Baseball Fiesta

Times vary, at the American Family Fields of Phoenix, 3805 N. 53rd Ave., Phoenix. Don't miss the second annual Mexican Baseball Fiesta, a three-day celebration with live music, dancing, food and drink vendors and baseball from Liga ARCO Mexicana del Pacífico. This event brings baseball to life with fun for the whole family. Tickets start at $22.

mexicanbaseballfiesta.com

Sky Peaks Mountain Runs

Times and locations vary. Runners, get those legs ready! The mountain runs return to Arizona Snowbowl and feature a weekend of challenging races ranging from a 5K to 50 miles. Runners will tackle steep climbs, scenic alpine trails and elevations reaching 11,500 feet, making this one of Arizona's most demanding trail-running events. Are you up for it? Registration starts at $110-$250.

aravaiparunning.com

SATURDAY 9/26

Standin' on the Corner Festival

Times vary; at 523 W. 2nd St., Winslow. The 26th annual Standin' on the Corner Festival returns to historic downtown, celebrating the city's Route 66 roots with two days of live music, food, vendors and family-friendly fun. Attendees will find a beer garden, horseshoe tournament, live auction and entertainment for visitors of all ages.

standinonthecorner.org

SATURDAY 9/26 – SUNDAY 9/27

National Alpaca Farm Day

9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Desert Mirage Alpaca Ranch, 19007 W. Roadrunner Road, Wittmann. Finish out the month with funny, furry alpacas at Desert Mirage. The ranch will offer an up-close tour, picture opportunities, live demos, educational talks and lots of time to pet the alpacas. This event is free for all ages.

desertmiragealpacaranch.com

Garlic Fest

Times vary, at the Queen Creek Olive Mill, 25062 S. Meridian Road. The 13th annual Garlic Festival boasts food, fresh estate-grown garlic, entertainment, and family fun. There will be garlic-inspired eats from del Piero Kitchen, vendors, live cooking demonstrations by Owner Perry Rea, Olive Oil 101 classes, estate tours, music, wine and beer tastings, raffles, family activities, and festival merchandise. This event is free.

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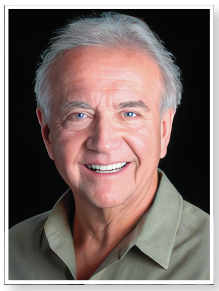
The Valley takes center stage in "Underneath the Glittery Moon," a film that showcases the power of connection, community, acceptance and relationships.

Scottsdale plays a starring role in new feature film

By Sherry Sklar

A local filmmaker set out to make a movie about connection, love and community. In the process, the making of the film created the very kind of community his story celebrates.

"Underneath the Glittery Moon" is about people coming together through a fictional Scottsdale theater and discovering relationships across generations. Behind the camera, writer and director Mark Bork brought together local actors, crew members, businesses, organizations and people of all ages to produce his first feature film.



Mark Bork

His message: Connection requires participation, and perhaps, vulnerability. People need places and reasons to connect, and love can bloom at any age for those open to it. Mark described the film as being about shared experiences. His characters meet because they participate in something together: church, bowling, the theater.

"That's where you meet people, and things happen," he said.

His career was spent largely in video and film production, including corporate and promotional work, commercials, a PBS documentary and 10 years producing for the Arizona Cardinals. He was inspired decades ago by Kevin Costner's work on the film "Dances With Wolves," which Costner produced, directed and starred in. Retirement gave him the time to tackle a project he had long wanted to undertake.

"I watched it and thought, oh my gosh, he assisted in the writing. He produced it. He's the head producer. He's the director, and he's starring in it," Mark said. "How do you do all that? I hope I can do that someday. And this? This was the day."

Jessica Spring Brown, Mark's writing partner, collaborated with him to develop the project over several years. They first met at the Phoenix Screenwriting Association when Mark attended one of its table reads. Writing the romantic comedy himself, Mark quickly realized that he needed a woman's voice as well as his own.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARK BORK

"I was about 50, 60 pages into the script," he said. "I realized at that point that I need a female voice, or else I'm going to miss things."

They worked well together, collaborating over several years to develop the storyline.

"I affectionately call it spitballing," Brown said. "We would take the script and send it back and forth to each other."

Brown later took on the role of script supervisor, a new learning experience that involved reworking pages of dialogue on set. The realities of shooting scenes under compressed timelines in real businesses taught her a thing or two about improvisation.

"I was literally crammed between the camera and sound operators, while feeding lines to the actor," Brown chuckled.

The film was shot entirely within the Valley, spotlighting recognizable locations, coffee shops, restaurants and nightclubs where the story unfolds. It was Mark's dream to make a homegrown film that brought together writers, actors and crew and spotlighted Scottsdale's photogenic backdrop.

Alongside a cast of 30 actors, Moriah Silverberg plays Katie, a spirited 22-year-old barista with Down syndrome who anchors the film. The message is one of connection and acceptance: seeing past assumptions and breaking down walls. The barista character was deliberately developed as someone with a disability to show that we all contribute to our society.

Silverberg auditioned for her first acting role after Mark discovered her at GiGi's Playhouse, a nonprofit offering free therapeutic and educational programs to individuals with Down syndrome.

"Underneath the Glittery Moon" will have its world premiere on October 15 at 7 p.m. at the Virginia Piper Theater at the Scottsdale Center for the Arts. A companion coffee-table book documenting the making of the film is also being produced, with a cast-and-crew signing planned at Anticus Fine Art Gallery following the premiere.

If you have an opportunity to get involved, do it, jump in and get to know your neighbors through an avenue or passion.

Brown called making the film the greatest educational experience of her career. She talks about Phoenix as a place where people can effectively live "behind walls." Yet, unexpectedly, the project became a personal journey of connectedness.

"If you have an opportunity to get involved, do it," she said. "Jump in and get to know your neighbors through an avenue or passion." People who might otherwise remain strangers can become the heart of your community.



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TARA GHAFOURI

This year's Outstanding Leader Awards go to...

By AJ Stone

The Outstanding Phoenix Youth Leader of the Year award aims to celebrate young people making a difference by highlighting exceptional accomplishments while encouraging community awareness of their leadership. Applicants must first submit a personal statement responding to the provided prompts. Then, using a rubric system, they are scored to identify top candidates. A select few go through the interview process.

They participate in a panel interview and share their goals and accomplishments, finalizing their candidacy for the prestigious honor. Sixteen students are selected and receive a cash prize. Additionally, two city-wide winners are chosen and all winners are recognized at a special event.

This year, a round of applause goes to Brophy Prep's Arturo Macias and Adam Shamoun and Phoenix Country Day School's Tara Ghafouri.

Arturo Macias

Arturo was acknowledged for his work serving Phoenix families, leading student service groups, and, as he puts it, "pursuing justice in honor of my father." Arturo said he was honored to be nominated and selected for such an award.

"It's a blessing and an amazing experience," he said. "It just shows that putting your head down and putting in the work with a smile on your face can be recognized."

He said that winning the award has given him motivation to continue striving for excellence every day. Aside from community service, Arturo enjoys golf, reading non-fiction books about politics and philosophy, and watching movies.

"This award stands for the hard work done by students, but not only that, the impact they've had on their communities and the people around them," Arturo said. "I think it characterizes me as a person by demonstrating my work ethic and dedication to what I do and to the people I serve."

He is hoping to attend college on the East Coast and study in a political science program.

Adam Shamoun

Adam was honored with the award thanks to his book drive, which grew into a small nonprofit and has donated over 110,000 books.

Additionally, he started an AI-based tool reducing waste on Brophy Prep's campus, and "learned to take action now to help build a more just and sustainable future for communities from Phoenix to the Navajo Nation."



"I think my theme of sustainability contributed to my selection. Most of the activities I do are related to sustainability, like running the Driving Empowerment Action and Learning (DEAL) Club and the Student Climate Coalition, where I have worked on sustainability on Brophy's campus," he said.

He plans on attending college somewhere on the East Coast and hopes to travel and explore more of the United States.

Tara Ghafouri

Tara said she uses storytelling and advocacy to build understanding. Furthermore, she recognizes the impact of her accomplishments.

"It was really exciting, especially because I knew there were so many impressive students applying. When I found out I had won, I felt incredibly grateful," she said. "It was a reminder that the projects and causes I've spent years working on have made an impact, and that meant a lot to me."

Tara believes that her work outside the classroom, paired with academics, translated to her selection. She's worked on projects from writing children's books on prejudicial bullying to competing in speech and debate, all of which assisted her in this process.

Although she just started the college application process, she's interested in studying public policy, international relations, or political science.

Tara said she loves to write and has already published a children's book called "What's in Your Lunch Box?" She also loves drawing and is involved in student government, volunteer work, and varsity tennis.

"This award recognizes more than academic achievement. It celebrates leadership, perseverance, and using your strengths to make a positive impact on others," she said. "I hope it reflects that I'm curious, driven, and willing to put in the work to create meaningful change, whether that's in my school, my community, or beyond."

Through service, advocacy, sustainability and leadership, Arturo, Adam and Tara are making meaningful contributions to their schools and communities while inspiring others to do the same.

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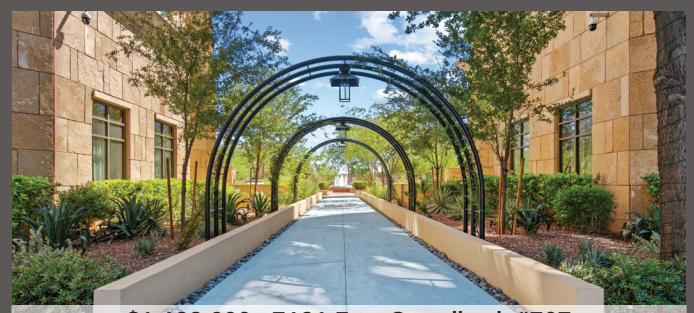
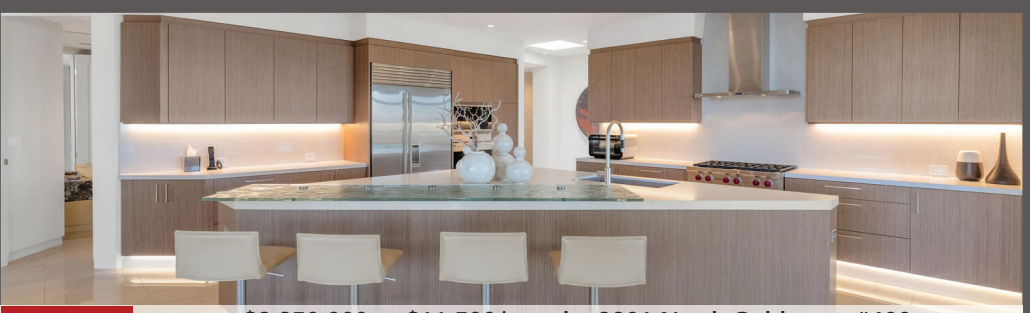


$1,699,000 7181 East Camelback #707
2 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,265 square feet
7181camelback.com



$566,000 2511 East Broadway Road
4 bedrooms, 4 baths, 2,212 square feet



NEW LISTING

$2,250,000 or $11,500/month 3801 North Goldwater #400
2 bedrooms, 3 baths, 3,443 square feet
3801goldwater.com



$14,895,000 6824 East Hummingbird
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,850 square feet

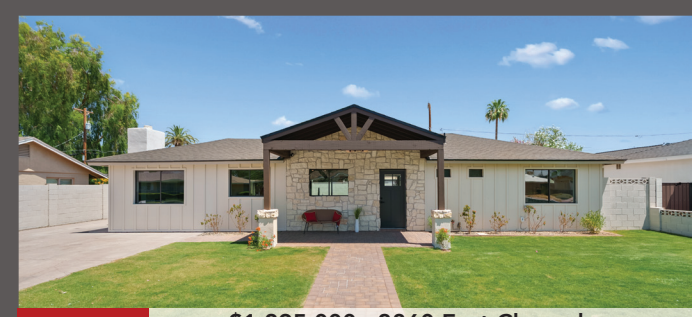


$1,699,000 4843 North 72nd Way
2 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,122 square feet
4843north72ndway.com



JUST SOLD

$1,395,000 12836 North 60th Street
4 bedrooms, 6 baths, 6,249 square feet



SALE PENDING

$1,295,000 3860 East Clarendon
3 bedrooms, 4 baths, 2,294 square feet
3860clarendon.com

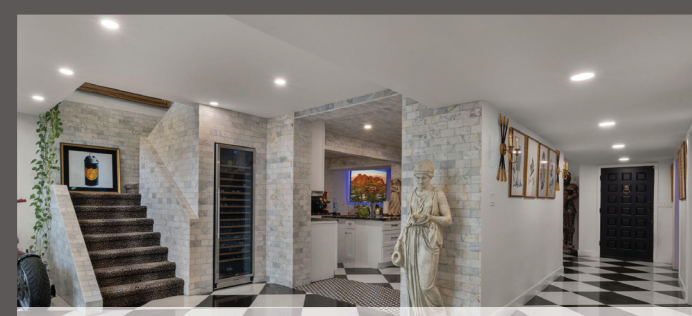


$11,935,000 2205 East Colter
7 bedrooms, 9 baths, 11,039 square feet
2205colter.com

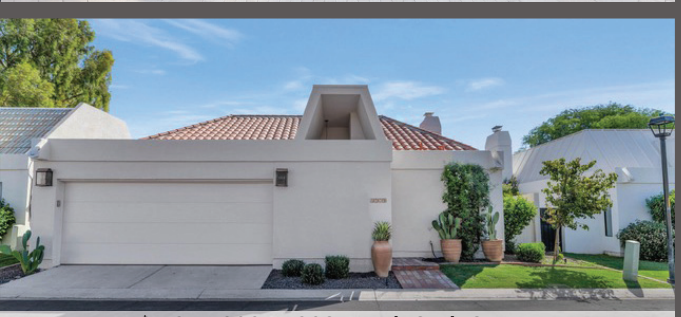


NEW LISTING

$1,650,000 3801 North Goldwater #402
2 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,498 square feet
3801goldwater402.com



$1,175,000 7240 North Via De La Montana
3 bedrooms, 4 baths, 3,613 square feet



$1,345,000 5309 North 25th Street
3 bedrooms, 3 baths, 1,834 square feet
5309north25thstreet.com



$2,895,000 3308 East Stella
46,200 square feet lot with plans
for a 7,000 square foot home

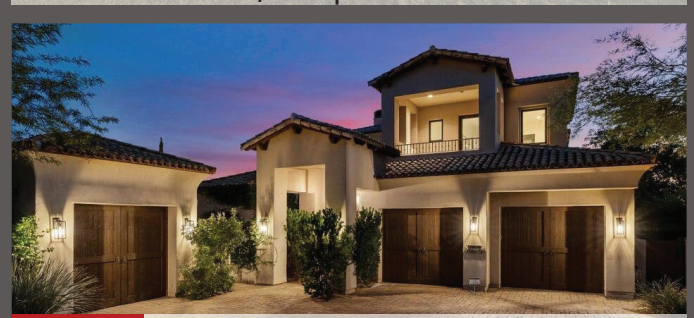


JUST SOLD

$4,295,000 4630 East Clearwater Parkway
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 4,602 square feet



$1,495,000 7157 East Rancho Vista #4001
3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 2,213 square feet
7157ranchovista4001.com



NEW LISTING

$3,250,000 3965 East Sierra Vista
5 bedrooms, 5 baths, 4,487 square feet



$24,000,000 5500 North Dromedary
1 bedroom, 3 baths, 4,641 square feet
23.66 acres

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5022orchid.com



$2,089,950 6914 East 2nd Street
4 bedrooms, 4 baths, 3,014 square feet
oldtown5.com



$1,795,000 5109 North 33rd Street
4 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,659 square feet
5109north33rdstreet.com



NEW LISTING

$3,840,000 4642 North Alta Hacienda
1.09 acres Phoenician Golf Course View Lot, $1,000,000 under appraisal!
Altahaciendalots.com



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6 bedrooms, 10 baths, 12,492 square feet
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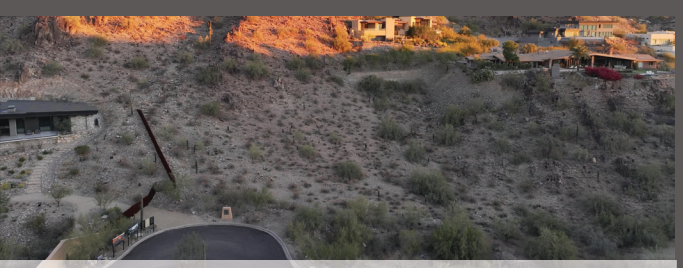


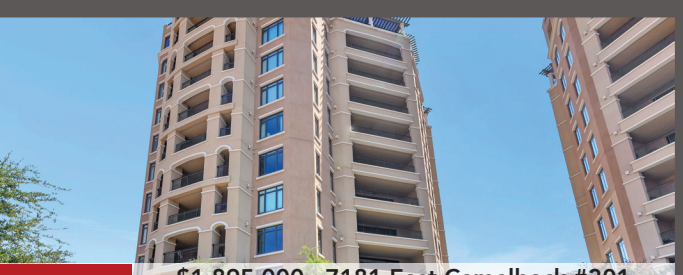
$2,550,000 7133 North 40th Street
1.33 acre lot



$7,500,000 9735 East Kemper
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,742 square feet



$1,250,000 5001 East Flower Street
4 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,650 square feet
5001flower.com



JUST SOLD

$1,895,000 7181 East Camelback #301
3 bedrooms, 4 baths, 2,503 square feet
7181eastcamelback.com



NEW LISTING

$7,795,000 11616 North Miller Road
6 bedrooms, 7 baths. 8,943 square feet



$1,395,000 8675 East Via De Los Libros
3 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,412 square feet
8675viadelloslibros.com



$7,300,000 7102 East Kalil
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 8,200 square feet



NEW LISTING

$7,295,000 7347 North Red Ledge Drive
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 7,300 square feet
7347northredledge.com



$5,995,000 5521 East Lafayette
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 5,522 square feet



SALE PENDING

$5,199,000 8441 East Cortez
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 5,765 square feet



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$1,549,000
2626 East Arizona Biltmore Circle #17
3 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,436 square feet



$9,595,000 9790 North 56th Street
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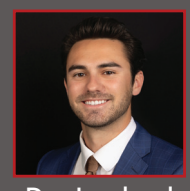

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In the Kitchen

In the Kitchen with Andrew Belcher, Sous Chef at Nobu Scottsdale

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From serving in the U.S. Army to honing his craft in one of the world's most recognized fine dining brands, Chef Andrew has built his career through discipline, determination and a passion for creating impressive meals, one perfectly prepared dish at a time.

Tell us about your upbringing.

I grew up in Arizona but I'm originally from Hagerstown, Maryland. My dad was in the military but after, he got a job here so I've been in Arizona since I was two.

Was there a specific incident that cemented your love for cooking?

I'd say it started with my grandma – she's a little bougie. She would take me to all these nice restaurants and I just remember thinking how cool I felt. I remember thinking salmon was so fancy! Trying all these different, new flavors… my mom? Not a cook [*laughs*]. What I ate growing up and what I cook and eat now are two very different things.

In high school I had a good friend and he watched *Hell's Kitchen* and all the cooking shows, so one day I sat down and watched with him, and I remember thinking 'okay, I could get down with this.' I didn't start cooking until, like, seven years later. I held a few other jobs until I realized that cooking is really what I want to do with my life.

Where else have you worked?

I was the manager at Fry's – still near food – and then I joined the Army and was in the infantry for four years. I went to Syria and Iraq, the whole shebang. It was something I really enjoyed. My job consisted of a lot of training so when we were stateside, we spent weeks on end in the woods.

All the food is in a bag. If you're lucky, there's hot water – add it to the powder, shake it really hard, and you've got scrambled eggs. Despite that, I had a great time, but then I was like, 'Okay, I'm ready to do what I want to do.'

I started working at The Gladly on Camelback with Chef Bernie. Worked there for a year and then went to culinary school at ACI. Right at the end, Chef Carl Murray came by looking for people for Nobu and I decided to give it a try.

Did you learn skills at ACI that you use today?

I'd say that culinary school is a great intro into the industry. It's nowhere near all the skills I've needed and learned in working here, but it gave me that initial look. I cut two fish in culinary school. I understood the basics and whatever path each person chooses is how they get better over time.

What kind of training did you go through when you first started at Nobu?

Our most famous dish – the Alaskan black cod – comes to the restaurant whole, 50 pounds each. The chef will show you how to cut it and you get one try. If you mess up, you have to wait for the next day to try again. You keep trying until you get two fish; three; then you're breaking down whole cases of fish like it's nothing.

Start at the 'bottom' of the fish, cut through to the top – don't worry, there's no head – and once you can cut straight down, you've got it. That's the main skill. Those first couple, though, I was really nervous. You can see the wavy lines in the fish and the chef goes 'Nope, try again tomorrow.' And then one day it clicks. I can break one down in 30 seconds now.

Did you know from the start you wanted to be in fine dining?

As far back as I can remember the Michelin Star has been my whole thing. I wanted to know everything I could about the star and about the restaurants with the stars. The chefs I read about – Morimoto, Jang – and in the first few pages of whatever book, they all said, 'Nobu taught me so much.' So I knew I wanted to check it out – and here I am!

What can guests find at Nobu?

Our popularity starts with the service itself. A lot of places talk about service but at Nobu there's constant training, there are tests, there are 'boot camps.' Your server is so knowledgeable. There's the fine dining experience with the knowledge.



The Alaskan black cod is marinated for three days – it's the most popular thing on the menu. Fire-wood oven, nice char, it's a great intro to fish if you're not sure. Other popular dishes are the spicy rock shrimp – that's a crowd favorite; my personal favorite is the Chilean sea bass pan seared with Nobu's custom dry miso on top.

Give us a little backstory on the restaurant. Where did it debut?

Nobu Matsuhisa opened his first restaurant – by that same name – in 1987 in LA, and Robert De Niro [yes, that De Niro] fell in love. He asked Nobu to open a restaurant in New York, and Nobu kept saying no… until two years later when Robert mentioned that he wanted him to check out a space, and the two partnered on the first spot that opened in 1994. It was insane for its time. He took the Peruvian and Japanese influences and fused them together and now there are 56 locations worldwide.

Have you met Nobu Matsuhisa?

I have – his security, his ambiance… he has a whole crew that rolls with him. His drip was brand-new, out of the bag. He's so successful. I was so star struck.

What is your favorite cooking technique?

Sauté! I like my pans, I like working with hot food, reducing sauces, cooking chicken so it comes out golden brown. I'm very comfortable at the sauté station.

When you're not working, what are you doing?

I have a one-year-old, so my life is super busy whether I'm at work or at home. Being a chef is very time consuming, but when I can, I get to the gym. I've been really boring this last year. I've been trying to bring the baby around things that I like, so I took her to the dirt bike shop, like, 'This is a dirt bike. You might want to ride one of these someday. Your mom is going to kill me.' [*laughs*]

If you could cook for anyone, who would it be and why?

Gordon Ramsey. I would love to get his blessing – if you do, you're eternal, if not, keeping working at it. Keep getting better.

What is your favorite part of the restaurant industry?

Is it lame to say the food? [*laughs*] I love the busy nights when you get consumed by it all. Nothing else matters. You're in the zone and all you can see is the food and the tickets and the chaos. When you get really good at it, you can see the panic on your team's face but you tell them 'okay, watch this,' and just cool everything down until there's a good flow.

I'm really calm when I'm in the kitchen – I don't know how. There are very few times that I've snapped at someone. It's just formulating a plan, trying to stay ahead of what's going on, plan for accidents, the tickets come out like nothing ever happened.

> ***I train students and I always remind them that even though you're being pushed hard day after day, keep remembering why you love it.***

What's your least favorite part?

Doing dishes! We've struggled – like a lot of other restaurants – keeping a dishwasher staffed so we all do our part. You'll look over and I'm scrubbing and putting dishes away. Twelve hours in, you're like 'Okay, just have to get these dishes done and we can go home!'

What do you cook when you're at home?

Rice, veggies, protein. I love my Instapot; I love making stews. I've gotten into Korean and Japanese-style stews. I keep it simple. After working a long shift, when you don't feel like cooking – or doing dishes – you find ways to make good tasting, healthy, simple food.

What advice would you give to someone who's thinking about going into the culinary industry?

Give it a chance. Be ready for adversity. Come in ready to learn! After the first couple months, reflect back on your why. I train students and I always remind them that even though you're being pushed hard day after day, keep remembering why you love it.

Who are some chefs that inspire you?

Oh, wow. Well, I can tell you all the French chefs I've admired, including Ducasse and Robuchon. Gabriel Kreuther's style of food is amazing. I probably shouldn't say this name but René Redzepi and the Noma crowd. Love their dishes. There are restaurants that inspire me, too, like Jungsik in New York – I like what they're doing. I've learned that it's the whole team that's creating the food, rather than just one chef.

My favorite restaurant right now is in California. It's called Single Thread. It's a bed and breakfast right next to vineyards and a farm. Every morning, the kitchen staff goes to the farm to tend to the veggies and 80 percent of their menu that day comes from the farm. They're a three Michelin Star restaurant. That's the real deal.

What's next for Chef Andrew?

They're opening a new location in Tennessee so I'm hoping I can find a spot there. They're building a restaurant and Nobu Hotel overlooking a river so we'll be heading there in the next few years. I'm excited to get out of the heat [*laughs*]. We're going to grind and it'll be a great way to get my name and my dishes out there.



"Meet Mr." | Ray Artigue

John Dawson

John Dawson is a purveyor of problems. He actually seeks them out. And once he discovers a difficult customer service issue, he pounces on it like a WWE wrestler, smothering it with a solution.

"Should something go wrong with a customer's dining experience, we have the opportunity to correct the problem and make things right," said Dawson, one of the longest-tenured employees of Fox Restaurant Concepts (FRC). "It's about enhancing the experience and having them say to themselves, 'wow, that was better than expected.'"

> ***Life is what you make of it.***

Dawson joined the restaurant company in 2002 as one of a handful of employees. Since then, he opened dozens of their concepts here and around the country. His career began while he was attending Phoenix College. Hoping to make a few extra bucks on the side, he wandered into a not-yet-open North Italia and asked for a bartending job. The rest is history.

"I was a part of something exciting and new, and surrounded by people who were genuinely passionate about creating remarkable experiences. That was a gamechanger for me," Dawson remembers.

After several years bartending, he moved into a management role. FRC was growing quickly and Dawson found himself on the road, opening new restaurants and training staff. In 2010, he was moved into management and today remains their longest-standing operations manager in Phoenix.

He recently stepped down from his GM role at the Arcadia Henry, choosing to serve as assistant general manager. He prefers to be on the front lines where he has the opportunity to observe and coach. "I'm really into helping people become their best selves, personally and professionally, and it's all about setting an example."

Dawson grew up in Iowa and moved to the Valley in 1984 with two brothers and a sister. His father heard that Phoenix was a hotbed for baseball and good coaches, he wanted to expose the kids to the competitive environment. Dawson excelled but eventually moved on. He points to his faith and the guidance he receives from friends for staying grounded.

"I prefer order to my life and strive for peace versus chaos. Life is what you make of it, as there will always be ups and downs," he said. "I've had lots of great mentors and that has been so important. Everyone needs a good mentor, someone they can emulate, no matter the profession."

Dawson also believes that there should be a routine to a person's day, which explains why he is an ardent list-maker.

"My to-do lists help me prepare for the week and stick to priorities. I'm also a fan of sending hand-written notes to people, encouraging my staff, and thanking them for a job well-done."

He is genuine about wanting to maintain his own growth, and relies on selected Ted Talks, podcasts and books to extend his learning curve. Some of his favorite reads are *Setting the Table*, *Laws of Leadership*, and *Leaders Eat Last*.



Dawson has only ever missed one day of work (something he is most proud of), but when he does have leisure time, he enjoys the outdoors: golf, biking, working out and his real passion, fly fishing. He pursues hobbies with the same zeal he has for work.

"FRC changed my life. It's been the kind of job where, at the end of the day, you already look forward to coming back. Few people I know get to experience that."

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Education, outreach, and most important: art

By Sherry Sklar

For nearly a century, one Phoenix nonprofit – run entirely by volunteers – has offered a creative space for artists to explore their chosen medium or try another, develop skills and build confidence as part of a creative community.

Arizona Artists' Guild (AAG) was founded during the summer of 1928, only 16 years after our statehood. Led by a small group who initially met regularly for an afternoon of sketching, those present discussed the role artists should play in the city's development, as there were few institutions devoted to visual art.

This core group set the agenda that helped establish some of the city's most cherished cultural institutions. Completing its own modern building in North Phoenix in 2009, AAG continues to enrich creativity through workshops, classes, art fairs, student scholarships and exhibitions. Its mission centers on education and outreach.

AAG board member Tess Mosko Scherer, whose work includes hand-bound books, recalled first joining the organization. She described what sets AAG apart from many other arts organizations open to artists at all levels, from beginners to professionals. She recalled being anxious when she first joined.

"I would say the word encouragement," she said. "I walked in timid, and they were very encouraging to me and to my work. They helped me flourish as an artist."

Membership dues are $50 per year and provide access to the Arizona Art Alliance as an affiliated institutional member, offering additional professional development opportunities. AAG has grown to roughly 500 active participants.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARIZONA ARTISTS GUILD

For nearly a century, the Arizona Artists' Guild has welcomed artists of every experience level to learn, create and connect.

There are demonstrations, presentations and conversations about artistic practice. Open Studio, held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, offers time and space to work alongside other artists. Life drawing, plein-air painting, printmaking, photography and sculpture classes are available regularly.

Five critique groups held throughout the month allow artists to learn from one another and receive feedback, while the general meetings allow members to bring work for discussion.

AAG serves a deeper purpose than creative expression; it offers programs that help people navigate pain to heal the heart and mind.

These Creative Journey classes are held on the first Tuesday of the month for people experiencing grief, loss, or isolation, as well as for those working in health care.

Community outreach has long been a cornerstone of the organization's mission. During World War II, members drew or painted more than 1,500 portraits of service members passing through Phoenix. Today, tuition-free Veterans Art Classes remain part of AAG's outreach. They are held on the fourth Saturday of each month in partnership with the Arizona Art Alliance and Your Art Your Story.

AAG will offer "Kintsugi: The Art of Repair" on September 20, a workshop that symbolizes brokenness, wholeness and beauty: a bowl is broken, repaired and then reassembled. The 2026 Winter Art Fair will take place on December 5 and offers a variety of media, styles and artistic voices.

"The art fairs are like an open house for the community," said Susan Holt, AAG's outreach manager and new member orientation coordinator. In its third year, the fair gives artists a platform to sell directly to the public.

AAG offers a unique exchange where people donate lightly used supplies. These are sold inexpensively, allowing others to experiment without a large investment, and the proceeds support classes and scholarships.

Scherer explained the exchange's value for members. AAG and its partner organizations award approximately $10,000 to $12,000 in scholarships annually to college-age art students, continuing the organization's investment in emerging talent.

"I think community is very much at the heart of everything that we do," Scherer said. "We are all artists, we are all creatives, no matter what stage and level. Simply put, we all feel that artmaking is our birthright."

@arizona_artists_guild
arizonaartistsguild.net

Dancing to help students' dreams come true

By Kylie de Best

After organizing a school supply drive for a small village in the state of Gujarat in India, Phoenix Country Day senior Jiya Birdi learned firsthand that children in underserved communities lack access to certain resources that make optimal learning possible. Wanting to make a change, Jiya combined her love of dance and desire to serve others to create Dance4Dreams, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Founded in 2024, Dance4Dreams is committed to expanding educational opportunities for students. Jiya teaches Bollywood classes at Dance Connection Scottsdale several times a month for toddlers to teens.

The classes are open to girls who are interested in learning Bollywood dance while being part of a program that promotes culture, confidence, and community service. Tuition is $50 per student per month, and 100 percent of the money is donated to support educational programs and school initiatives for children in need.

"What I love most is seeing the students come into class and light up. They are laughing, dancing, and singing lyrics they once mumbled proudly," Jiya shared. "Knowing that their participation is also helping provide educational opportunities for children who may not have access to basic school supplies makes the experience even more meaningful."

Jiya still thinks back to the humble beginnings. While she did get some donations from the school supply drive, she ultimately filled just one suitcase with supplies she purchased on her own. However, when she arrived in Gujarat, hundreds of eager students were packed together, waiting for her arrival and excited to see what she had brought. The school in Gujarat lacked so many things: desks, chairs, and basic needs.

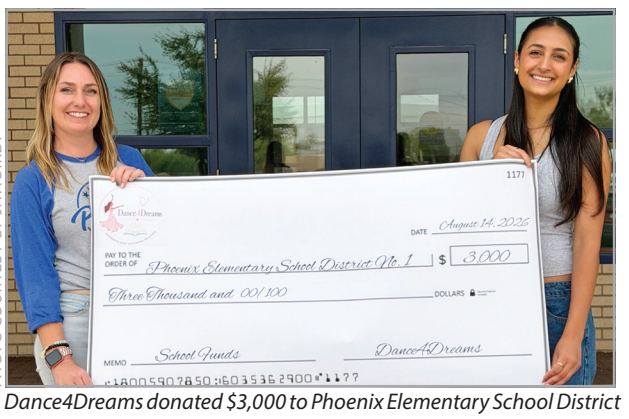

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIYA BIRDI

Dance4Dreams donated $3,000 to Phoenix Elementary School District No. 1 for various programs and supplies.

The hallways and walls were adorned with faded or torn teaching materials. Grateful for the donations, one of the teachers shared: "These students use small pieces of the leftover crayons from other schools. Imagine what they could do with a full crayon." Those words stayed with Jiya and shaped the focus of the next few years of her life.

"We're working to grow our workshop program to accommodate the current waitlist, so more girls in Phoenix can take part," Jiya said. "We are also looking to get more dance teachers."

Dance4Dreams has already made a positive impact. In India, they have provided more than $3,000 worth of essential supplies to underfunded schools, purchased shoe racks, desks, and chairs, and provided 450 personalized student ID cards.

In Phoenix, they donated 144 new backpacks filled with school supplies to the UMOM homeless shelter. They donated $1,500 to children in foster homes and contributed $3,000 to Phoenix Elementary School District No. 1 for field trips, STEM programs, and library funding.

In Dayton, Ohio, and Rochester, New York (where Jiya has family) the organization donated more than $1,000 in school supplies through Crayons to Classrooms. Looking ahead, Dance4Dreams is partnering with foster homes and under-resourced schools to expand reach and bring educational resources to even more students in need.

"Dance4Dreams is about showing that giving back doesn't have to look one particular way," Jiya said. "You can use whatever you're passionate about, whether that's dance, art, sports, music, or something else, and turn it into an opportunity to help someone else."

dance4dreamsfoundation.org

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What does tomorrow's leadership look like?

By Mark Hays

…for Junior Achievement of Arizona, it can look like a student building a sustainability movement on his high school campus, or another exploring how artificial intelligence might contribute to research aimed at making schools safer.

Those are among the stories behind the organization's 2026 JA 18 Under 18 Awards, which recognize 18 Arizona students for leadership, community involvement, innovation and other accomplishments. The annual program is designed to spotlight young people who are already making an impact rather than waiting until adulthood to get started.

Two of this year's honorees are Brophy Prep student Adam Shamoun and BASIS Scottsdale student Umar Amer.

Adam's passion for sustainability began during an immersion trip to the Navajo Nation, where he saw the impact of environmental degradation on families. After a waste audit at Brophy revealed compost contamination rates as high as 50 percent, he and a team developed WasteCam, an AI-powered camera that identifies and analyzes waste in real time to improve sorting.

Educational initiatives and better signage have already reduced contamination to about 10 percent, and Adam hopes WasteCam can eventually bring rates down to five percent and expand to schools nationwide.

Adam believes meaningful change starts with collaboration, compassion and an openness to learn from others. In addition to his sustainability work, he has collected and redistributed clothing, led immersion trips to the Navajo Nation and helped provide books to Native American, refugee and Title 1 students through the DEAL Club. He is a member of the cross-country team, sings with the Pueri Cantores choir and interns at Circular Earth.

"I felt honored to be nominated," Adam said. "It felt rewarding to be recognized for service, late nights working, and leading clubs at school."

His interest in the environment also extends beyond school. Adam enjoys running with his family, and he credits his love of the outdoors with helping spark his interest in sustainability. He is also an avid reader, naming Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass* as his favorite book.

> ***"Whether small or big, all projects can transform into something impactful for the people you serve and for yourself."***

Adam hopes to attend college on the East Coast, giving him a chance to experience another part of the country. He has not yet settled on a particular university. His advice to other young people interested in making a difference is straightforward: start – just start.

"Whether small or big, all projects can transform into something impactful for the people you serve and for yourself," he said.

Umar was nominated by his teachers and recognized in part for research the BASIS Scottsdale junior is conducting at ASU, where he developed what he describes as the first AI-based machine-learning model designed to analyze U.S. high school gun violence dating back to 1999.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT



UMAR AMER



ADAM SHAMOUN

His research focuses on identifying patterns in that data, with the broader goal of exploring whether artificial intelligence and machine learning can contribute to prevention and safer schools. For Umar, the project is part of a larger interest in public health, civic engagement and using research to address issues affecting young people.

Umar is the co-founder of SPARKHope, a health-equity nonprofit that has donated 200,000 pounds of food and hosted 105 free health clinics since its inception. He describes himself as an activist citizen focused on the intersection of public health and disability rights.

Most recently, Umar addressed the United Nations General Assembly. His paper, "Human Rights and Assistive Technologies: Analyzing Policy, Training, and Innovation for Enhanced Accessibility and Equity," was presented and incorporated into the official case report for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' final report on Resolution 55/8.

Being selected as one of the 18 honorees was meaningful because of the recognition itself, and also because it gave him an opportunity to represent young people across Arizona.

"Ultimately, youth are the engine to social success," Umar said, describing the award as an opportunity to represent Arizona as a young changemaker while inspiring other students to become more civically engaged.

The recognition has not changed the direction of Umar's work so much as reinforced where he wants to go next. He hopes to work with policymakers and school districts to explore implementing his AI-based school-violence prediction model.

At the awards ceremony, the honorees and their families gathered to celebrate. Each recipient had the opportunity to share their personal mission and what motivates them.

jaaz.org

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARIZONA COUNTRY CLUB

Arizona Country Club, a storied Arcadia institution with deep roots in PGA Tour history, is celebrating 80 years in 2026. (inset) Arizona Country Club circa 1948.

A legacy written on the fairways

By Michael P. Murphy

Who remembers when PGA Tour history was made in 1963? It was when Arizona Country Club took its turn hosting the Phoenix Open. The great Arnold Palmer held up the winner's trophy with a score of 273, 15 under par. Gary Player was runner-up after shooting a 274, and right behind him was Jack Nicklaus at 275. Palmer pocketed the winner's purse, a whopping $35,000.

It was the first time golf's Big Three came in 1-2-3 in the history of the PGA Tour. It was also the greatest professional golf moment in the history of the Arizona Country Club, which alternated hosting the Open with the Phoenix Country Club from 1955-1973.

The club was founded in 1946, with the parkland golf course opening two years later. In viewing aerial photos of the time, the only familiar landmark is Camelback Mountain to the north. It's a virtual snapshot of the Arcadia district in its infancy.

The course may be its crown jewel, but the Arizona Country Club is much more than golf. It's a full-service, member-only organization that includes a spa for body treatments and facials, plus a hair salon. There's dry cleaning and a shoe service, and a car wash in the parking lot.

"It's a great neighborhood club," President Jeff Donnell said. "We have a wonderful membership with about a thousand members. It's a terrific place to spend time. We try to provide services that members appreciate and use. We think those amenities are valuable; in many cases they save time."

The club is sensitive to overcrowding, so there is a wait list for new members. Even with the obvious beauty of the property, it's the people who make it special. There are many multi-generational families here – each with a wealth of stories to tell.

"Just about everything the club has to offer, we offer for kids as well," Member Services Director Brett Martin said. "We have a kids' club, where they can order breakfast, lunch and dinner, and summer camps in June. The parents need somewhere for the kids to go, so if we can provide that at the club, we will."

As the Arizona Country Club observes its 80th year, significant renovations are underway on the campus. They are renovating the on-site restaurant, which will open near Christmas, and refurbishing the men's locker room and tennis court. They're also expanding pickleball courts, which will be open in September.

After eight decades, Arizona Country Club has figured out the secret to staying relevant: keep the traditions, keep the people and keep making the place better. There's just one small catch for those hoping to join – they'll have to wait their turn.

azcountryclub.com

Once upon a goodbye: The inspiration behind Nonny's

By Madalyn Paltzik

About a year ago, my mom and little brother moved across the country. Like anyone adjusting to a new reality, I struggled with the distance. Before they left, my little brother gave me a stuffed bear. I sprayed it with my mom's perfume, and every night it became a small source of comfort – a familiar reminder of home when I needed it most.

As I began researching why something so simple could have such a profound effect, I discovered the science behind it. Familiar scents are closely tied to memory and emotion, warmth can promote relaxation, and gentle weight has been shown to create



a calming, grounded feeling for many people. That experience inspired me to create Nonny's.

I wanted to design more than just another stuffed animal. I wanted to create something intentionally built to comfort people through life's hardest moments, whether they're missing someone they love, navigating anxiety, grieving a loss, or simply in need of a hug. Every Nonny's bear combines soothing weight (they each weigh around four pounds), optional warmth or cooling, and calming scents to create a comforting experience inspired by personal experience and research.

This fall, we'll launch our very first Nonny's: Benny the Bear. Named after my little brother, Benny was inspired by the bear that brought me comfort during one of the hardest seasons of my life. Benny is more than a stuffed animal – he's a hug that lasts forever.

We'll be launching with our signature Vanilla scent insert, chosen for its warm, familiar, and comforting aroma, with additional scents like lavender, floral mixes, citrus and more planned for future releases. Eventually we plan on launching new animals as the company grows.

We are also seeking partnerships with different organizations – like Phoenix Children's Hospital – to donate bears to those who might be going through a tough time.

If my little goodbye bear could help me through one of the hardest transitions of my life, I hope Nonny's can do the same for someone else. Benny is available for pre-sale September 2026.

nonnys.co

New faces on the basketball court at Arcadia

By Mark Hays

Arcadia High's girls basketball program will enter the season with a new head coach in Myron Crawford, who will be joined by assistant coaches Montana Oltrogge, Kay Port and Bethany Roessler.

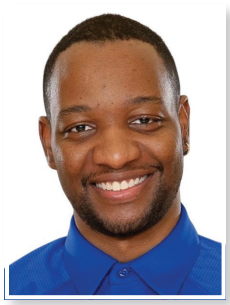
Crawford's basketball roots go back to the south side of Chicago, where he grew up playing the game and watching Michael Jordan. Those early experiences helped inspire his interest in coaching, and he began studying basketball more closely.

While attending Morehouse College, Crawford focused on academics but continued playing intramural leagues. He eventually started attending professional practices to learn from coaches. He also met multiple times with legendary coach Pat Summitt to discuss what she looked for in successful teams. Crawford later volunteered with USA Basketball, coached at the youth level and attended the 2016 U.S. Women's National Team training camp.

Since then, he said he has helped coach more than 50 players who went on to play collegiately or professionally. Crawford has coached with Arizona Select and Arizona Elite and served as an assistant at Casteel High and Xavier Prep. At Casteel, he helped the team reach its first 5A Final Four in 2019. Xavier Hall of Famer Jennifer Gillom mentored him, helping him and the team win its first basketball state championship in 2024.

Crawford said his coaching philosophy centers on fundamentals, shared responsibility, and emphasizing improvement over results.

"Fundamentals first. Shared responsibility. Process over outcome," Crawford said. "I like to play in transition, with great pace, and high-level IQ. Defensively, I want to teach our players to make the game a night to remember for the opponent. That includes pressure, communication, and a ton of energy."



Myron Crawford



Kay Port

Crawford said his priority is building a strong community within the program and creating an environment in which athletes can develop confidence while enjoying the sport. He also hopes to emphasize passing, shooting, and support for multi-sport athletes.

"I want Arcadia to be proud of the product that we put out there on and off the court," he said.

Crawford has already held camps combining basketball and yoga as he forms the program.

"I am most excited about laying a great foundation. Cementing a base for our culture to stand on," he said.

Port brings extensive playing, coaching and education experience to the staff. She played point guard at Perry High School in Massillon, Ohio, from 1973-76 and was inducted into the school's Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010.

She began coaching in 1976 and eventually accumulated 28 years of experience across several sports, including 12 years in Ohio and the past two at Xavier. She spent 43 years in education as a teacher, middle school administrator, and educational service center director. Her coaching philosophy emphasizes sportsmanship, academics and developing a lasting appreciation for basketball.

"I believe you start with exemplifying sportsmanship to the athletes, school, community, and parents/caregivers," Port said. "I hope players develop a deeper love for the game and the excitement of its complexities, work ethic, and skill development that it takes to compete at the high school level."

"We are going to be a completely different team this year," Crawford said, "and I hope that our seniors can graduate knowing that they had a great experience playing for me."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARCADIA HIGH SCHOOL

Crawford brings years of high school, club and youth coaching experience to his new role at Arcadia.

When someone else's heart becomes your wake-up call

By Robin Sewell

Heart disease takes on a different meaning when it happens to someone you love. For Justine Hurry and Andrea Robertson, it became personal when their fathers got sick.

Both remember the fear of watching their dads face life-threatening heart problems. At the time, neither could have known how much those experiences would stay with them or how important those early lessons about heart health would become.

Hurry was only 17 when her father suffered his first heart attack and underwent a quadruple bypass.

"It was a really scary experience to go through and so hard to watch my dad recover," she says.

Heart disease would continue to touch her family. Her father later suffered several strokes, and her mother struggled with congestive heart failure and an arrythmia. Looking back, Hurry says her parents came from a generation where there simply wasn't the same conversation about prevention, nutrition and heart health that there is today.

For her, though, awareness came early. At 19, Hurry began seeing a cardiologist after being diagnosed with mitral valve prolapse. Watching both of her parents deal with heart-related illness also changed the way she approached her own life.

"My whole attitude of eating healthy, exercising, and wanting to be the best version of myself, not just for me, but for my kids and husband is so important," she says.

Robertson's awareness began with her father's TIA, often called a mini stroke, that she says almost went undiagnosed. Having already learned to advocate for her daughter who has autism, Robertson knew to trust her instincts and keep asking questions.

She's glad she did.

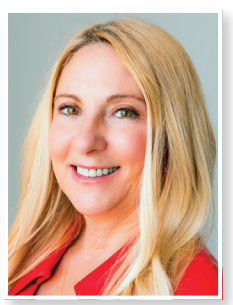
Doctors discovered her dad needed a triple bypass. Seven years later, those bypasses failed. That could have been a devastating turn, but advances in cardiovascular care gave her family another option. Robertson's father became the first patient in Arizona and second in the country to receive treatment with the Shockwave Javelin Peripheral IVL Catheter, technology used to treat severely blocked arteries.

"Today, he is doing amazingly well," Robertson says. "Without this technology, he simply wouldn't be here." For years, Robertson had been paying attention to someone else's heart.

Then one night, it was her own. She woke from a sound sleep with her heart racing. It felt like it was skipping beats. She was sweating and her chest felt tight.



Andrea Robertson



Justine Hurry

"At first, I tried talking myself out of waking my husband because I didn't want to make a big deal out of it," she says.

Robertson had recently joined the Phoenix Heart Ball committee and had been learning more about heart health and the importance of listening to your body. This time, she listened. Robertson went to the hospital and was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation or AFib.

That experience changed the way she thinks about her own health.

"As a mom, it's easy to put everyone else first," she says. "But I've learned that taking care of myself is part of taking care of my family."

For both, involvement with the Phoenix Heart Ball has built on lessons that began years earlier around their own families and reinforced the importance of knowing your body and speaking up when something doesn't feel right.

Hurry and Robertson first learned about heart health by worrying about someone they love. By sharing their stories, they hope to remind other women the importance of taking care of their own hearts.

phoenixheartball.heart.org

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Make your own fun with these Scottsdale-based businesses

By Rachael Bouley

Scottsdale is known for its dining and shopping, although a new type of attraction is taking off: "make-your-own" experiences. These creative, hands-on projects let you unlock your inner artist and take home something special after a fun day in town. Here are a few spots to get you started!

LIGHT + BARK CANDLE CO.

7227 E. 1st Ave., Scottsdale
lightandbark.com

If you love candles and dogs, you're in luck, as Light + Bark Candle Co. gives back to pooches in need while creating premium scented soy candles. The small business is focused on raising awareness and funds to support rescue and shelter dogs as guests blend their own fragrance and pour a custom soy candle. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Community Canine Project, benefiting the Maricopa County Animal Care & Control shelter.

Founder Jenni Pollack learned to make and sell candles as a unique fundraiser, originally beginning as DOG Candle Co. in 2017 before evolving into Light + Bark in 2020. At the Candle Bar, you get to pick your jar and scents before pouring a candle to take home. Light + Bark is a fan favorite for birthdays, bachelorettes, and date nights, while walk-ins, reservations, and private parties are welcome.

Candle-making parties are especially popular for animal rescue fundraisers and team-building events. Light + Bark proudly specializes in custom, one-of-a-kind fragrance blends featuring 100 percent soy wax and cotton wicks for a safe, steady, and clean-burning candle. They have over 70 premium, non-toxic fragrance oils to combine into a unique scent, with cactus, sea salt, and basil some of the top picks for desert-inspired candles.

RANCHER HAT BAR

4225 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale
rancherhatbar.com

Rancher Hat Bar makes it easy to embrace the trend of western hats with modern flair. It's been three years since the first storefront opened, with the goal of preserving hat-making heritage while adding contemporary, personalized designs. The Scottsdale location was the brand's second overall, and now it's blossomed into 17 stores nationwide.

"Rancher Hat Bar was created at the intersection of western heritage, fashion, and experiential retail," Founder Shantelle Girard said. "By giving every guest the opportunity to design a hat that's uniquely their own, we've transformed shopping into an unforgettable experience."

The Old Town shop offers custom cowboy, rancher, and trucker hats, plus a cowboy boot and charm necklace builder. Every guest gets one-on-one guidance from a trained Hat Stylist to create a custom piece that matches their personality and style. You get to select your desired color, style, and fit before adding bands, feathers, charms, and brands to complete the look.

TURQUOISE CANDY HAT BAR

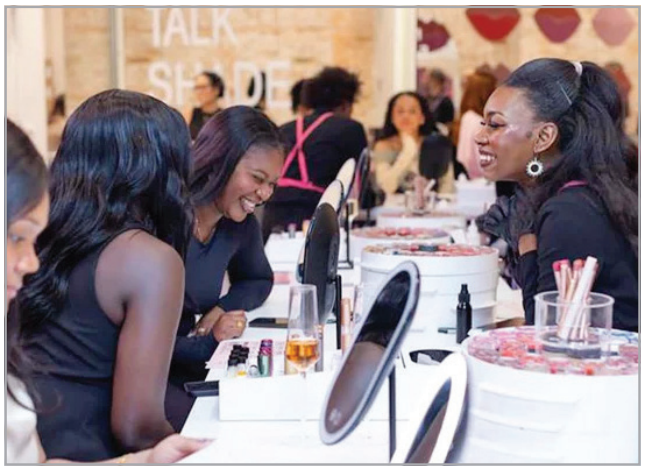
7240 E. Main St., Scottsdale
turquoisecandyhatbar.com

Another hotspot for creating western-inspired hats is Turquoise Candy Hat Bar, located on Historic Main Street. Sisters Faith and Julia Ballor opened the business in 2024 as an extension of Norde Scottsdale Boutique, where they sell Western clothing with feathers, fringe and sequins.









Their hats live up to the name, with flat brim and cowboy hats made a of felt, wool, or beaver blend.

Choose from over 1,000 accessories and 150 styles and then sit back and relax as a stylist works their magic, bringing the final piece together with rhinestones and ribbons, plus unique accessories like vintage matchboxes, bullet shells, and playing cards. There's a custom trucker hat and charm bar for bracelets and necklaces, too.

LIP LAB

15037 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale
liplab.com

Located in Scottsdale Quarter, Lip Lab allows customers to make their custom lipstick or lip balm. With 17 locations around the country, this customizable business has taken off and is especially popular with anyone on the hunt for a discontinued or hard-to-find shade.

The experience starts with choosing your products: lipstick, gloss, balm, or cheek stick. Next, a color expert analyzes your skin undertones to help mix pigments until you achieve your desired shade. You can choose your coverage and feel, whether that be glossy, matte, satin or sheer.

Then, enhance your new makeup with custom essential oils, featuring scents like vanilla, mint, and mango. The last step is selecting your case color before naming and engraving it.

All personalized Lip Lab products are vegan, cruelty-free, gluten-free, paraben-free, and talc-free. While walk-ins may be accommodated, reservations are recommended due to popularity, or you can book in for special events like girls' nights, birthdays, and work gatherings.

THE BRUSH BAR

7010 E. Main St., Scottsdale
thebrushbar.com

The Brush Bar is a paint-and-sip studio where guests create their own artwork during guided classes for a fun,



introductory art experience enhanced by great music and drinks.

The business is celebrating 15 years and has expanded beyond painting to other art and craft classes, such as the Masterpiece Collage Class where children's artwork and mementos are displayed and celebrated on a large canvas. The tight-knit Brush Bar team believes everyone can have fun being creative.

"You don't have to have any art experience to enjoy a class here. The last thing we want is to feel like a stuffy classroom, so grab a glass of wine, listen to music and let's enjoy our time making art together," General Manager Lauren Davidson said.

They also recently launched Art Cafe, which is a walk-in option where you can paint or do one of many other craft options available on the menu.

Paint Date is another popular pick, where each person paints one half to create a masterpiece together. In addition to in-person acrylic painting workshops at their Scottsdale studio, there's an at-home creative experience with Art Box DIY painting kits.

"We have seen many experience-based businesses open in Old Town over the years, and we love to see it," Davidson added. "So many of us these days are craving experiences and memories over material things, and the changes we've seen naturally reflect that trend."



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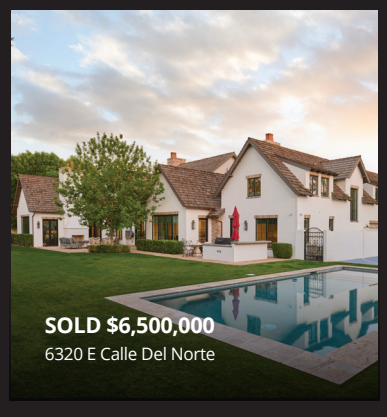
Welcome Siena Koppelman to The TEAM at RETSY

NOTABLE SALES



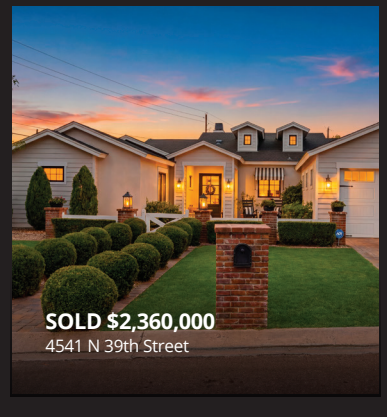




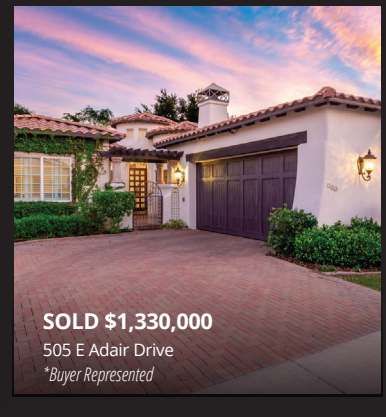


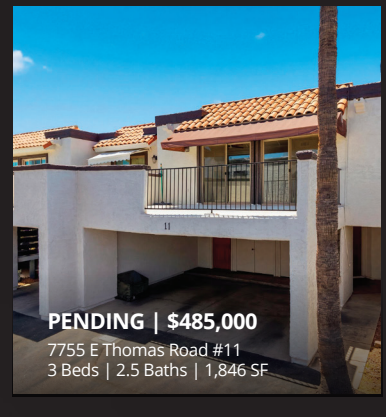












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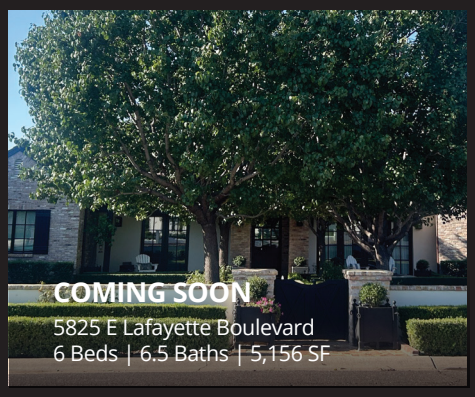
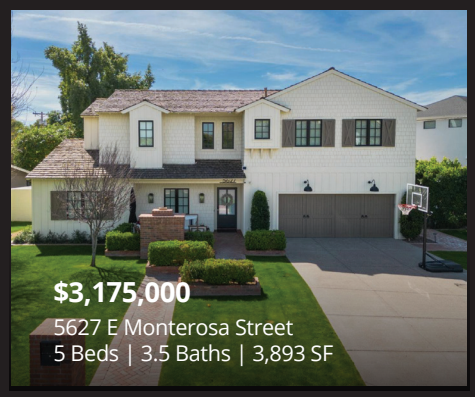
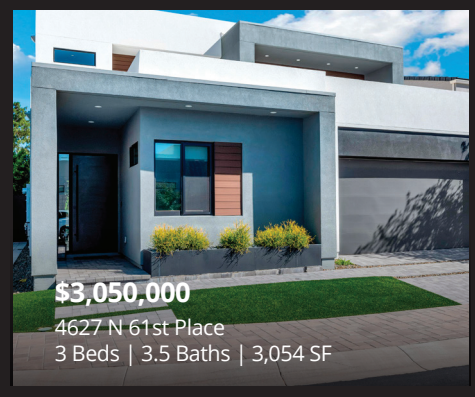
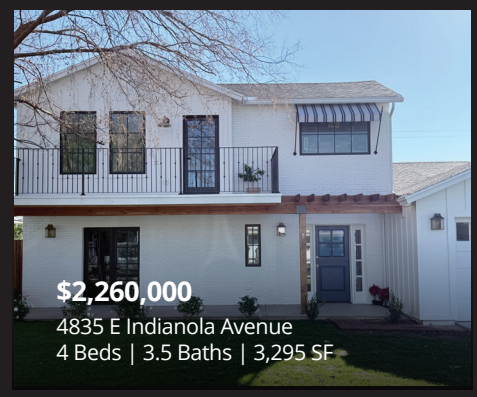
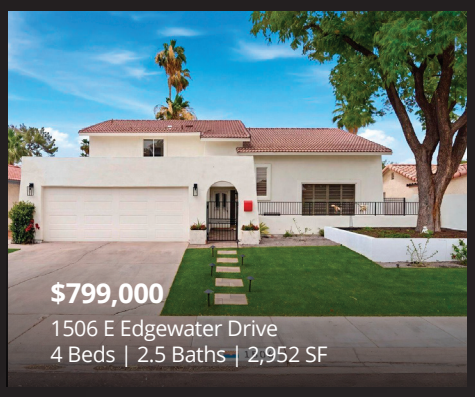
FEATURED LISTINGS



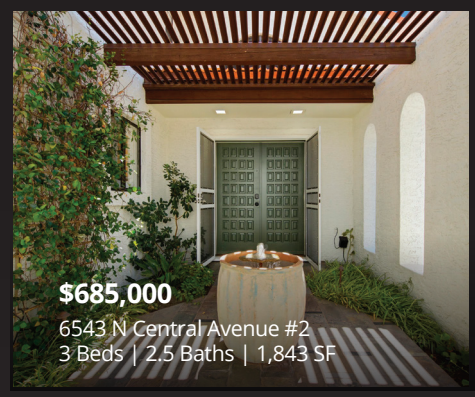








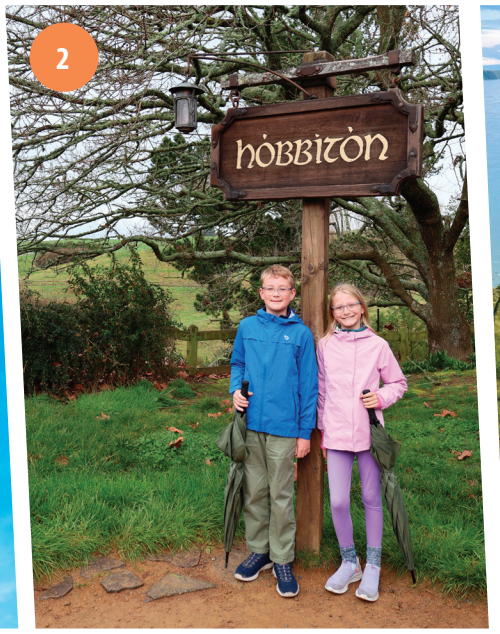














SUMMER

Vacation Photos

Here are a few vacation snapshots that capture the spirit of summer vacation – Arcadia style!













***1:* Reagan, Scott and Sawyer Donnell parasailing above Lake Chelan in Washington.** *Courtesy of Amy Donnell*

***2:* Winston and Blair Marvin at the Hobbiton Movie Set in New Zealand.** *Courtesy of Shauna Marvin*

***3:* Matt, Lauren, Will and Max, at Lake Baikal, Russia – the largest freshwater lake in the world.** *Courtesy of Lauren Morstad*

***4:* Garrett, Katie, Riley, Parker and Frances Otondo at the Space Needle in Seattle.** *Courtesy of Katie Otondo*

***5:* Owen, Sawyer, Reagan and Lincoln Donnell in front of Rainbow Falls in Stehekin, a remote town at the northern end of Lake Chelan in Washington.** *Courtesy of Amy Donnell*

***6:* Henry McCarty in San Clemente, California.** *Courtesy of Megan McCarty*

***7:* Grace McCarty and Charlotte Snell at Rivi Beach in San Clemente, California.** *Courtesy of Megan McCarty*

***8:* Carolyn, Grace, Jack, Henry and Andrew Cheney at Jackson Hole, Wyoming.** *Courtesy of Andrew Cheney*

***9:* Amy, Carl, Aspen, Bristol, Austin and Brooklyn Kasalek spent Fourth of July in our nation's capital.** *Courtesy of Amy Kasalek*





















10: ***The Church and Baumgardner families held an inflatable kickball game in Hope, Idaho: Jennifer and Sarah Church, Ella, Gretchen and Mike Baumgardner, Elizabeth and Jason Church with Olivia Baumgardner and Kathryn Church.*** *Courtesy of Gretchen Baumgardner*

11: ***Aimee and John Heckenlaible took a road trip for the Fourth of July and traveled along Route 66. Here they are in Grants, New Mexico.*** *Courtesy of John Heckenlaible*

12: ***Carson Herding, Justine Williams, Keri and Mark Herding took a family trip to Iceland in June, snorkeling a 32-degree fissure and kayaking in a Glacier Lake.*** *Courtesy of Keri Herding*

13: ***Kennedy and Gage D'Ambrosio in Dad's "office" at the start of summer vacation.*** *Courtesy of Jim D'Ambrosio*

14: ***Shya and Madison Pethtel with Jessica Enriquez at Phi Phi Islands and Phuket, Thailand.*** *Courtesy of Jessica Enriquez*

15: ***Arcadia News' editor and her boyfriend, Anthony, at the Arch of Cabo San Lucas.***

16: ***The Harris Family enjoying a staycation at the Arizona Grand.*** *Courtesy of Lauren Harris*

17: ***On the Fourth of July, the Michl and the Harkensee families raised over $400 at their lemonade stand and donated the proceeds to the firefighters working on the fires in Sedona.*** *Courtesy of Ashley Michl*

18: ***Lauren Harris on a gorilla trek in Rwanda.*** *Courtesy of Lauren Harris*

19: ***The Grassi family spent time biking through Flagstaff this summer.*** *Courtesy of Natalie Grassi*















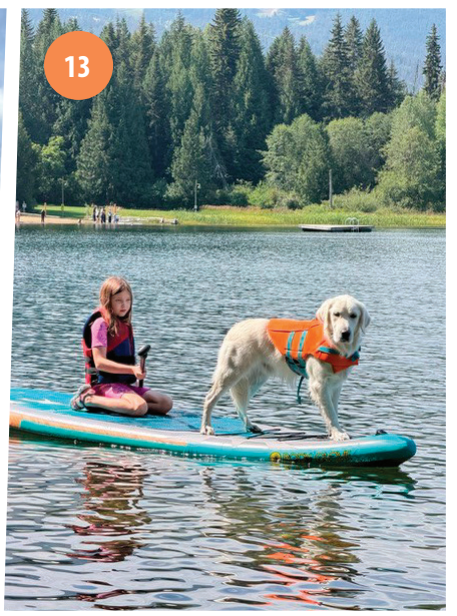












1: ***Colin, Jenny, Connor and Maddie Tetreault visited South Korea (this photo is in Seoul) for their summer trip.*** *Courtesy of Jenny Holsman Tetreault*

2: ***Sarah Pyper went raspberry picking with her grandson Dane in Whistler, British Columbia.*** *Courtesy of Sarah Pyper*

3: ***Amy, Carl, Aspen, Bristol, Austin and Brooklyn Kasalek at the Washinton Monument. Check out the Thunderbirds flying overhead!*** *Courtesy of Amy Kasalek*

4: ***Angeles, Antonella and Avianna Klein enjoyed the beach in Hawaii.*** *Photo: CC Visuals*

5: ***Riley, Parker and Frances Otondo hangin' at Lake Crescent, Olympic National Park, Washington.*** *Photo: Katie Otondo*

6: ***The Shock Family checked out Bridal Veil Falls in Telluride, Colorado, this summer.*** *Courtesy of Mindy Shock*

7: ***Isabella and Valentina Villanueva took a trip with the family to Italy and France for Isabella's Quinceanera trip.*** *Courtesy of Cinthya Morales*

8: ***Lottie Blitz practicing her surfing skills in Long Beach, California.*** *Courtesy of Jen Blitz*

9: ***Henry, Grace and Jack Cheney in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.*** *Courtesy of Andrew Cheney*

10: ***Valentina Serafini in Greece.*** *Courtesy of Alana Serafini*

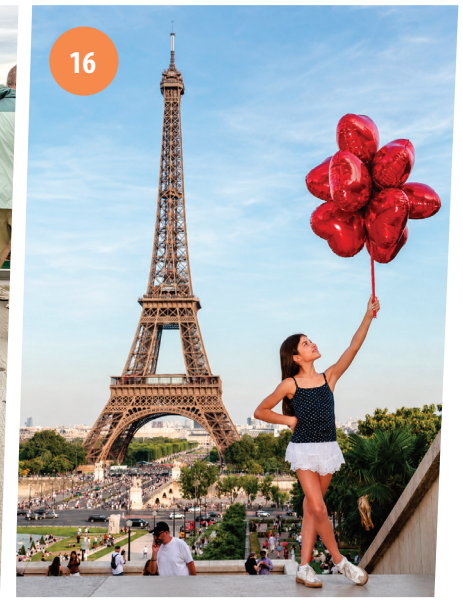
11: ***Alexander and Sanders Ingold in Charleston, South Carolina.*** *Courtesy of Laura Ingold*

12: ***Heidi, Bill, Kate and Jacob Staudenmaier took an eight-day biking trip through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.*** *Courtesy of Heidi Staudenmaier*

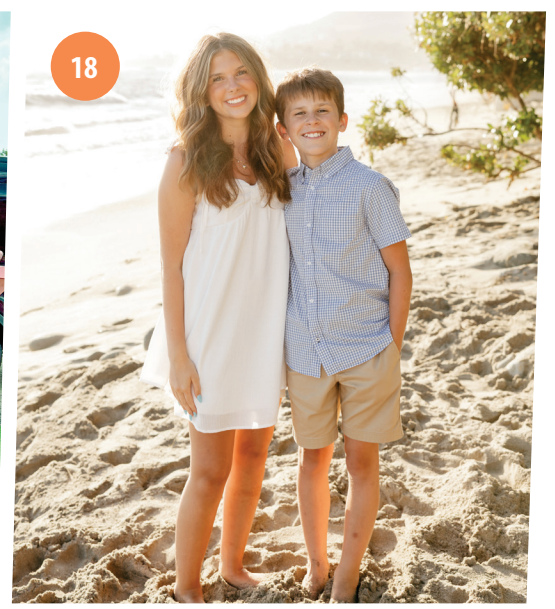
13: ***Hopi third grader Margot Dunshee and her pup paddleboarding in Whistler, British Columbia.*** *Courtesy of Sarah Pyper*











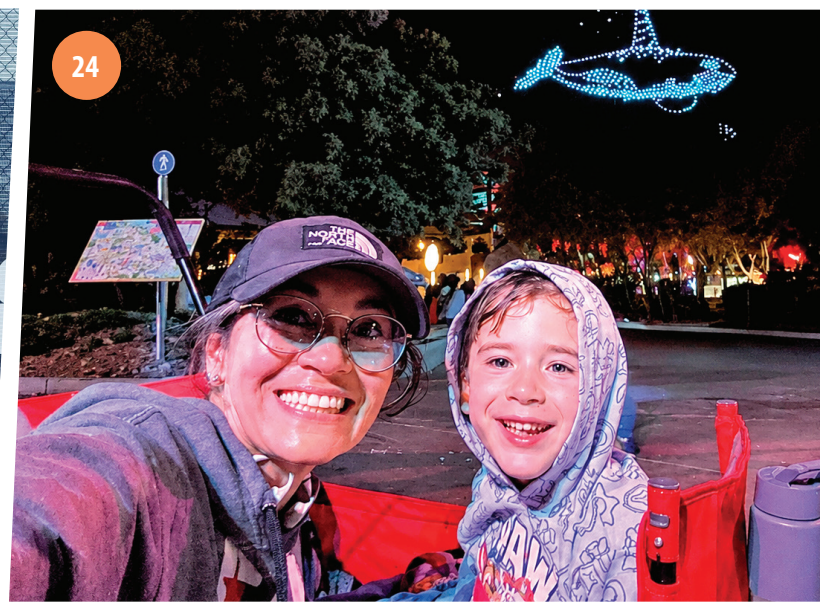












14: ***Alana, Chris and Valentina Serafini in Greece.*** *Courtesy of Alana Serafini*

15: ***Jack, Chelsea, Ben, Cameron, and Ollie Carter went to Seattle, rode the ferry to Bainbridge Island and went to Olympic National Park.*** *Courtesy of Chelsea Carter*

16: ***Isabella Villanueva at the Eiffel Tower.*** *Courtesy of Cinthya Morales*

17: ***Nora Packer with her cousin, Stella Bragg in Windsor, Virginia.*** *Photo courtesy of Nicole Packer*

18: ***Lily and Liam Itule spent the summer at the family home in Laguna Beach, where they love to surf, skim board, and lay out at the beach as much as possible!*** *Photo courtesy of Billy Itule*

19: ***Saylor and Eisley Allen swimming at Lovejoy Lake in Hayward, Wisconsin.*** *Courtesy of Jaime Pederson*

20: ***Su and Bill Byron hiking near the famous waterfall, Mulafossur, which is the only waterfall in the Faroe Islands that drops directly into the Atlantic Ocean.*** *Courtesy of Bill Byron*

21: ***Kingston Allen showing off his catch of the day in Hayward, Wisconsin.*** *Courtesy of Jaime Pederson*

22: ***Tim, Trish, Aidan, Madigan, and Aubrey Moran in Hawaii.*** *Courtesy of Trish Moran*

23: ***Blake and George Buckler in Norwalk, California at the USATF Junior Olympics. Blake got fourth place in the discus field event!*** *Courtesy of Bita Buckler*

24: ***Monique Huffsmith with her son, Daelan Haehn, who went to Sea World and stayed to watch the drone show for the first time.*** *Courtesy of Monique Huffsmith*

Sky high adventures are one zipline away

One of my favorite things about hosting *Arizona Highways Television* is discovering places I've driven near countless times without ever knowing what was waiting just off the highway.

Arizona Zipline Adventures (AZA) is one of those places.



Robin's Adventures

BY ROBIN SEWELL

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

Tucked into the foothills of the Catalina Mountains outside the small town of Oracle, AZA is about two hours from Phoenix and an hour north of Tucson. Yet when you arrive, surrounded by mountains, desert and wide-open views, it feels much farther away.

The property sits along the original back road to Mount Lemmon, a route many Arizonans don't even know exists. From here, you can see views stretching across three mountain ranges, including the Galiuro Mountains and, on a clear day, all the way toward the Superstitions.



Arizona Zipline Adventures features a five-line eco tour, beginning with a 400-foot zipline and building to the 1,500-foot finale, one of the longest ziplines in the state.

But most people come for a slightly different perspective – one that can have you flying nearly 55 miles per hour above the desert.

AZA features a five-line eco tour, beginning with a relatively gentle 400-foot zipline and progressively building to the 1,500-foot finale, one of the longest and fastest ziplines in the state. The last run is a dual line, so you can race alongside a friend or family member.

What makes the experience especially interesting is that you're not traveling from tower to tower. Between each zipline, your feet are back on the ground as you walk short trails through the landscape. One minute you're soaring above the Sonoran Desert and chaparral grasslands; the next, you're right in the middle of them.

Owner Emily Goff has deep roots here. She's the fourth generation of a ranching family, and this land was once part of her family's cattle ranch, which her brother continues to operate. The property is bordered on three sides by Coronado National Forest, helping preserve the incredible scenery surrounding it.

And here's the part I especially love: you don't have to be remotely interested in flying through the air to enjoy this place. Perched on the hillside is Peppersauce Kitchen, a rustic restaurant created so visitors would have a reason to stay awhile and take in those spectacular views.

The name comes from nearby Peppersauce Canyon, along with a legend about a miner who supposedly lost his hot sauce while working in the area. In the late 1800s, this was known as the Old Hat Mining District, home to gold and silver mining. Even Buffalo Bill Cody once owned a house nearby. That history is reflected throughout the restaurant, where reclaimed wood and old tin from a nearby stamping mill were incorporated into the building.

The menu is small, with hand-pattied burgers, hand-battered chicken strips and rotating specials. For the brave, there's even an "Adventure Burger;" you choose the spice level, and the chef chooses the toppings. Don't skip the battered fries, seasoned with a house-made shake that has developed a following.

There's also a gift shop featuring locally made items from artists in Oracle. Whether you come to zipline, explore Oracle, hike at Catalina State Park, visit Biosphere 2 or enjoy lunch with a view, this is exactly the kind of Arizona road-trip discovery I love sharing. Sometimes the best adventure really is hiding just off an Arizona highway.



The Valley looks ahead as water challenges grow

By Madalyn Paltzik

Living in the desert means plenty of sunshine, but with that comes a limited water supply. As Arizona continues to navigate drought, population growth and uncertainty surrounding the Colorado River, conservation remains an important part of our lives.

"Water is a finite resource and as we begin to understand how Colorado River allocations will shift in coming years, water conservation should be top of all our minds," a rep for Scottsdale Mayor Lisa Borowsky said.

The issue hits close to home. According to Borowsky, about 70 percent of Scottsdale's water supply comes from the Central Arizona Project, which delivers Colorado River water to communities throughout central Arizona.

In a recent op-ed, Borowsky also noted that Arizona is using less Colorado River water than it has in 35 years. She wrote that the state conserved nearly 900,000 acre-feet last year and more than 5.5 million acre-feet since 2014 – enough to raise Lake Mead by more than 80 feet.

For residents wondering what they can do, some of the most effective changes begin right outside the front door.

"Irrigation schedules should be adjusted as temperatures and seasons change rather than left on the same setting year-round. Watering in the early morning reduces water lost to evaporation, while drip irrigation can deliver water more directly to plant roots," said Emily Merritt of Water – Use it Wisely, a water conservation campaign.

Residents should be mindful of how much water they use on landscaping at residential and commercial properties. Checking systems regularly for broken sprinkler heads, damaged drip lines and pooling water can also catch leaks before they waste significant amounts of water. Technology can make those changes easier.



Smart irrigation controllers can adapt watering schedules to factors such as weather and landscape conditions rather than automatically watering on a fixed schedule.

Water used inside the home goes down the drain and enters Scottsdale's wastewater system, where it is treated, purified, and put back to work – reused for irrigation and to help replenish the aquifer that provides much of our groundwater.

Water used outdoors to irrigate landscapes, however, is largely consumed and does not return to the system for reuse. That's why reducing unnecessary outdoor water use can make the biggest difference for Scottsdale's water supply.

Indoors, WaterSense-certified fixtures and other efficient appliances can reduce consumption without requiring residents to dramatically change their routines – even waiting for the shower to warm up can add up.

Mayor Borowsky is proposing incentives for hot-water circulation systems, which she says could prevent hundreds of thousands of gallons from going down the drain each year.

Scottsdale has also tried to encourage larger, permanent reductions in household water use. Its water conservation rebate program has operated for nearly 30 years and includes incentives for qualifying WaterSense-certified products as well as removing water-intensive features such as grass, pools, spas and water softeners.

"Small changes make a big difference. Using water wisely does not have to mean drastic changes to your daily life," Merritt said. "Changing a few habits can impact water consumption, and embracing good habits now can nourish our state for generations to come."

Behind the scenes, the city has invested in its long-term supply as well. Scottsdale uses aquifer storage and recovery wells, which allow the city to recharge groundwater and later recover it when needed. Borowsky also said the city recently purchased 15,000 acre-feet of long-term water storage credits from the Harquahala Valley groundwater basin for $8.25 million.

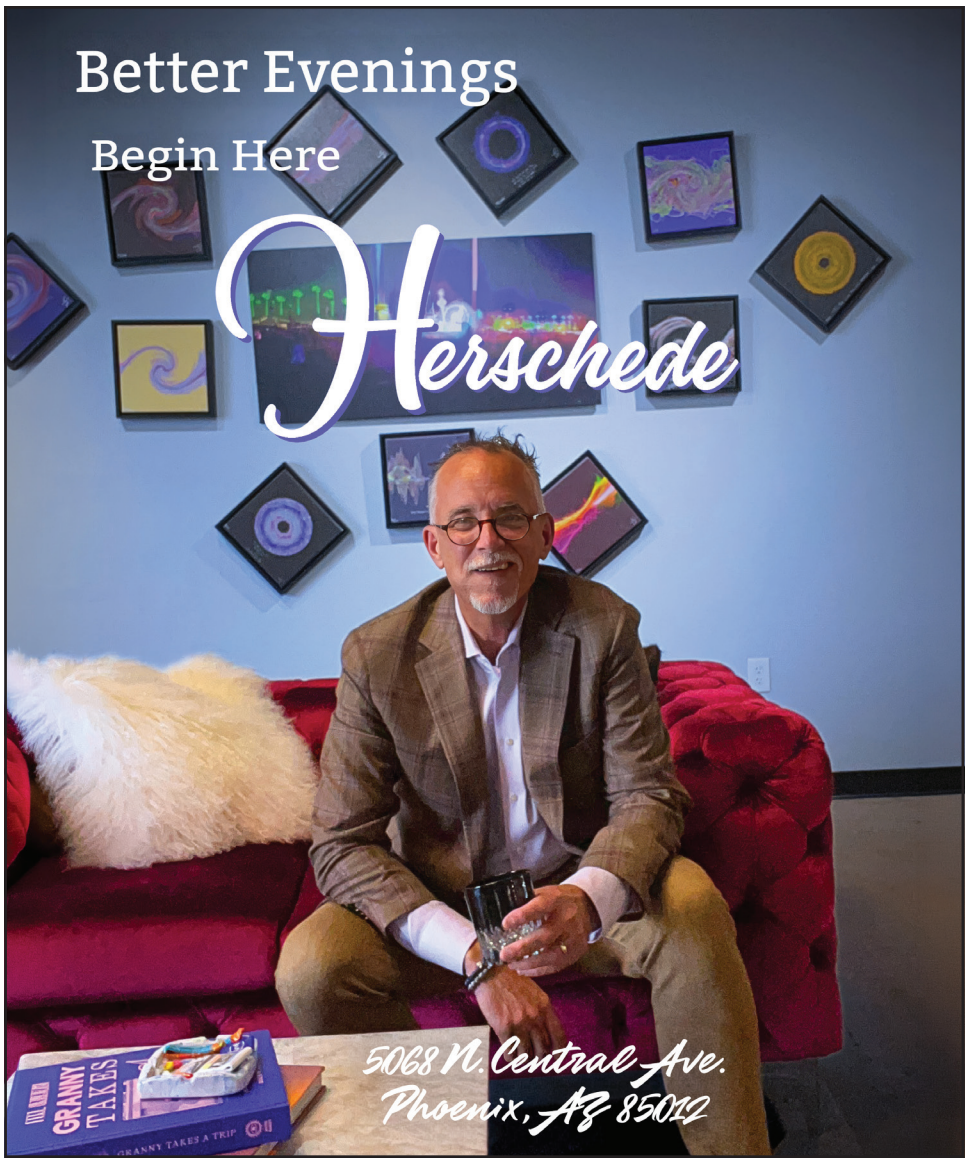
These efforts come as communities throughout the Southwest prepare for the changing Colorado River. In her op-ed, Borowsky wrote that the river provides drinking water to roughly one in 10 Americans, irrigates farmland and supports major metropolitan economies.

She also cited a commitment by Arizona, California and Nevada to contribute at least 3.2 million acre-feet of water savings to the Colorado River system through 2028, building on nearly nine million acre-feet conserved in Lake Mead by the Lower Basin states since 2007.

"We live in a desert, and our region only receives about seven inches of rain per year. Water is a precious resource," Merritt said. "Using water efficiently and conserving water where we can helps protect our supplies. The choices we make today help ensure we have the water needed to support communities, economy, and environment both today and in the future."

wateruseitwisely.com





Exercising to break a sweat, not your body

By Kylie de Best

Do you ever feel burnt out by fad workouts that fail to give you consistent results? Or are you wanting to get into a workout routine and aren't sure where to start? Well, fellow Arcadians, just a few months ago I was in the same exact situation, until I went to Pvolve at Scottsdale Waterfront.

Pvolve stands for personal evolution. It's a science-led fitness method that focuses on strength, stability and mobility. This is done through low-impact, high resistance workouts that are designed to "break a sweat, not your body" – or so their slogan says. The first studio opened in November 2017 in New York. Now, there's 50 locations.

Right when you walk in, you are greeted with a smile by the instructors and co-owners. After you check in, you open the door and enter a room full of energy and upbeat music, the genre changing depending on the instructor. Each attendee will start at their precision mat, which has numbers and dots on it to guide where to step or do different movements.

A warmup kicks off the class – the instructor will explain the movements that will later be used with the equipment. Each class is 50 minutes, with three rounds of exercises where you're standing up and one round of exercises where you're on the floor. Every class is different, so you will always have something new to look forward to. After your workout, you can freshen up in the beauty bar, which has skincare products available for use.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JEANINE YONUSHONIS

Owners Whitney Goodwin and Jeanine Yonushonis. Each 50-minute Pvolve class combines a warmup with three rounds of standing exercises and one floor-based round.

The Scottsdale Waterfront studio offers signature sculpt and weight training classes. The sculpt class focuses on toned physique and improved longevity and the weight training classes aim to build muscle, support bone density, and improve metabolic health.

The method utilizes 13 pieces of equipment, with different ones used for each workout. The P.ball, also known as "the ball that started it all," is made with 35 pounds of resistance to work your thighs. The P.band works on postural muscles and is beneficial for tech neck or a strained neck – especially helpful for those who sit for long periods of time. Other equipment includes the heavy ankle band, gliders, and a slant board.

Owners Jeanine Yonushonis and Whitney Goodwin opened the Scottsdale location in January. Jeanine has a background in advertising and marketing. Whitney's background lies in accounting, operations and real estate investment. Both are passionate about fitness and passionate about Pvolve.

"I first discovered Pvolve after seeing Jennifer Aniston using the same workout and shared it with Whitney, who has been my best friend for 15 years," Jeanine said. "We fell in love with the workout, the brand and the opportunity to build something meaningful together."

There are currently four instructors, each offering valuable feedback during the workout while staying mindful of what your goals are and how you are progressing.

There are three membership options, ranging from eight classes to unlimited. Members get special perks, such as out-of-studio events and classes. If you are looking to pop in and see how you like the method, they have an intro offer of three classes for $60.

With the support from instructors and being surrounded by familiar faces at each class of regular members, my confidence in working out has really improved.

pvolve.com

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D'LITE HEALTHY ON THE GO


JOJO COFFEEHOUSE

The Dining Scoop

Iced coffee. Cold brew. Latte. Mocha. The options are endless when it comes to a cup of joe, and Arcadians are lucky because there are plenty of spots to choose from when you're in need of a morning, afternoon or evening (we don't judge) pick-me-up. These local favorites have been around for a while, so you know they're worth a sip.

Black Cat Coffee House

4730 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix
blackcatcoffeeaz.com

Black Cat Coffee House originally opened in 2011. The shop has become a familiar gathering place for families, thanks in large part to owner Tanya Nygard. After moving to the area from Iowa, Nygard began working at Black Cat in 2016 as a part-time barista under the shop's second owner. Within a few months, she was promoted to manager, and just a month later, she was asked if she wanted to buy the business. She took ownership in February 2017 and has continued to make the shop feel less like a coffeehouse and more like an extension of the neighborhood.

"Our shop stands out from others because it feels like coming home," Tanya said. "We've been in the area so long we have gotten to know so many families in the neighborhood. We've watched their kids grow up from going to Tutor Time to Hopi or Ingleside to Arcadia High."

The signature Black Cat Bomb is a frozen coffee drink made with espresso, chocolate, peanut butter, protein and banana, but lattes and iced teas remain among its top sellers. Beyond coffee, the menu features Italian sodas, matchas, sandwiches and muffins from Baked by Grace *(check out Grace's story in the June 2026 edition)*.

"When customers walk through our doors, they can expect to be met with a team that is glad to be their neighbor. We will probably even greet you by name!" Tanya said.

d'Lite Healthy On The Go

3214 E. Indian School Road
dlitehealthyonthego.com

For nearly 20 years, Brooke and Chad Knudson have been building a business around one idea: healthy food and coffee should be accessible – even for those on the go. What began as a mom-and-pop operation has evolved into a family-owned and operated franchise model. For the Knudsons, expanding the business is ultimately about making healthy choices easier to find.

The coffee program mirrors that commitment, with premium-grade, small-batch beans and a farm-to-table approach that maintains close relations with the farmers and growing regions.

"We utilize a blend composed of 100 percent Brazil Mogiano beans. This coffee is produced by farmers organized around cooperatives in the Mogiana growing region in Brazil," Brooke said. "This region has rolling hills and uneven terrain lending to small- to medium-sized farms."

For a signature drink, Brooke said the d'Breakfast Buzz is a favorite. The meal-replacement shake combines chocolate whey protein and vitamins with espresso shots, nonfat milk, banana and peanut butter, all blended with ice.

"We also just launched a Zen Cold Foam that tastes like ice cream! It's actually a chaga shroom base which is antioxidant and adaptogen-rich," Brooke said. "The cold foam pairs amazingly well with iced matcha and iced lattes."

Everything on the menu is made to order. The California Club is the most popular food item, featuring two fried eggs, bacon, smoked turkey, tomato, avocado, pepper jack, cream cheese and pesto on toasted artisan bread.

"While we offer dine-in quick service with a friendly atmosphere, the drive-thru is truly where health and convenience are optimized." The drive-thru is the niche that encourages people on-the-go to choose a healthy alternative to fast food.

JOJO Coffeehouse

3712 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale
jojocoffeehouse.com

JOJO Coffeehouse owner Michael Melton grew up in the East Valley and has been an entrepreneur since he was 19. In 2016, he began developing the idea for a coffee spot centered around community. He asked his brother, Andy, to be part of the venture and the duo opened JOJO Coffeehouse in Old Town Scottsdale in 2018.

"While there are a lot of things dividing us in the world, I wanted to counter that division by offering an enjoyable space that brings people closer together. There is no better way to do that than through good coffee, food, and music," Michael said.

JOJO's original roast, a proprietary medium blend developed with a roaster before the restaurant opened, is what anchors the business. The blend combines subtle chocolate notes with a wild berry bean for a balanced flavor. The barista team takes things a step further with house-made syrups, purees and cold foams, creating inventive combos built around espresso and cold brew.

For first-time visitors, Michael recommends one of JOJO's Coffee Flights, which have become the most popular order.

The Original Coffee Flight offers cold brew, mocha, latte, caramel macchiato and white mocha. The Signature Coffee Flight showcases popular creations, including the Blueberry Vanilla Macchiato, Strawberries & Cream Latte, Salted Caramel Cold Brew, Coconut Cream Pie Latte and Honey Bee Latte. All are also available in full-size servings, hot or iced. Guests can check out cocktails and mimosas, and live music takes place every Saturday during brunch.

"I hope customers always feel welcome. Our goal is to provide an inviting, social atmosphere with the heart of hospitality for friends and family to gather over their favorite drinks and dishes," Michael said.

OTHER VALLEY FAVORITES

La Grande Orange
An Arcadia-area favorite, La Grande Orange brings together coffee, breakfast, baked goods, pizza, wine, cocktails and neighborhood charm.
lagrandeorangegrocery.com

Lola Coffee
Lola roasts its coffee in-house daily and pairs its espresso and coffee offerings with breakfast, pastries and organic, fair-trade coffee and tea.
lolacoffeebarphx.com

Hava Java
A longtime Phoenix coffee shop on Camelback Road, Hava Java invites guests to "come for the coffee and tea, stay for the friendships" with a welcoming atmosphere and free Wi-Fi.
havajavacoffee.com

Sip Coffee & Beer
Sip Coffee & Beer combines a full espresso bar with beer, cocktails, food and a laid-back atmosphere.
sipcoffeeandbeer.com

Black Rifle Coffee Company
Veteran-founded Black Rifle Coffee Company serves up light, medium and dark roasts alongside ready-to-drink options.
blackriflecoffee.com

La La Land Kind Café
La La Land Kind Café pairs coffee and colorful café culture with a mission centered on kindness and community.
lalalandcafe.com

Moxie Coffee Co.
A specialty coffee micro-roastery in Phoenix, Moxie focuses on uncommon coffees from unexpected producers.
moxiecoffeeco.com

Coffee Builders
Coffee Builders combines beverages with a creative, ever-changing menu.
thecoffeebuilders.com

Case Study Coffee Lounge
Case Study Coffee Lounge keeps things simple with great coffee, vibes and a relaxed space open daily.
casestudycoffeelounge.com

Fourtillfour
The Scottsdale café blends specialty coffee roasted in-house with pastries, a shaded patio and a serious love of vintage cars.
fourtillfour.com

Colados Coffee & Crepes
Colados Coffee & Crepes offers specialty coffee and sweet and savory crepes for an easygoing café experience built around a "Crepe it Easy" philosophy.
colados.com

LUX Central
LUX Central serves coffee from early morning into the evening in an eclectic setting that also makes room for food and drinks.
luxcoffee.com

Arcadia-area golfers tee up for winning seasons

By Alex Gross

Over the last decade, Arizona's high school golf has asserted dominance on the national stage. Those leading the pack of elite desert golfers happen to be Arcadia area programs, with Brophy finishing No. 1 in the nation and Xavier finishing No. 7 after both clinching state titles last year.

Arcadia experienced a return to form as the boys placed fifth in the state and the girls made significant strides in rebuilding with a younger squad. Here's how Phoenix's top teen golfers are striving not to reach, but maintain greatness this season.



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE SHAFF

The most recent title in the 2025-26 season marked Brophy's fifth consecutive State Championship win.

ARCADIA HIGH

Boys

The Titans are coming off of one of their best years in recent history in which they finished No. 5 in the state and placed third at the Division II State Championship.

Though two of last season's top performers have graduated, Senior Beck Sage will step into a leadership role. He shot a district-record 62 to win the Scottsdale District Championship and was named District Golfer of the Year in 2025.

Arcadia started the season hosting one of the state's best programs in Notre Dame before facing Desert Mountain later that week – two early tests for this season's young core of golfers.

Girls

After progress was made last year to develop a roster with no seniors, Head Coach Dean Lamppa is taking over in his first season with the program. After only rostering seven golfers last season, five new players are joining the squad.

All starters are returning from last season, led by senior Captain Annie Dreier. She was the lone qualifier at last year's State Championship, finishing 60th and later committing to play collegiately at California State San Marcos.

"Having her on the team is like having a second coach," Lamppa said. "I can tell she's well-liked and respected."

The goals for this season remain centered on improving last year's core and building chemistry to help underclassmen integrate into a team that will be looking for new talent as early as next year.

BROPHY PREP

Head Coach Jon Shores is entering his 20th season at the helm, on the heels of the school's most successful year ever. The most impressive part of finishing atop state and national rankings? Returning four of the five starters who have won consecutive state titles.

"There's a lot riding on this season for the kids and for the school," Shores said. "It would be the first time in Brophy's history that we've 'threepeated' and put us in the top for most boys' program wins in state history."

The Broncos' core has stayed active over the summer, as seniors Evan Tyree and Asher Nelson teamed up with junior Hank Miller to win the Junior America's Cup for Team Arizona in July. Nelson, an Oklahoma State commit, was the top individual finisher at the tournament at 9-under par. Tyree is committed to Texas A&M and Senior Jack Langbein will be staying local at Grand Canyon University.

Heading into the fall means reorienting golfers to not only compete as individuals but on behalf of their team.

"It's a matter of reminding ourselves of what it means to be a Brophy student," Shores said. "For three months we put the team at the forefront and every one of the 12 guys on the team contributes."

The Papago Invite and Brophy Rodeo will give the Broncos early chances to build momentum in their quest to achieve the fabled 'threepeat.'

XAVIER PREP

Winning may be part of the culture at Xavier, but Head Coach Tui Selvaratnam doesn't let it turn into pressure. Last season marked the school's 40th state golf title and Selvaratnam's eighth.

"I go into every season with the same goals in mind: team building and team chemistry," Selvaratnam said. "When you work on the individuals, the winning comes automatically for the team. I expect a lot out of them. I have strict rules and regulations, and I want them giving 100 or more than 100 percent."

Senior and team captain Alexis Lamadrid has grown into a leader both on and off the course for the Gators. She recently advanced to the Round of 32 in the U.S. Girls' Juniors Championship and tied for fifth at the Junior PGA Championship.

The team's younger core is highlighted by Sophomore Addison Taylor, who was the top-placing freshman in last year's state tournament. Incoming freshmen Claire and Caroline Brooks are also being welcomed to the team after placing fourth for Arizona in the Junior America's Cup.

"The main goal is to win state, and I would like to see Alexis repeat and win a state championship for the third time," Selvaratnam said. "But overall, I just want the girls to play their best and reach their full potential."

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PHOTO COURTESY OF AHS

Arcadia High varsity



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE SHAFF

Brophy Prep's Callaway Johnson

Big hopes "set" up success for volleyball squads

By AJ Stone

Arcadia High, Brophy Prep, Veritas Prep, and Xavier Prep are poised to take the court by storm in a season marked by rigorous practices, intense competition, and the energy from players and fans. These schools are anticipating some major wins, all while building their skills and abilities as a team.



PHOTO COURTESY OF XAVIER PREP

Xavier Prep's 2025 championship team.

ARCADIA HIGH SCHOOL

The Titans opened up the season at home against Crimson. Last season ended in a crushing defeat to Ironwood Ridge, leaving AHS just missing the playoffs and a chance to hang a banner.

The Titans head into this season looking to rewrite history. New Head Coach Rylee Brown says the program is as much about developing young adults as it is maintaining a winning culture. The "core four" focuses are growth, leadership, community, and competing.

"I want every athlete to make meaningful progress, gain confidence, improve skills, and push past what they thought they could do. Growth isn't just about performance; it's about becoming better every day," Coach Brown said.

"My hopes are to enjoy my last season of volleyball with my best friends and win our region and make a run at state," teammate Riley Rooney said, with player Tessa Peters echoing the feeling:

"I am really hoping to build an amazing team with amazing people and create a special atmosphere that lasts for years to come."

Practices will focus on skill-based development and working toward cohesion as a team.

"We compete to win, and that's a goal we embrace. But winning comes from preparation, teamwork, and discipline – the habits we build every day. When we focus on the process, the results follow," Coach Brown said.

BROPHY PREP

Brophy had an incredible run in the regular season last year. They finished with a 25-10-1 record, but that streak ended after a tough playoff loss to the Chandler High Wolves. Since then, the team has been biding its time to return to the courts.

With so much success on their side, it seems like the only thing holding Brophy back from playoff success was the offseason. This year, with Head Coach Tony Oldani leading the charge, the Broncos will look to chase down playoff wins and a banner to boot.

VERITAS PREP

Veritas kicked off the season in an away contest against Arizona Lutheran Academy on August 27. Although it was a non-region game, the Falcons will need to get back on track early to keep momentum on their side.

"The Falcons spent the summer building strength in the weight room, endurance through conditioning, and discipline through every rep," Coach Sarah Kersey said. "Now we're turning that foundation into speed, intensity, and execution. Our team motto this season is 'No Plays Off!' The first whistle is here, and we're ready to compete with 100 percent effort."

XAVIER PREP

Xavier volleyball opened up with a home thriller on August 27 against Mountain Ridge. Coming off back-to-back state championships, Coach Lamar-Renee Bryant says the culture at Xavier focuses on high competition.

"We always try to be competitive in the gym," she said. "We compete in everything we do from the beginning of the practice to the end."

After their recent run of dominance, Xavier is trotting out a young lineup this season, full of newcomers. The only senior on the roster, Tessa Larkin, looks to lead her squad to another finals appearance. Larkin has already earned a Gatorade Player of the Year award and a finals MVP. She'll attend Stanford after she graduates and is playing with the US National Team U21.

"I know she is going to take a leadership role for our squad," Coach Bryant said. "We have four freshmen, so it's going to be a lot of teaching, but we are fully confident that these freshmen are going to catch up and will be capable."

In addition to on-court success, Xavier was named a recipient of the AVCA All-Academic Award for the 2025 to 2026 season. This award highlights teams that maintain at least a 3.3 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale year-round.

They also earned the additional distinction of being on the AVCA Team Academic Honor Roll, representing the top 20 percent of GPAs nationally by division. The Gators did just that, and after earning such a prestigious award, they'll look to translate their success in the classroom onto the court.

"It's a new team, it's a new year. We won back-to-back state championships, and obviously we're looking for our third, but we are just working on getting better every single day," Coach Bryant said.

DISTRICT 6 UPDATE

Preparing Phoenix for what's next

As we look toward the future, water remains one of our most important priorities. New federal guidelines for the Colorado River are expected to bring major cuts beginning in 2027, and I know that can raise questions about what those changes will mean for our neighborhoods.

Phoenix has been preparing for this moment for decades. Thanks to careful planning, significant water storage, drought infrastructure and a diversified water supply, residents and businesses will not experience water service interruptions because of the upcoming reductions. But that does not mean we can take our water supply for granted.

Phoenix is currently in a Stage 1 Water Alert under the city's Drought Management Plan, and I encourage everyone to do their part to help protect our water future. Being "PHX Water Smart" does not require major lifestyle changes. Small steps, repeated across our community, can make a meaningful difference.



KEVIN ROBINSON
Councilman
District 6
602-262-7491
District6@phoenix.gov

Our landscapes are another opportunity to conserve. Consider replacing water-intensive plants with native desert species that are naturally better suited to our climate. If you have an irrigation system, a smart irrigation controller can help ensure you are watering according to actual weather and landscape needs rather than simply following a fixed schedule.

Perhaps most importantly, I hope we continue building a desert-water mindset throughout our community. Conserving water should not be viewed as something we do only during a drought. It is part of living responsibly and ensuring that we remain a strong, sustainable city for generations to come.

There are also several important updates I want residents to know about.

The city will host a special 9/11 remembrance event on Thursday, September 10, at Steele Indian School Park's Memorial Hall. The evening will feature members of Arizona Task Force 1, who deployed to New York following the attacks, as well as youth leaders discussing how life has changed in the 25 years since 9/11. Preserved pieces of the World Trade Center will also be on display.

Additionally, the Cholla Sewer Diversion and Abandonment Project is underway. As always, I encourage residents to stay informed, conserve where they can and look out for one another. Together, we can meet the challenges ahead while protecting the resources that make Phoenix home.

For more information about water conservation and Phoenix's Drought Management Plan, visit Phoenix.gov/WaterFuture.

Thank you,

Kevin

30 YEARS AGO



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



It seems like just yesterday that the Toney family gathered for a picture on the front porch. That was in 1996, when the family numbered 21. Thirty years later, in 2026, the family grew to 41 members, including spouses, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and babies on the way.

At the heart of the family are Margaret and Ken, who were married for nearly 63 years before Margaret passed away in 2018. Ken, now 92, continues to live in Phoenix, where he enjoys golf, bridge, and spending time with family and friends. For the past 20 years, he has also enjoyed creating beautiful oil paintings.

Theresa Filiger is a retired teacher and mom of three, living in Prescott with her husband, Dennis. Theresa's oldest, Brady, lives in Mesa with his wife, and their son. Cody lives in North Carolina with his fiancée, and Riley is serving in the Army.

Julie Daly is retired from teaching and lives in Prescott with her husband, Jim. Julie's daughter, Stephanie, lives in Virginia with her husband, Joe, and their four children. Daughter Toni lives in Hanapepe on the island of Kauai with her husband, Isaiah, and their three children. Their son, Michael, lives in Phoenix with his wife, Amanda, daughter, Chloe, and a baby on the way.

Katy Regester is a teacher and lives with her husband, John, in Phoenix. Their daughter Laura lives in Denver with her husband, Neal, and a baby on the way. Emily, a nurse, lives in Phoenix with her fiancé, Mike, while Charlie lives in Phoenix with his fiancée, Bri.

Matthew Toney, an IT Specialist, and his wife, Barbara, have three children in Phoenix. Their eldest son Zach lives and works in Phoenix. Annabell Riley and her husband, Jace, are also in Phoenix with their son. Henry works and goes to school in the Valley.

Patrick Toney is an attorney and lives in Massachusetts with his wife, Tara, and their son, Hollis, a contractor and musician.

From a family of 21 in 1996 to 41 in 2026, the Toney family continues to grow and spread across the country. Despite the miles between them, family gatherings, shared memories, and strong connections keep everyone close.

ARCADIANEWSARCHIVES.COM

Soup in September? Yes, please!

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

September always feels like the real start of the year. School's back, schedules tighten up, and even if you don't have kids at home, everything moves faster. And it's still 103 outside, which doesn't help. This is when I start cooking like we live somewhere with real seasons. Soup in the heat. Cozy flavors on a day that hits triple digits. It doesn't make sense, but it works.

The good news is dinner doesn't have to be complicated. These meals come together fast and taste more intentional than they are. Filling enough to keep you going through a long evening, light enough that nobody's dragging afterward. Kale and white bean soup started the whole soup-in-September thing for me. The beans make it hearty without weighing you down, and it tastes like it simmered a lot longer than it did.

Loaded white bean tostadas are crispy on the bottom, piled high on top, and you can put out the toppings and let people take what they want. The beans keep them filling, and cleanup is basically a few bowls. The vinegar in the tangy pasta salad keeps it bright, so it works cold straight from the fridge on a hot afternoon and it makes enough for leftovers, which is half the reason I keep coming back to it.

Tangy pasta salad *Serves 6*



- 1 lb. pasta
- 1 red or orange bell pepper, diced
- 1 can garbanzo beans, drained
- 2 cups halved grape or cherry tomatoes
- ½ cup pepperoncinis
- ½ cup halved kalamata olives
- 1 cup diced dairy free cheese (I'm using plant-based babybel)
- 2 cups sliced spinach (stems removed)
- ¾ cup dairy free Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup sliced basil

• DRESSING •

- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. pepperoncini brine
- 1 diced shallot
- 2 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. garlic granules
- 1 tsp. pink salt
- ½ tsp. pepper

1. Cook and cool pasta. ***2. Whisk up dressing.*** ***3. Toss it all together!***

Kale and white bean soup *Serves 6*



- 1 tbsp. avocado oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 3 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp. fresh rosemary, minced
- 1 tsp. pink salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 2 cans navy beans, drained
- ½ bunch Lacinato Kale, chopped fine
- Juice of ½ lemon

1. Add oil to a pot and bring heat to medium. Drop in onion, garlic, carrots, and celery. Cook for 5-8 minutes until soft.

2. Add the rosemary and spices and cook for one minute.

3. Add the beans and broth and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer 20 minutes.

4. Using an immersion blender, blend half of the soup.

5. Add lemon juice and kale, cover and simmer for 10 minutes before serving.

Loaded white bean tostadas *Serves 4*



• WHITE BEAN MIXTURE •

- 1 can white beans, drained
- 1 avocado
- ¼ cup diced red onion
- 1 diced tomato
- ¼ cup cilantro
- 1 diced jalapeno
- 8 tostada shells

• DRESSING •

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- Juice from 1 lime
- ½ tsp. grainy mustard
- 1 tsp. maple syrup
- ½ tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. pink salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

1. Mix up the white bean ingredients.

2. Warm up tostada shells and layer on white bean mixture.

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BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

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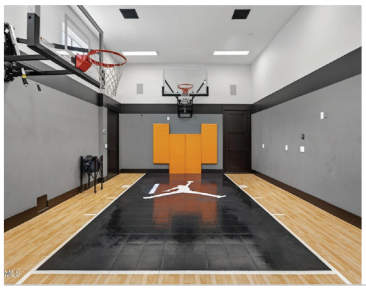







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DID YOU KNOW? DINOSAURS

HOW LONG?

131’ *Argentinosaurus huinculensis* is widely considered one of the largest dinosaurs ever discovered, with estimates putting it at up to 131 feet long and weighing 70-100 metric tons. This massive, long-necked herbivore lived in what is now Argentina and is considered the largest land animal known to science.

Other enormous sauropods include Patagotitan, which reached an estimated 122 feet and 77 tons, and Dreadnoughtus, which measured about 85 feet long and weighed roughly 65 tons.



HOW OLD?

240M YEARS

The oldest, widely accepted evidence places the emergence of dinosaurs in the Late Triassic Period, 237 to 201 million years ago. The first confirmed dinosaur fossils date to approximately 230 to 240 million years ago. Fossil sites in South America, particularly the Ischigualasto Formation in Argentina and the Santa Maria Formation in Brazil, have produced the most ancient specimens.

HOW SMALL?

2” The smallest known dinosaur is Oculudentavis, measuring just 2-3 inches long and weighing under 30 grams. Oculudentavis, discovered in amber from Myanmar, lived during the Late Cretaceous period and is notable for its tiny size, bird-like beak, and numerous small teeth, suggesting it fed on insects.



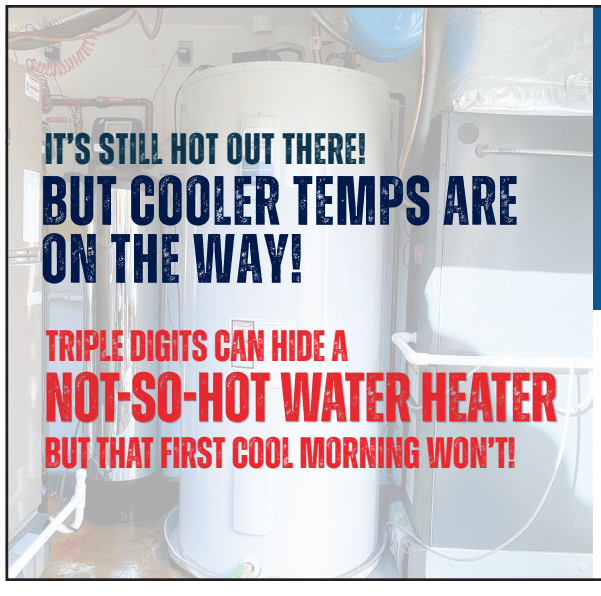
HOW MANY?

800 TEETH



A Triceratops could have up to 800 individual teeth at any one time, with most estimates placing the total within the 432-800 range. This massive dental count comes from its highly specialized dental battery system (“replacement” teeth densely packed together in a jaw).

Other plant eaters had wide flat teeth that they used to grind up tough vegetation. Long-necked dinosaurs had long pencil-like teeth that they used to rake the leaves off branches. These dinosaurs swallowed the leaves whole. They also ingested small stones, called gastroliths, most likely to grind up the food in their stomachs, much the same way parakeets and chickens do today.



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In 1842, the English naturalist Sir Richard Owen coined the term Dinosauria, derived from the Greek *deinos*, meaning "fearfully great," and *sauros*, meaning "lizard."

Dinosaur fossils have been found on all seven continents.

The Tyrannosaur family spent 100 million years evolving into Tyrannosaurus rex.

All non-avian dinosaurs went extinct about 66 million years ago.

There are roughly 700 known species of extinct dinosaurs.

Modern birds are a kind of dinosaur because they share a common ancestor with non-avian species.

In most cases, a fossilized bone is actually a rock made out of minerals, with no trace of the original bone material.

The discovery of dinosaur eggs and nests provided evidence for the behavior of some dinosaurs.

By comparing the skulls of Protoceratops of different ages, paleontologists can draw conclusions about how some dinosaurs grew.

To discover how organisms lived in the past, paleontologists look for clues preserved in ancient rocks: the fossilized bones, teeth, eggs, footprints, teeth marks, leaves, and even fecal matter of ancient organisms.

Until recently it was believed that feathers were unique to birds. Recent discoveries, however, have unearthed evidence for feathered non-avian dinosaurs.

Barnum Brown, who began his career at the American Museum of Natural History in 1897, is considered one of the greatest dinosaur hunters of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He discovered the first T. Rex fossils in 1902.

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That's one way to eat a leaf...



Nigersaurus taqueti *– also known as the "Mesozoic vacuum cleaner" – was a Late Cretaceous dinosaur that had a feeding system all its own. Nigersaurus lived in what is now the Sahara Desert and had a wide, flat muzzle lined with more than 500 teeth.*

Rather than reaching up for leaves like other long-necked dinosaurs, it grazed close to the ground, essentially sweeping up vegetation as it moved along. Its teeth were replaced every two weeks, allowing it to keep up its nonstop grazing.

And its mouth wasn't the only unusual thing about it. Nigersaurus had an incredibly lightweight skeleton, with vertebrae so thin and hollow they were almost paper-like. Despite its delicate-looking bones, the dinosaur was well-equipped for its low-to-the-ground lifestyle.

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A living time machine: The tomato plant that remembered yesterday



Just as the handful of sweet pea seeds, given to me by the next door neighbor, were my first introduction to flowers, the humble tomato was the very first vegetable plant I grew as a child that was given to me by my mother. Back then, I was trying to witness a miracle in real-time, checking the plant every hour for signs of growth. My hands trembled as the dirt got patted around that fragile green stem, but it welcomed my clumsiness. In time, I remember standing on tiptoes, peering into the dense, green canopy of the tomato bush.

Learning that you could put a fragile little plant into the dirt, give it some water, and watch it turn into sweet, warm drops of sunshine made me a believer in gardening. Decades later, that excitement hasn't faded; it has just grown deeper. Life looks completely different now than it did when I was a child, but my hands still know exactly what to do with a tomato transplant. It was my introduction to growing food. Today, in the heat of September, the earth welcomes my grown-up, tired hands the exact same way. Season-by-season, this plant has found a way of bridging my childhood past with my adult present.



Thyme in My Kitchen

BY SHERRY KLUSMAN

thyme.in.my.kitchen

Human beings are naturally critical. We judge, we evaluate, and we carry expectations that can make the world feel heavy. But having a garden over the years has become much more than just a hobby – it has become a lifeline. When family members who were my anchor passed away leaving me feeling untethered and disoriented, the dirt became my only comfort. A tomato plant doesn't ask you to explain your grief or prove your worth.

You don't have to find the right words; you just need to care for something that's living. The desert sun is brutal, but the earth itself is entirely gentle. In a garden, you're allowed to just be – to dig, to breathe, get dirty, and to heal alongside something that is quietly fighting to grow. It's a place to process grief, a living reminder of resilience, and a direct tribute that connects and honors those you've lost. There's something incredibly healing about putting your hands in the earth.

Now, after navigating the twists and turns of adulthood and those losses that reshaped my world, here I am still doing the exact same thing, planting tomatoes. As the summer "monsoon" humidity breaks, September brings a subtle, crisp clarity to the early morning air. The sun sits lower in the sky, casting long, dramatic shadows across the raised beds and filtering a softer, golden hue through afternoon shade cloth. Planting in September feels like a triumphant graduation from the survival mode of July and August.

For Phoenix gardeners, this marks the most magical turning point of the desert horticultural year: our beautiful "second spring." While the rest of the country prepares to put their gardens to bed, we are eagerly burying tomato stems into sunbaked soil. It's an act of hopeful defiance against the summer heat and a beautiful dance with the changing seasons.

Success here is hard-fought against unique environmental barriers. Digging into a backyard often means striking caliche, a concrete-like layer of calcium carbonate that stunts root growth and destroys drainage. Our native soils and tap water have a punishingly high, alkaline pH. This chemical reality creates a nutrient lockout, starving tomatoes of iron and sulfur unless the soil is heavily amended with organic compost. Using worm castings has successfully released even the most locked soil conditions in my garden, enhancing color and accelerating growth. As temperatures dip into the double digits, the intense UV rays can still blister and sunscald young, developing green fruits.

Unlike most plants, and because the ground is holding onto summer warmth, buried tomato stems transform their surface hairs into a massive, hidden network of strong roots at double the speed of spring planted crops. We might understand the science of photosynthesis now, but burying a tomato stem in the soil and expecting a Thanksgiving harvest? That's pure, unfiltered magic.

There are over 10,000 different varieties of tomatoes worldwide. To guide these distinct varieties to their full potential against the desert climate, consistent watering is crucial. Because our low humidity causes soil to dry out rapidly, gardeners must keep the soil evenly moist, providing deep hydration to wash away salt buildups without drowning the roots. Pairing this with a balanced fertilizer and fish emulsion provides the essential nutrients needed for vigorous growth and abundant fruit production.

Indeterminate varieties are the untamed, vining giants like classic heirlooms and many cherry tomatoes. They grow, vine, and produce blossoms continuously until the frost finally arrives, requiring sturdy caging to manage their boundless spirit. Determinate varieties are bush-type tomatoes that grow to a fixed size and focus all their energy into a single, massive harvest. They are built for efficiency, ripening their fruit all at once – perfect for a batch of homemade salsa before winter. The semi-determinate varieties strike a beautiful balance – growing slightly larger than traditional bushes – but remain manageable.

Some people compare the fragrance to geraniums and pine, but to me, it just smells like summer. That scent hits the pause button on adulthood. For a split second, I'm no longer an adult standing in the backyard trying to outsmart the Arizona heat; I'm seven years old again.

This fragrance is driven by nature's alchemy. If you've ever noticed that the vines appear a bit hairy, you've spotted the key. Those little "hairs" are filament-like growths called trichomes. They serve a variety of purposes, including secreting the sticky essential oils that protect the plant from harsh desert winds and pests. These fragrant oils are unleashed when the leaves and stems are brushed against as you coax the branches to stand tall and weave them through the bars of brightly colored tomato cages.

The resulting flavor of a homegrown tomato is incomparable to anything bought in a store. Biting into a sun-warmed tomato harvested in the late autumn brings back the exact same unadulterated joy I felt during my very first childhood harvest. Whether you're searching for a peaceful sanctuary to process life's heaviest seasons, looking to revive a forgotten sense of childhood wonder, or simply wanting to taste the pure sweetness of a homegrown harvest, the dirt is waiting for you.

Garden Tomato Salsa

- 16-18 vine-ripened tomatoes, quartered (Roma or San Marzano)
- 1 medium red onion, cut into wedges
- 2 green onions, rough chop (all parts)
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ¼ tsp. Mexican oregano
- ¼ tsp. cumin
- ¼ tsp. ancho chili powder
- 1 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 small garlic clove, finely minced
- 1 tsp. dark brown sugar
- 3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp. fresh cilantro, small dice
- 6-8 Hatch roasted chili peppers, stemmed, small dice (use less for a milder salsa)

1. **Gather tomatoes and onions, transfer to a food processor fitted with the metal blade.**
2. **Chop to desired chunkiness. Transfer to large bowl.**
3. **Add dry spices followed by balsamic vinegar, garlic, brown sugar, and lime juice.**
4. **Blend in cilantro and roasted peppers.**
5. **Taste and adjust seasoning. Refrigerate at least one hour.**
6. **Strain liquid for desired serving consistency.**
7. **Serve chilled.**

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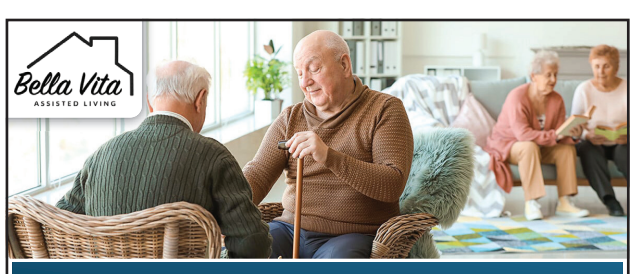

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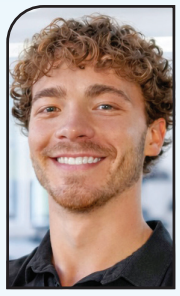

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Titan Times

VOL. 3 NO. 11 — SEPTEMBER 2026

From the students of Arcadia High School

Introducing the latest batch of Titans to their new domain

By Ana Redzic

Every year, Arcadia's student government (affectionately nicknamed Stugo), ambassadors, National Honor Society members, and dedicated volunteers come together to create a freshmen orientation day called Campcadia to kick off the school year. Incoming students from schools all over Arizona get the opportunity to meet new friends, see the campus up close, and experience life as a Titan. This year's Campcadia was held on August 7.

Students arrived at 8:15, and many seemed nervous to engage with people outside of their middle school friend groups. Volunteers flooded the gym with positive energy as they hyped up the freshmen with creative posters and cheers.

Once everyone filed in, Stugo Vice President Vivian Speyer and Treasurer Braden Knaub started the day off strong with a lively assembly featuring the spirit line, games, the class chant, advice from sports captains, and opportunities to socialize.

Once the assembly was over, the freshmen were split into individual groups to take a guided tour of the campus, sign up for clubs, and have water balloon fights under Mount Olympus. They had the opportunity to ask questions, find specific classrooms, and see Arcadia from the perspective of current students. The day ended in the cafeteria, where Chick-fil-A sandwiches were provided for lunch.

Campcadia would not have been possible without the help of Mrs. Kim, the Stugo sponsor, Mrs. Mo, the head of Arcadia's ambassadors, the PTO, and all the volunteers who dedicated their Friday morning to helping out. Welcome to Arcadia, Class of 2030!



A LOOK AHEAD AT ARCADIA SPORTS

Last year, the Titan athletics program surpassed all expectations: football reached the state championship for the first time in 63 years; basketball won the state championship. This year is starting off a little different, not just for the staff, but for the players.

After a remarkable season leading the Titans to the state championship, star quarterback Zach Smith has graduated. With Smith gone, the quarterback spot is up for grabs, a choice that Coach Struzyk will have to ponder on.

Star wide receiver Ian Slater has also graduated, leaving Konner Kammes to fill those shoes. Kammes is going into his senior year with Division One offers from Hawaii and Boise State. His play will impact the Titans' run tremendously. Although this team is loaded with star power, it'll all come down to their chemistry and ability to work together if they want a repeat of last year.

Arcadia basketball is now the state champion, but the team will have a lot to overcome if they want to defend their title. Star forward Mason Kendrick and point guard Max Strauss have both graduated, and without the two senior leaders, the Titans will need players to step up. After a remarkable freshman season, state championship MVP Jacobi Thompson took his talents to Mesa. He will be missed – Arcadia wouldn't have won the state championship without his stellar performance in the final.

Another loss to the team is Coach Greg Richards, whose sudden resignation came amidst some controversy with his coaching style.

Arcadia will need seniors Brock Knee, Will Heinrichs, and Braden Baldwin to step up. Sophomore Jalen Knighton will also be a player to watch out for after showing significant potential during his freshman season. Although the squad is not as strong on paper, many players have improved in the offseason and are expected to make a big jump. Football and basketball have experienced some losses in the offseason, but AHS is a resilient school – don't bet against the Titans this season.

– Armeen Ghazanfari



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