

ARCADIA NEWS

VOL. 34 NO. 7

ARCADIA • BILTMORE • CAMELBACK CORRIDOR

OCTOBER 2026



LACE UP YOUR SKATES

Zoni Girls transformed a skate-inspired clothing brand into a roller-skating pop-up experience.

PAGE 28

CAN YOU DIG IT?

Dig It Gardens offers plants, workshops, events and landscaping services while creating an inviting space for visitors.

PAGE 22

WICKED OCTOBER FUN

From Oktoberfest to pumpkin patches and spooky adventures, the Valley offers plenty of festive ways to celebrate.

PAGE 24

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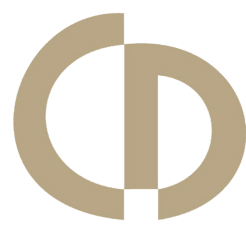
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OCTOBER

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Zoni Girls launched in 2020 as an apparel and lifestyle brand that now serves as a pop-up skate rink.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAIGE ALEXANDRIA



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1 SWIM LESSON AT A TIME

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Normally, I wouldn't start my editor's note off with a comment about the weather, but it's currently pouring rain and – being the craziest amount I've seen thus far in 2026 – it felt worth commemorating, especially because gloomy weather makes me feel more October than anything else. The pumpkins have been staring me down at Costco since August so cloudy skies really set the mood.

This month's edition feels chock-full of everything Arcadia. We showcase our Lady Titans flag football team, which debuted for a third year, now under Head Coach Mark Kelley. Kick off resulted in a loss against Scottsdale Christian, but these girls are full of grit and ready to redeem themselves through the rest of the season.

A trip to the California coast became a new business for Arcadia couple Art and Kathy Rowland, who have been baking shortbread cookies out of their kitchen for the past five years. The duo grabbed some 'cash

register cookies' from Bouchon Bakery – and the rest is history. Art says his favorite part of baking is the many flavor combinations one can come up with – no ingredient is off limits.

October is really the start to fun holidays events; Halloween and Oktoberfest are well-known, of course, but there are also fall markets, pumpkin and apple patches, ghost tours, haunted houses – you name it, someone is probably celebrating it.

We're diligently working on our upcoming edition and excited for the months to come. Thank you for reading the Arcadia News, and happy October days!

Mallory
– Mallory Gleich



ARCADIA'S PETS

Luna is a cattle dog/pit bull mix. She's five years old and came to us via One Dog Arizona Rescue. She was three when we adopted her and had been living with her nine pups in back of a building in New Mexico. She's a bit skittish around other dogs but we're working on that. She is an absolute nutball and our best bud and can play fetch like no other! We love you Luna!

– Alexis M.

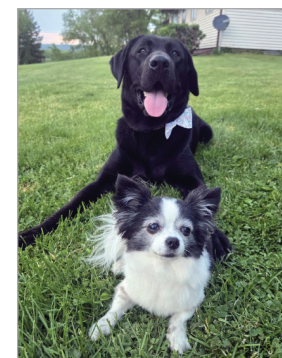


This is our dog Red! He is a Dutch Shepherd. He trains with K9 Defense and loves to play Frisbee. He is great with both of our little kids and is a good boy!

– John P.

Bear is a 1.5-year-old lab that we've had since he was 12 weeks old. His favorite thing to do is go swimming and play keep away. Bella is a Pomeranian/Chihuahua – she's 16 years and loves sun bathing and napping. My favorite thing about both them is that they greet me every single time I come home with wagging tails and kisses.

– Kelly B.



UPCOMING THEMES:

NOVEMBER

Veterans

DECEMBER

Happy Holidays

JANUARY

Fitness

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"There is a child in every one of us who is still a trick-or-treater looking for a brightly-lit front porch." – Robert Brault



Ming Ming is a two-month old gray tabby. Her favorite thing to do is play with a remote control toy mouse and chase around the backyard. My favorite thing is when she purrs instantly as soon as she sees me. She's so loving and playful!

– Bonnie B.

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



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VOTED BEST SEAFOOD IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2021, 2025
VOTED BEST TAKEOUT IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2023, 2025
VOTED BEST LOCAL BURGER IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2025
VOTED BEST OF THE BEST SEAFOOD AND TAKEOUT IN THE WEST VALLEY VIEW 2025
VOTED BEST SEAFOOD IN THE GLENDALE STAR 2020, 2023, 2025
VOTED BEST SEAFOOD IN LOVIN' LIFE 2023, 2024, 2025
VOTED BEST LOCAL BURGER IN LOVIN' LIFE 2024
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A sweet little business – that started with a cookie

By Michael P. Murphy

Art Rowland didn't realize it when he impulsively bought a small bag of cookies at a California winery a few years ago, but it was the start of something. Those classic shortbread cookies were so good that Art decided he wanted to replicate the recipe when he returned home. He was a banker by trade and admittedly not a culinary expert, but he knew how to bake cookies.

After experimenting with several recipes, Art produced one that satisfied him; then he and his wife Kathy took a batch to a party and received more than a few compliments. Knowing this, a realtor friend contacted them about a different kind of sales promotion, and she wasn't interested in using store-bought cookies.

"She put some of our cookies in a bag, attached her business card, and that was what she would leave behind when she made business calls," Art said.

He set up an LLC and a bank account because they needed to invoice the sale. That's when Art and Kathy decided to set themselves up as a small business, in case they wanted to keep baking and selling. After all, Art's shortbread cookies were exceptionally good, and the possibility of more demand was there.

"We sat on it because it was such a busy time," Kathy said. "Then I retired from the medical supply business. My last day was a Friday, and on Monday I got my food handler's license."

Art secured a web domain name, found a designer

to create a website, and learned how to package professionally. Their daughter designed a logo and the family easily settled on a brand name. The Art of Shortbread launched in November 2022 as a licensed Arizona cottage business.

"Right in the middle of the holidays!" Kathy laughed.

Over time, they received requests for a variety of different flavored cookies, and Art was always willing to experiment. For instance, he learned to skin an apple, then chop, shred, and dehydrate it to create a flour-like consistency, then replace cooking flour with the apple to create the apple pie flavor.

"Arcadia has plenty of citrus, so we use our own oranges for the orange-cranberry flavor," Kathy said. "We use a lot of lemons, limes, and locally produced vanilla."

"And we bake to order,"

Art said. "Because we want the cookies to be as fresh as possible for our customers. We deliver within 48 hours."

There are currently 35 different flavors offered on The Art of Shortbread website. So far, the duo has supplied cookies for weddings, showers, and corporate events. Art even created a butterbeer cookie, complete with sprinkles, representing the four houses of Hogwarts.

Packages of Art's cookies can be found at a handful of local restaurants, just like when Art rediscovered his love for shortbread cookies at the California winery years ago.

theartofshortbread.com



Art and Kathy Rowland launched The Art of Shortbread in 2022 and it now offers 35 flavors of shortbread cookies.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHY ROWLAND

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WHAT'S HAPPENING, ARCADIA?

BRIEFS

The **Scottsdale Unified School District** Governing Board approved a resolution calling for a \$375 million bond election on the November 3, 2026 ballot. If approved, funds would support school renovations, technology, safety, transportation and other capital improvements. Informational meetings took place in September; the last day to register to vote is October 5.

susd.org/our-district/elections/susd-bond-2026

The public is welcome to attend **Arcadia High's Homecoming Parade** on October 30 at 4 p.m. The parade starts at Ingleside Middle School (5402 E. Osborn Road) and ends at Tavan (4610 E. Osborn Road). Area businesses are also invited to participate in the parade – email Sonya Kim at skim@susd.org for more information. After the parade, head to Arcadia High for the homecoming football game at 6 p.m.

arcadia.susd.org

From October 16-25, **Care Card** shoppers can purchase a \$60 Care Card for 20 percent discounts at hundreds of area retailers and restaurants. All proceeds benefit The BIG Pink Bus, Banner MD Anderson Cancer Center's mobile mammography program, which will provide 3,000 mammograms this year, supporting early breast cancer detection.

thecarecard.org



Send some snuggles this year with PANDA's annual **Pandas for Patients** campaign, available until October 4. Community members can help further pediatric research by purchasing a stuffed panda bear for \$35 online or at PANDA's "pop-ups" at select Fox Restaurant Concept locations. All bears will be delivered to children at the Steele Children's Research Center. Find pop-up dates and locations on the website.

azpanda.org

The Shemer Art Center (5005 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix) is kicking off holiday shopping Arizona style with its 2026 **Shemer Arizona Arts Festival** on November 7-8, 2026 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. This annual event will once again feature fine art for sale, created by 40 juried artists from across Arizona, as well as chalk artists, art demonstrations, live music, a Blacksmiths Village, a \$5 Interactive Art Zone, food and beverage vendors and a silent auction.

shemerartcenter.org

Dinosaurs are invading the Phoenix Zoo! Last seen in 2023, the **Dinosaurs in the Desert** exhibit has returned in a bigger herd than ever. Through April 2027, visitors can hear and see prehistoric creatures up close during every visit. Try your hand at digging for fossils, or snap a family photo in front of your favorite dino. Everywhere you turn, be ready to marvel at life-size dinosaurs, bones and more.

phoenixzoo.org

EPIC Living Alone, a free ASU program delivered through Zoom, is seeking participants for a research study supporting adults 60 and older who live alone and experience early-stage memory loss. The program offers workshops covering memory changes, stress, communication, future planning and social connection. Participants may receive up to \$90 in gift cards.

agingsuccessfully@asu.edu

Southwest Human Development will open the annual **"Birth to Five Helpline Awareness Week"** until October 3. This event showcases the organization's free support line for Arizona parents, caregivers and professionals to call, text, or email questions or concerns about parenting and the early development of children from birth to age 5. Specialists are available at 877-705-KIDS, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-8 p.m.

birthtofivehelpline.org

EVENTS

FRIDAY 10/2

Urban Sketching

9:30 a.m. at Shemer Art Center, 5005 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix. This adults-only class focuses on the basic techniques of urban sketching. Instructor Duane Blossom will help artists "seek out their sketching voice to express and record visual experiences." Come learn a new way to create stories of your experiences in an artistic format. Fee is \$266 per person.

shemerartcenter.org

SATURDAY 10/3

Whirly Twirly Flying Things

12 p.m. at The Esplanade, 2501 E. Camelback Road, Phoenix. This October the Esplanade is partnering with the Arizona Science Center to host classes focused on science, technology, engineering, math and robotics. Today's class topic is helicopters – attendees will learn how they're built, how they fly, and will even get to test them out! Other classes include sphero mazes, chemysteries and solar science. Attendance is free.

azscience.org

Pink Out 5K

8 a.m. at Steele Indian School Park, 300 E. Indian School Road. The 10th annual

Pink Out 5K happens today. Before the race, there will be a vendor village, live music, food trucks and activities for kids. One hundred percent of the funds raised will provide Arizonans with free breast health education, mammograms, wigs and support. Don't forget to wear pink! Registration is \$40 for adults, \$25 for kids.

checkforalump.org

SUNDAY 10/11

Casa Hermosa Dinner

6 p.m. at the Hermosa Inn, 5532 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley. Chef Brian Peterson will take over with a four-course menu of classic cowboy cuisine. Lon Megargee (who the restaurant was named after) was a working cowboy before he was a painter, and Chef Peterson will cook what he painted: chipotle-braised rabbit, scallop ceviche, red chile bison stew, and more. The event kicks off with a reception on the patio. Tickets are \$125 per person.

hermosainn.com

Life, Love and Light

3 p.m. at Camelback Bible Church, 3900 E. Stanford Dr., Paradise Valley. Phoenix Chorale opens its 2026-27 season with Life, Love, and Light, a performance that explores the themes of joy, love, grief and remembrance. Led by Artistic Director Christopher Gabbittas, the program centers on Herbert Howells' Requiem, alongside works by composers Reena Esmail, Adolphus Hailstork, Ysaye M. Barnwell and Ingram Marshall. Tickets are \$50 for adults, \$25 for kids.

phoenixchorale.org

WEDNESDAY 10/14

Beyond the Vine

6 p.m. at Wrigley Mansion, 2501 E. Telawa Tr. Join the mansion for an intimate evening with Mark Pisoni while he regales attendees with the story of the family and their home in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Through a multi-course dinner, guests will taste Pisoni wines alongside coffee and honey produced by the family. Tickets are \$300 per person.

wrigleymansion.com

FRIDAY 10/16 – SUNDAY 10/18

Phoenix Greek Festival

Times vary, at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 1973 E. Maryland Ave. Celebrate Greek culture with the 63rd annual Phoenix Greek Festival. There will be authentic cuisine, dancing and live performances, music, a village market with groceries, décor, jewelry, pottery and more, culture and history tours and activities for the kids. Admission is \$5 per person.

phoenixgreekfestival.org

SATURDAY 10/17

Mimosas and Monet

9:30-11:30 a.m. at the Hermosa Inn, 5532 N. Palo Cristi Road, Paradise Valley. Calling all painters, beginners and experts alike. Hermosa Inn welcomes Carrie Curran Art Studios for a morning of art and mimosas. Carrie will teach and guide guests with an acrylic on canvas painting of "Van Gogh Sunflowers." Enjoy a mimosa and snack on pastries while creating your masterpiece. Registration is \$120.

hermosainn.com

Fall Art Auction

10 a.m. at 3705 N. Bishop Lane, Scottsdale. The Larsen Fall Art Auction returns with 440 lots spanning contemporary, modern, Southwestern, Native American and Latin American art. Highlights include works by Jesús Rafael Soto, Roberto Matta, Oswaldo Vigas, Françoise Gilot, Emily Mason and Beth Cavener, with pieces ranging from hundreds to six figures.

larsenartauction.com

Scottsdale Fall Festival

5-8 p.m. at the Scottsdale Civic Center, 3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd. A family-friendly event with tricks and treats for all. There will be game booths, arts and crafts, face painting, a DJ, a live band, a magic show, and lots and lots of candy. Visit booths to learn about upcoming projects and don't forget to check out "Tales from the Haunted Stacks" – a spooky library experience where storybook monsters come to life.

scottsdaleaz.gov

SAT. 10/17 – SUN. 10/18

Arizona Taco Fest

11 a.m. at Salt River Fields, 7555 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. The third annual Taco Fest will bring together over 40 of Arizona's taco makers slinging all the taco goodness, along with agave spirit artisans and small businesses to create two days of food and fun. There will be tequila and mezcal tastings, live music and art, activities for kids and more. Tickets start at \$17 for general admission.

tacofestaz.com

SUNDAY 10/18

Alice in Wonderland

2 p.m. at the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, 7380 E. Second St. Step into a whimsical world of wonder with a performance of Alice in Wonderland, a collab between Dance Theater West and Art Heals. The festivities begin at 2 p.m. with an art show, followed by the main show at 3 p.m. The afternoon wraps up with a party at 4 p.m. Admission is free.

dancetheaterwest.com

WHAT'S HAPPENING, ARCADIA?

TUESDAY 10/20

Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable

6 p.m. at the Scottsdale Public Library, 3839 N. Drinkwater Blvd. This month's Scottsdale Civil War Roundtable will host author and professor Nicole Etcheson's discussion of "Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era." Doors open at 5 p.m. for meeting the speaker, book sale, and Civil War videos. This event is free.
scottsdalecwrt.org

Anniversary Wine Dinner

6 p.m. at Marcellino Ristorante, 7114 E. Stetson Dr., Scottsdale. Celebrate Marcellino's 24th anniversary with a VIP wine dinner. Guests will be treated to a five course chef's choice menu, paired with Italian wines while chef discusses each dish and his history in the industry. Dinner is \$250 per person.
marcellinoristorante.com

SATURDAY 10/24

Spooktacular Sprint & 5K

7:30 a.m. at Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza, 1700 W. Washington St., Phoenix. This 3.1-mile event invites friends and families to dress in your Halloween costumes and join in by running, jogging and walking to support life changing causes at Phoenix Children's Hospital. There will also be a kid's dash for the youngsters. All proceeds and donations will help PCH provide care to patients. Registration is \$35 for adults, \$5 for kids.
phoenixchildrensfoundation.org

Friends of Erma Bombeck Luncheon

12 p.m. at the Arizona Biltmore, 2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix. Presented by the Arizona Women's Board, the 47th annual Erma Bombeck Author's Luncheon brings together writers from all over the country to discuss their latest releases. There will be panel talks with authors Andrew Sean Greer, Pamela Meyer, Lisa See and more, plus opportunities for purchases and book signings. Registration starts at \$300 per person.
authorsluncheonaz.org

Proof

7:30 p.m. at the Tempe Center for the Arts, 700 W. Rio Salado Pkwy. When Catherine, the daughter of a late prize-winning mathematician, allows her father's protege access to his archives, he discovers an impossible math proof – that's been solved. What follows is a debate over the proof's author, a clash between sisters, and a romance that pushes Catherine to trust her heart. Tickets start at \$33.
atc.org

SUNDAY 10/25

Yes Day for Autism

9 a.m.-12 p.m. at Tempe Beach Park, 80 W. Rio Salado Pkwy. Join Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center for YES Day for Autism. Guests can check out a family-friendly fundraising event that includes a one-mile



Whirly Twirly Flying Things at The Esplanade.

walk, resource fair, carnival and kid-friendly activities, entertainment, games, plus food trucks and drinks for purchase. This event is free but registration is required.
autismcenter.org

Full Moon Flow Yoga

6:30 to 8 p.m. at The Phoenician Spa, 6000 E. Camelback Road, Scottsdale. Gather at the rooftop pool for a yoga flow class and sound bath, aligning with the energy of the full moon. If you're a seasoned yogi or new to the mat, the class will leave you feeling grounded,

empowered and in harmony with the moon's natural rhythms. Registration is \$45.
thephoenician.com

Pup Festival

10 a.m. at Tempe Marketplace, 2000 E. Rio Salado Pkwy., Tempe. Calling all dog lovers! Pup Festival is taking over Tempe Marketplace for a free day of fun. The event will feature dog races, a Halloween costume contest, an agility course, dog gym and spa experiences, games, demos, professional photo opportunities, rescue adoptions,

vendors, giveaways and more. Bring the whole family – four-legged members included!
tempemarketplace.com

THURSDAY 10/29

Pumpkin Carving Contest

5 p.m. at Four Peaks, 1340 E. 8th St., Tempe. Get into the Halloween spirit at Four Peaks Brewing's annual Pumpkin Carving Party. Bring your own pumpkin, carving tools and candles to compete for more than \$600 in prizes, or simply come cheer on the contestants and cast your vote for your favorite creation. Tickets are \$12 and include a pitcher of Pumpkin Porter and Pumpkin Porter cheesecake.
fourpeaks.com

SATURDAY 10/31

Walk to Save Animals

8 a.m. at Tempe Beach Park, 80 W. Rio Salado Pkwy. The 28th annual Walk to Save Animals, the Arizona Animal Welfare League's largest fundraiser, invites pups, family, and friends to support animals during a 2K or 5K walk. There will be trick-or-treat stations for pets and people, a trick-or-treat bucket giveaway for the first 500 attendees, vendors, pet adoptions, food trucks, activities, and more. Registration starts at \$35.
aawl.org

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OUT OF THE AREA, BUT WORTH THE DRIVE

FRIDAY 10/2

Catch Me If You Can

7:30 p.m. at Hale Centre Theatre, 50 W. Page Ave., Gilbert. Hale Theatre presents *Catch Me If You Can*, the Tony Award-winning musical inspired by the true story of Frank Abagnale Jr. Follow his globe-trotting adventures as he assumes new identities while evading the FBI in this energetic production filled with music, choreography, humor and heart. Tickets start at \$42.

haletheatrearizona.com

FRIDAY 10/2 – SUNDAY 10/4

Prescott Area Artist Studio Tour

10 a.m.-4 p.m., locations vary. Explore the creative work of 74 artists during the Prescott Area Artist Studio Tour, featuring 52 private studios and three art centers throughout the Prescott/Quad-City area. Visitors can check out live demonstrations, purchase original artwork, enter a tour-wide raffle and help support local children's art programs through ticket proceeds. This event is free.

prescottstudiotour.com

Maricopa County Home & Garden Show

10 a.m.-5 p.m. at WestWorld, 16601 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale. Looking to give your home a makeover but not sure where to start? Look no further than the Maricopa County Home and Garden Show! Over 1,000 exhibits showcasing home improvement, interior design, ask-the-expert seminars, make-and-take crafts and more will be on-site. New this year is The Little Book Nook and Kids' Dream Home Art Contest. Tickets are \$10.

maricopacountyhomeshows.com

SATURDAY 10/3

Come From Away

7:30 p.m. at Fountain Hills Theater, 11445 N Saguaro Blvd., Fountain Hills. Based on a true story, *Come From Away* depicts the events when the isolated community of Gander, Newfoundland, played host to



Whiskers & Wine at the Homestead Community Center.

the world after 38 planes were diverted to Gander's airstrip on September 11, 2001. Tickets are \$40 for adults, \$18 for kids.

fhtaz.org

SUNDAY 10/4

Beethoven and Mozart: Virtuosity and Brilliance

3 p.m. at Ruth Street Theater, 1050 Ruth St., Prescott. An afternoon of classical music! Maestro Peter Bay leads the Arizona Philharmonic alongside violinist Steven Moeckel performing Beethoven's Violin Concerto paired with Mozart's Jupiter Symphony. Tickets start at \$28-\$69.

azphil.org

FRIDAY 10/9 – SUNDAY 10/11

Arizona Wine Country Artists Village

10 a.m. at the Old Town Activity Park, 187 E. Pima St., Cottonwood. A family and pet-friendly art and fine-craft fair featuring top regional artists, interactive activities, and a celebration of local creativity – with plenty of wine on hand. Organized by Jerome-based artists John and Lauri Maeder, guests will find a juried showcase, kids' craft station, and a scavenger hunt with prizes. This event is free.

artists-village.com

SATURDAY 10/10

Wings & Wheels

9 a.m. at Sedona Airport, 235 Air Terminal Dr. Do you like airplanes? What about vintage cars? This event is for you! Guests will find an open house-style event for the family highlighting static aircraft displays, vintage warbirds, aviation demos, airplane/helicopter rides, vendors, and the Sedona Car Club Show. Admission is a non-perishable food item, or \$2 without.

sedonaairport.org

SATURDAY 10/10 – SUNDAY 10/11

Sedona Arts Festival

9 a.m.-5 p.m., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Sedona Red Rock High School, 995 Upper Red Rock Loop Road. The 34th annual Sedona Arts Festival will showcase a lineup of 100 juried artists from across the country. There will also be live music, raffle prizes, food trucks and a beer and wine garden – all set against the backdrop of Sedona's red rocks.

sedonaartsfestival.org

SUNDAY 10/11

The Concert Truck

3 p.m. at Chandler Museum, 300 S. Chandler Village Dr. The Concert Truck – a 16-foot box truck that opens up to become a fully equipped mobile concert hall with a grand piano, lights and sound system – brings free live music to its audiences. Presented by Chandler Center for the Arts, the mobile concert features pianist Susan Zhang and violinist Alena Hove. This event is free.

chandlercenter.org

FRIDAY 10/16

Harold's Corral Anniversary Party

6 p.m. at Harold's Corral, 6895 E. Cave Creek Road. Harold's Cave Creek Corral celebrates its 91st anniversary with a one-night concert featuring country hitmakers Parmalee and Phoenix singer-songwriter

Chauncey Jones. The celebration honors more than nine decades of live music, dancing, food and community at the iconic Cave Creek institution. Tickets start at \$54.

haroldscorral.com

SATURDAY 10/17

Desert Foothills Book Festival

10 a.m.-3 p.m. at The Holland Center, 34250 N. 60th St., Scottsdale. This festival is for book lovers of all ages. Guests will have the opportunity to meet over 80 published authors – fiction, non-fiction, children's books, romance – you name it, it'll be here. Be one of the first 100 people through the door and receive a gift. This event is free, but donations are welcome.

desertfoothillsbookfestival.com

WEDNESDAY 10/21

Whiskers & Wine

6 p.m. at The Homestead Community Center, 18600 N. 98th St., Scottsdale. DC Ranch brings together restaurants, wineries, breweries and distilleries for an evening benefiting homeless pets and The Foothills Animal Rescue. Guests will find tastings, live music, a silent auction and raffles, with proceeds supporting animal care and adoption services. Tickets start at \$75.

foothillsanimal.org

FRIDAY 10/23

Boots, Buckles and Belly Laughs

6 p.m. at Camelot Ranch, 6250 E. Jomax Road, Scottsdale. Dress in your cowboy best for Camelot Therapeutic Horsemanship's Starry Knights fundraiser! Attendees will find the traditions they've come to love, plus live comedy from Hayden Kristal and an evening supporting therapeutic horsemanship programs for children and adults with disabilities. Tickets start at \$180 per person.

camelotaz.org

SAT. 10/24 – SUN. 10/25

Pumpkin Patch Train

11 a.m. at The Grand Canyon Railway & Hotel, 233 N. Grand Canyon Blvd., Williams. The Pumpkin Patch Train returns! Guests can participate in a scenic train ride to a rail-accessible pumpkin patch. Admission includes a pumpkin, harvest maze, scavenger hunt, photo ops and seasonal activities, with haunted train cars adding a spooky twist. Tickets start at \$35.

thetrain.com

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Arcadia Real Estate is Booming Despite 7% Interest Rates

Mortgage rates are hovering around 7%, so why hasn't the Arcadia housing market fallen apart?

On paper, you might expect the real estate market to fail but Arcadia isn't the typical housing market.

After watching billions of dollars in Arcadia real estate trade over the past decade, I've become convinced that interest rates matter here far less than most people assume.

So far in 2026, approximately 40% of Arcadia Proper transactions have closed with cash.

Think about that for a moment. Nearly four out of every ten buyers aren't taking out a mortgage at all. For those buyers, the difference between a 3% mortgage rate and a 7% mortgage rate is exactly zero.

Even among the remaining buyers who do finance their purchase, many are coming into the transaction with significant equity from another property, substantial down payments, or the financial flexibility to refinance later if rates decline.

That makes Arcadia fundamentally different from markets where the buyer's purchasing power is largely determined by the monthly mortgage payment. For example, across Phoenix we have seen a significant slow down in price ranges between \$600,000 - \$2,000,000 where home sales have slowed with the tick up in rates.

We expect interest rates to remain higher for longer, but Arcadia should remain resilient given buyer liquidity and demand. If you have any further questions about the current environment, please do not hesitate to reach out anytime at 602-561-0445.



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Personality is their business

By Rachael Bouley

Two Arcadia moms are helping businesses thrive with the Enneagram, a personality and self-awareness tool that sorts human behavior into nine interconnected types based on key motivators.

Lindsay Bailey and Joey Roether both spent several years as leadership consultants for a boutique firm before teaming up to create their own business, Rooted Cultures.

"We're passionate about developing self-aware leaders and believe that how we lead starts with how well we understand ourselves," Bailey said. "When leaders become more self-aware, they can lead with greater intention and create healthier cultures."

Their combined backgrounds in social work, sales, leadership, and entrepreneurship gave them a strong foundation for launching Rooted Cultures. After working with small businesses and Fortune 500 companies, they found that no matter the size, the challenges are often the same.

"Leaders can feel stuck because they're trying to lead their teams without first understanding what's driving their own behavior," Roether said. "That's where we've seen our work make a real difference."

The duo was introduced to the Enneagram through their own journeys of growth and development. After experiencing how transformative this tool was for understanding themselves, they saw the potential of using the Enneagram

in business, particularly in leadership and team dynamics.

"Unlike tools that focus mainly on behavior, the Enneagram helps people understand what motivates them and why they do what they do," Roether said. "It highlights strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth, often revealing parts of ourselves we haven't fully understood before."

The Culture Coaches and Certified Enneagram Practitioners believe it's one of the most powerful leadership tools, providing personal and professional insights that lead to clarity and self-awareness.

As mothers raising teenagers with very different personalities at Arcadia High and Veritas Prep, the pair said they can't imagine not having this tool to help better understand their loved ones. This business lets them spread the word and share the Enneagram's benefits to help others see how they show up at work and at home.

"We hope people discover the Enneagram and realize that it's so much more than a personality test," Bailey said. "We see it as a powerful tool for understanding any relationship, and we use it in our own marriages, parenting, and professional lives."

They believe that creating and maintaining healthy



Joey Roether



Lindsay Bailey

relationships is a skill that can develop over time.

"The Enneagram can help you understand what motivates your child just as much as it can help you understand a coworker," Roether added.

Bailey and Roether work with businesses, university faculty and students at ASU, and travel nationwide to lead workshops.

"The most rewarding part of our work is watching people connect the dots and become more aware of who they are and how they show up," Bailey said. "We get so much joy from walking alongside leaders who may start frustrated with their team members and then begin to understand and appreciate their differences."

Bailey and Roether's shared goal is to help more leaders and organizations by improving how people work and relate to each other.

As they grow Rooted Cultures through individual coaching, development, team workshops, and organizational experiences, they look forward to helping others understand how to achieve real, lasting change with the Enneagram as a starting point.

rootedcultures.com

A legacy that's still growing

By Robin Sewell

Sixty-seven years ago, Peggy Goldwater began a Phoenix tradition rooted in the belief that women working together could save lives. Today, Denise Voss leads the 100-woman Phoenix Heart Ball committee in carrying that work forward.

"How can we continue to evolve? How can we reach more people, create greater impact and make this mission relevant to the next generation?" Voss asked.

Those questions have shaped her year as chairwoman. For Voss, honoring an established legacy means building on it, taking the committee's work further into the community and giving more people the knowledge and confidence to take charge of their health.

Voss joined the Phoenix Heart Ball Committee nearly a decade ago and served in several leadership roles before becoming chairwoman. She now oversees 23 committees responsible for fundraising, community initiatives, education, advocacy and outreach. The position demands the organization and judgment of a chief executive, but her approach begins with trust.

"Leadership isn't about doing everything yourself," she said. "It is about surrounding yourself with talented people, giving them the opportunity to use their strengths and creating an environment where everyone understands that their contribution matters."

The women she leads bring different experiences and perspectives to the work. They also bring full lives, families, careers and businesses yet continue to share their time and relationships with the cause.

"When women come together around a

shared purpose, there is very little they cannot accomplish," Voss said.

Her theme for the 67th year, "Transformative Hearts: Innovate. Educate. Empower," defines what she wants that shared purpose to achieve.

"Innovate is about advancing lifesaving science, technology and research," she said. "Educate is about giving people the knowledge to understand their risks, recognize warning signs and know how to respond in an emergency. And empower is about giving people the tools and confidence to take action for themselves, their families and their communities."

The committee's impact can be measured in programs already at work across Arizona.

The American Heart Association partners with local health organizations to improve screening, education and care for more than 25,000 people each month. It currently supports six active research grants in Arizona and has invested more than \$47 million in research across the state.

Its reach also extends to the conditions that shape health. The organization helped secure \$2 million for Double Up Food Bucks, giving more families access to Arizona-grown fruits and vegetables.

CPR education is particularly meaningful to Voss. Her family has helped fund training kits for Arizona schools, and last year nearly 75,000 people learned CPR through training centers and community events.

"When we teach young people CPR, we aren't simply teaching a skill, we are creating potential lifesavers," she said. "Those students take that knowledge into their homes and communities, and they may someday be standing beside a parent,



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBIN SEWELL

"Transformative Hearts: Innovate. Educate. Empower." is this year's theme.

grandparent, teammate or stranger when every second matters."

The return on that education may not be known for years. It may come on an otherwise ordinary day, when a heart stops and a former student has the courage to step forward.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States, giving the committee's all-female leadership special urgency. Voss wants women to understand that it is not only a man's disease and not something that happens only to someone else.

"We are often so busy taking care of everyone around us that our own health moves to the bottom of the list," she said. "Knowing your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and family history and understanding what those numbers mean can lead to conversations and changes that may ultimately save your life."

After nearly a decade with the committee, Voss has learned to see the individual lives behind its work. Heart disease may begin with

one person, but its effects reach husbands, fathers, siblings, children and friends.

"I have heard personal stories from people whose lives have been forever changed by heart disease or stroke," she said. "Behind every statistic is a person, a family and people who love them. That perspective changes the way you look at the work."

It has also changed the way she defines success. Her legacy, she said, will not be one evening, a fundraising total or even her year as chairwoman.

"If someone learned their numbers because of something they heard from us, learned CPR, scheduled a doctor's appointment, recognized a warning sign or encouraged someone they love to take better care of their heart, then this year will have accomplished something meaningful," Voss said. "Most of all, I hope we leave the Phoenix Heart Ball stronger for the women who will lead it next."

phoenixheartball.org



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PHOTO: COLE HORCHLER

Arcadia Little League is back in the swing of things

By AJ Stone

Over 1,200 kids are ready to experience the thrills of youth baseball to the fullest. Established in 1957, Arcadia Little League is one of the largest little leagues in the United States and partners with Arizona State University, Arcadia High School, professional coaches from around the Valley, and the Major League Alumni Association to provide participants with the best possible experience. This season, parents and players have plenty to be excited about.

“We are looking forward to another great season at Arcadia Little League,” President Cheri Pierce said. “One of our biggest goals remains creating a strong community baseball and softball program where kids of all experience levels can learn the game, develop their skills, compete, and have fun.”

New for the 2026 season, Arcadia Little League is hoping to upgrade its facilities.

“We are also continuing to invest and strengthen our partnerships with schools and the community,” Cheri said. “This season, we are hoping to expand our field usage by adding another campus to the family. We are currently working through the details of that partnership and hope to officially announce the new school in the spring.”

Registration for the 2026/2027 season opens on November 1 – and according to ALL, it’s a good time to get involved, because last season was full of memorable moments.

Between Austin Dooley’s legendary Home



The 8-9-10 and 9-10-11 teams after winning the district tournament in June.

Run Derby performance, mirroring the likes of the St. Louis Cardinals’ Jordan Walker, and four Arcadia All-Star teams making it to state-level playoffs, the league was full of competition, smiles, and memories. The next season also marks a serious transitional period for the league’s leadership.

Paul Kolo is set to be named League President for the 2027/2028 season and will serve side-by-side with Cheri.

“I have been involved with Arcadia Little League since 2011, when my daughter first started playing. Now my son will soon be aging out of the league, so it feels like the right time to pass the torch,” Cheri said.

“I am excited to have a season to work alongside Paul and help prepare him for the role while continuing to support the league and community that have been such a large part of our family’s lives.”

As for practices, families can expect a focus on fundamentals. The goal is to create an environment that challenges and encourages players. Practices start with the basics: throwing, catching, fielding, hitting, base running, and understanding the game. From there, coaches can build on those skills as the players develop.

“Our goal is to challenge experienced players while creating an environment where

newer players can learn, gain confidence, and develop a love for the game,” Cheri said.

The league’s competitive side has drawn serious talent in recent years. The commitment is much more intense. All-Star players can expect a demanding practice schedule followed by tournament play. Teams begin at the district level and, if they keep winning, can advance to state and, depending on the age division, regional, national, or international competition.

“Last season, our 10-11-12 All-Star team advanced through Arizona competition and earned the opportunity to play in the regional tournament in California. For those players, representing Arcadia at that level was an experience they have told us they will never forget,” Cheri said.

Upper-division evaluations will take place toward the end of January, and teams will be announced in early February. Practices usually begin around Valentine’s Day, and games begin around SUSD’s Spring Break, with the exact start date depending on the number of teams in each division.

Youth baseball fosters lifelong memories for both parents and children. From a first home run to a diving catch to embracing your teammates in the dugout, it’s an experience like no other.

arcadialittleleague.com

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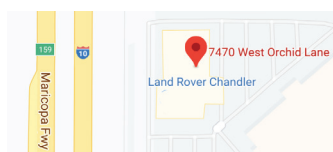
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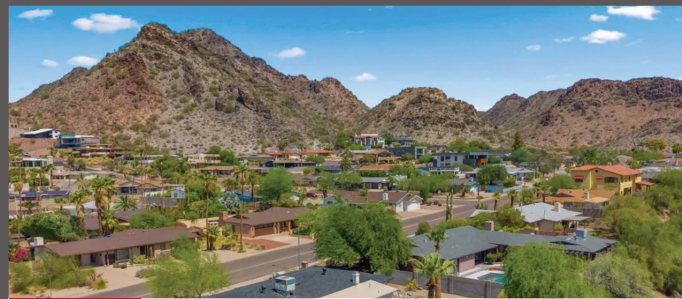


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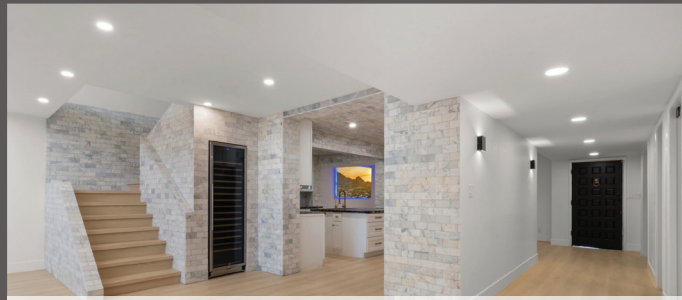
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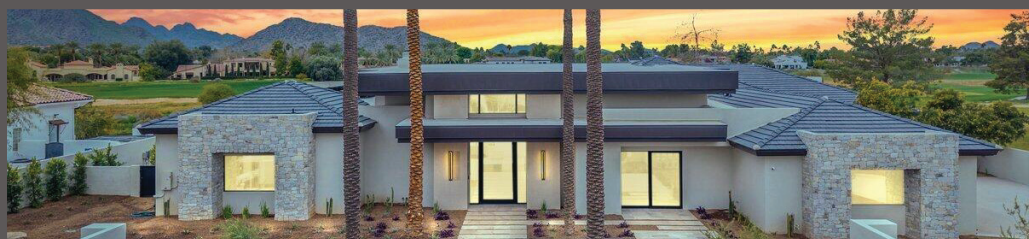


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In the Kitchen

In the Kitchen with Jennifer Caraway, Founder of The Joy Bus Diner

10401 N. 32nd St. Phoenix • joy-bus.org

For Jennifer Caraway, food has always been about more than what’s on the plate. Since founding The Joy Bus in 2011, she + her team have helped serve more than 118,000 meals to families facing cancer. Today, Caraway runs the diner and the nonprofit behind it, bringing her lifelong love of food to the table in more ways than one.

Tell us the story of The Joy Bus.

I grew up on the west side, and on Sundays, there was a bus that would pick up kids and take them to Sunday school. It was called The Joy Bus. When my friend Joy became ill with ovarian cancer, I started making her meals. The name had two meanings.

One day, when I was delivering her food, I had a thought that there were probably a lot of people out there that don’t have this kind of support. I decided to create the organization and called it Joy Bus because of my friend but also because of that bus in my childhood neighborhood. Once I had the idea, I spoke at a case managers conference, pitched it and got my first two clients.

Did you have experience in the restaurant industry?

My entire career has been in this industry. I started as a dishwasher when I was 14; then waited tables. I moved to Flagstaff and worked my way up, like a lot of others. It was for this pasta restaurant that’s not there anymore which sucks because it was really good [laughs]. I started as a busser, went to the line, then I left and got a general manager job.

You moved around a bit?

Yes! I left Flag for Portland, Oregon, and opened my first restaurant. Then I moved to Puerto Vallarta and opened a second restaurant, then went to Spain for a bit – where I had my two kids – and then I came back here to open a third restaurant.

How does The Joy Bus work?

I was making all the meals in my home with my two kids – they work in the diner with me now, which is rad, I get to be with my kids all day. So I was cooking all the food and partnered with Crooked Sky Farms for produce... I would go to the farm every Wednesday, get the food, cook it and deliver it.

For three years we were doing this out of our house. National Charity League started volunteering and that was a game changer – they would come to the house, pick up meals, deliver – the program wouldn’t be what it is without them. It grew so much that I was running out of room in my kitchen so I proposed to the board that we needed a commercial kitchen.

I said, ‘Let’s buy a restaurant and invite the public in, and 100 percent of the proceeds will go toward the organization.’ And they were not about it, because



restaurants are hard! It’s a tough industry. But I’ve done this my entire life so I was able to convince them – even though at first I was pretty naïve, like, I thought we could run this with 100 percent volunteers.

It’s all volunteer-run?

It’s a skill – there are skills in this diner – and that’s what we needed to make it run, so we switched the model to 60 percent paid, 40 percent volunteer. At first, it was just me on the line and my son was in the dish pit and my daughter waited tables.

As we got busier, we brought more people on. Our chef is brand-new and he’s legit, with awards and the white hat and everything. We’re so fortunate to have Chef Lenny with us.

Give us an example of one of the meals.

Each delivery is a week’s worth of food – at least 10 meals with each drop. Almost all of it is sourced locally. I’ve done my due diligence throughout the years and

worked with our farmers and ranchers to make sure that these meals are made with real, fresh ingredients.

One of the meals is a lamb and sweet potato meatball with turmeric rice and salad. We also do snack bags that have items like apple slices or oranges, maybe some peanut butter and granola and yogurt, some cheese.

What is a medically-tailored meal?

In order for our food to be a ‘medically-tailored meal,’ you have to have a registered dietary nutritionist on staff – we are a hub for all the RDNs at U of A and Grand Canyon University, Paradise Valley Community College, and they work with our chef to ensure that the recipes are specified to that client’s needs. Once they sign off, we can put the meal into production.

What’s the Food is Medicine Coalition?

I started the Arizona branch of the Food is Medicine Coalition last year. I’ve been to other states that do what we do and seen how they operate and seen how the

government and legislatures work to keep them funded. I know it's possible but Arizona doesn't have the things it needs to make that work – yet.

I work with farmers, ranchers, health care people and providers, physicians, food-focused nonprofits, food banks, etc., so I can go and advocate for legislative action – not as The Joy Bus, but as everyone in this space, so that we can get costs billed directly to Medicare/Medicaid for our food.

What is the first thing you remember cooking?

I was just talking about this the other day! I think it's a bananas foster at, like, age 9.

...isn't that the one you light on fire?

Yes [laughs].

Did you attend culinary school?

I knew from the beginning that it'd be working in restaurants. But it was easier for me to learn by doing. I opened a Mexican restaurant in Portland. Growing up in Arizona, we have Mexican food and taco shops all over the place.

I like to sweat when I eat [laughs], so my food has a lot of spice. At the time, there were no Mexican spots in Portland, so I bought a building for, like, \$13 grand and opened a restaurant. While I was there I met my kids' dad and he was from Sinaloa, so we went to Mexico and I opened a place there. After we split, I moved to Tijuana with the kids and the company I worked for closed, so Spain was next. When I came back to the states, I opened a place in Scottsdale.

Where does the inspiration for the Joy Bus meals come from?

From travel. For example, my daughter and I hiked

“

I knew from the beginning that it'd be working in restaurants.
But it was easier for me to learn by doing.

”

Machu Picchu in Peru, and when we came back, I cooked *causa limeña de pollo* (a cold layered potato and chicken dish) for clients. Every time I go somewhere I bring a dish back and implement it into the program. That's a big reason that I travel, so I can eat! My kids and husband, when we travel, get angry when I say we're walking... because if we walk, I can try 10 different restaurants. I have a list! I have a map!

What's been your favorite place you've traveled thus far?

Nice, in France. This baguette we ate on the beach was amazing. It was a crusty baguette from a truck on the beach and it had goat cheese and ground beef.

I got to go to Italy when I was working for an import company and brought the kids with me, and while we were there I ran us ragged with all the places we went and food we ate. By the time we got to Nice and saw that food truck, we were so tired and so excited to sit and eat.

Tell us about your time on Chopped.

I think that probably put us on the map a bit. I didn't want to do it, honestly. When we started this I thought I would be in the kitchen and no one was going to talk to me.

They called the restaurant and I thought it was a joke, right, like, I'm running a diner [laughs]. My daughter

really loves the show so she convinced me to do it; I studied so hard, making sure I knew what judges liked and which judges liked whatever dishes. I used the \$10,000 I won and put it toward The Joy Bus. That was huge for us, but then all these people started calling and it was like, 'No, I did this, I'm done, now I'm focused on the program.'

What does a day in the life of Jennifer Caraway look like?

I start at 5 a.m. and I'm usually done around 7 p.m. I'm running a restaurant, I'm running a nonprofit – two of the most difficult industries, and I put them together. I'm a genius, right? [laughs]

It costs a lot to give out free food, so I'm constantly looking for ways to generate funding. Today I started with a fundraising meeting for our gala in October. Then I met with you. Then another meeting. Then a virtual lecture with a company in LA. Then a meeting with a charity for an event in December. Then a board meeting. Then dinner with a potential donor. It's a lot!

What's next for The Joy Bus?

I want to be able to provide meals across the state. We're looking for partners and volunteers and it's a great goal, so we're excited to get the ball rolling.

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"Meet Mr." | Ray Artigue

Officer Andrew Miller

Some people are shaped by what they do for a living. Others are shaped by what they've seen along the way. In the case of Officer Andrew Miller, it's probably a little of both.

A 25-year veteran of the Phoenix Police Department, Miller has spent much of his career dealing with people and situations most of us would prefer never to encounter. Yet there's a thoughtful, sensitive side to him – with a deep appreciation for his faith and a love of classical music. Get to know Miller, and you realize there's more to this police officer than badge number he wears.

"I guess I have a natural inclination to want to protect people, especially kids," reflects the stocky cop, who goes by Drew. A warm smile belies his imposing physical stature.

Miller said he grew up wanting to be in law enforcement but even still, he left the police force a few times, thinking he would try his hand at something else. He returned because he missed serving people.

"I have the best job in our precinct – Mountain View Precinct 71 – because I get to do a little bit of everything," he said. He compares the role to that of a free safety in football, "where you see the field and go to where the action is at."

Miller grew up in a large Irish Catholic family in

upstate New York, the youngest of nine children. He attended SUNY Brockport where he played soccer and studied criminal justice. "I was better on the soccer field than I was in the lecture hall," he said, grinning.

After college, he followed one of his brothers to the Valley in 1999. "It was a tough adjustment coming to Arizona; the landscape, the heat and even the culture."

Miller says he has seen too much of the "dark side" in his quarter century of service patrolling the streets, and occasionally it has been more than a little risky.

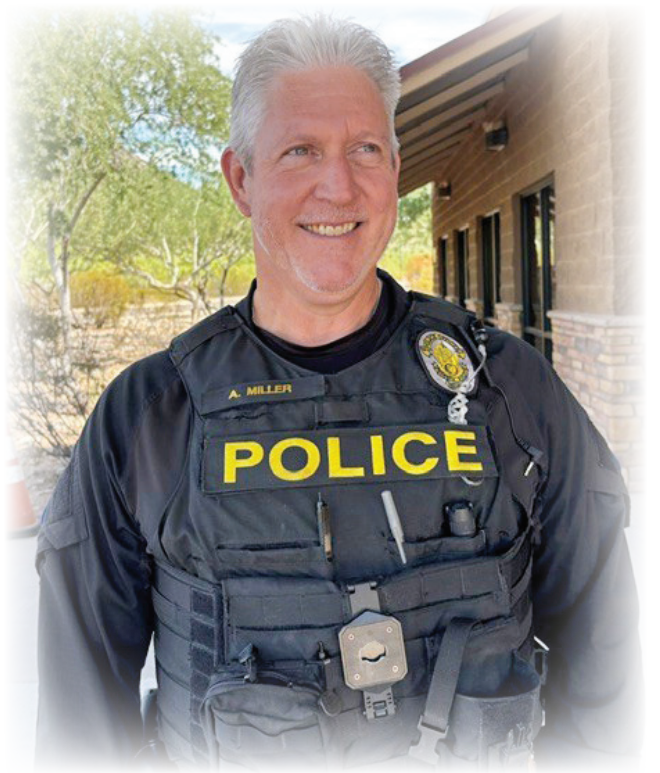
"Several times, I felt my life was in danger. Once, a woman in a mental health crisis was firing a gun in the neighborhood. With her family behind me, I aimed my gun at her as she said, 'Shoot me,' and slowly raised her gun. By the grace of God, she ultimately dropped it."

As CAO, he serves as a liaison between the precinct and the hundreds of neighborhoods that it covers. "I probably shouldn't say this but Arcadia is one of my favorites. Sometimes I just drive around admiring the landscapes and the views. It's a great neighborhood and so are the people," he said.

Miller met his wife while working as a security officer at a hospital where she worked. They have been married 20 years and have two daughters. He often keeps his answers general – not saying names, because police officers, especially former detectives, must protect their personal information. "You never know when someone might want payback."

Despite the unpredictable and dangerous daily routine, Miller has maintained a positive outlook on life, shaped

"Arcadia is one of my favorites. Sometimes I just drive around admiring the landscapes and the views."



largely by a personal faith passed down to him by his mother.

"My mom was always faithful and a real prayer warrior. I learned much from her," he said. Today he is a regular in a men's bible study and also teaches Sunday School. Miller's advice for young people is direct and without waver:

"Be a critical thinker, question what you have been told, seek other perspectives, and consider the bible as the way to find truth in a world full of lies and deception."

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ADVENTURES AWAIT



Get ready for action-packed exploration of the Sonoran Desert

By Alex Gross

The desert can be treacherous, and no one can attest to that more than Phoenixians in the summertime. But it can also be beautiful, and Stellar Adventures has made it their goal over the last 30 years to make sure everyone gets to experience that splendor.

After living in Indiana for most of his life, founder JJ Briles found the perfect place to explore his innate love for the outdoors. In a city whose backyard is lined with mountains and gorgeous sunsets, he wanted to make a living in a way that let him appreciate nature.

As a concierge at The Phoenician, Briles made connections with Valley companies in the tourism industry. One of those connections became a

friendship and eventually a business partnership.

What started with one Hummer in 1997 has now turned into an operation with 35 all-terrain vehicles and 25 utility task vehicles – one of the largest fleets in the Southwest.

“I just enjoy creating the activities and meeting the guests,” Briles said. “It’s really amazing to be part of people’s bucket list and to get to show them the Sonoran Desert – just like I slowly fell in love with it.”

Whereas guests 10 years ago preferred “safari style” tours where they relaxed in the backseat and learned about the desert’s flora and fauna, today’s clientele wants to be in the thick of it. Guides take the front and rear to ensure safety, but guests get to push the throttle, navigate

around cacti and shrubs, and plow through water.

What has kept Stellar Adventures alive is their ability to adapt, growing from offering just off-road excursions to food and whiskey tastings.

“I learned early on that you can’t just offer the same thing over and over again,” Briles said. “I’m a one-stop shop. Adventure means something different to everybody.”

They partner with Cien Agaves in Old Town Scottsdale for a tour called Trails and Tequila. Prickly pear margaritas and street tacos provide the perfect refreshment after a day in the desert. Stellar Adventures doesn’t only serve the tourist crowd either – one of their most popular offerings is team-building events for corporate groups.

“Once they get back, they’re all

showing each other pictures or talking about what they did. It’s giving them a different feel than a regular banquet lunch or seminar dinner,” Briles said.

To explore an environment as diverse as the desert, you have to be versatile. In winter, up to 18 guides lead tours throughout the day, but summer heat becomes a seasonal obstacle.

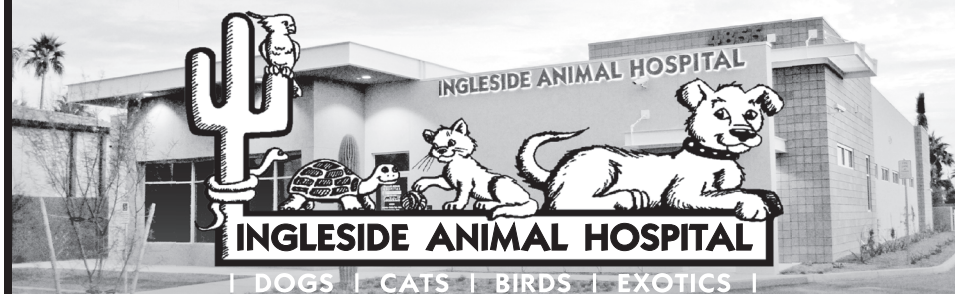
Briles’ solution? Stargazing. At night, guests dodge the heat and meet an astronomer on the trail.

“Guests are taking four, five hours from their vacation, which might be the only one they get for the whole year, to spend with us,” Briles said. “We need to make sure it’s what they expect and what they want.”

Stellar Adventures offers experiences that keep guests coming back.

stellaradventures.com

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Can you dig it? Local business has greenery for every season

By Michael P. Murphy

Dig It Gardens is a terrific name for a business that's downright cool. Tucked away in Phoenix, the nursery is a hidden gem, and founders Ryan and Jessica Jerrell kind of like it that way. There's a welcoming feeling here, and first-time customers marvel at 30,000 square feet of glorious greenery outside – not to mention the colorful mural on the 16th Street side of the building.

"The name originated with my husband," said Jessica. "It used to be Dig It Gardens and Nursery. Over the years we shortened it to Dig It Gardens. Then we found that the community, the people who come here all the time, call it Dig."

Dig is more than a nursery. It's a place where weddings, bachelorette parties, birthday parties, and corporate events take place in a pleasing, natural setting.

There are also fun educational workshops, such as the Succulent Skull and Pumpkin Wreath classes, and popular seasonal events that some families return to year after year. And in October? That's when the nursery really starts revving up.

"Fall is Christmas around here," Jessica said. "My inventory has already tripled. We're very seasonal, so you can always feel confident when you walk in the door that what you see on our floor can be planted. All the plants here have been hardened by the summer sun and can go in the ground right now."

Jessica emphasizes one point above all: that planting takes preparation. Adjusting irrigation for the season matters, but it all begins with the soil.

"You must make sure you get it right, and the soil fits the foundation of your home. If you have the right mix of everything, then plant your veggies and herbs," she said.

Ryan's primary focus is managing Dig It's landscape service, and it's where he spends much of his time. After the consulting and design process, he stays



For Jessica and Ryan Jerrell, Dig It Gardens is more than a nursery – it's an event space, a workshop and a store where people can find all types of plants.

on-site for the entire duration of the work, ensuring the design's integrity through completion and staying mindful of the client's investment.

The duo, along with their team, also volunteers. They've supported St. Mary's Food Bank, the Alzheimer's Foundation, and Phoenix Children's Hospital.

They partner with Community 43, an organization that helps people struggling

with unemployment and mental health challenges. The crew helps plant, propagate, and care for the special succulents and cacti in a donated greenhouse, then sells them and gives the proceeds to Community 43.

It's all in the spirit of community, one that has supported Dig It Gardens for 11 years. Jessica sums up their business philosophy nicely:

"What we strive to do, and we've told our

employees throughout the years, is that we simply want to be a space where you come in and leave feeling a little bit better."

Whether you're looking for the perfect cactus, seasonal color, a few herbs to get your garden growing, help with a landscape project, or simply a place to wander and get inspired, Dig It has plenty to discover.

digphx.com

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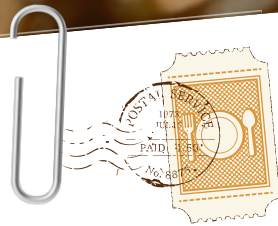
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Cheers, chills and autumn thrills

By Madalyn Paltzik

October in the Valley is a funny thing. The pumpkins arrive before the sweater weather does, and “fall” can still mean checking if the high will dip below 90. Luckily, the calendar has no such identity crisis. Here are some of the fall festivities worth marking on the calendar.

Arizona State Fair

azstatefair.com

When: October 1-November 1, Thursdays through Sundays. Gates open at noon; last entry is 9 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays and 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Where: Arizona State Fairgrounds, 1826 W. McDowell Road, Phoenix

Price: \$20 for ages 13 and older; \$12 for ages 5-12; \$14 for ages 62 and older; free for children younger than 4.

This month-long tradition brings carnival rides and games, concerts, agricultural exhibits, animals, competitions and enough fair food to make visitors reconsider everything they know about what can reasonably be deep-fried.

Brat Haus Oktoberfest

brathausaz.com

When: Saturday, October 3, noon-8 p.m.

Where: Brat Haus, 3622 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale

Price: \$10 cover

Old Town is getting a Bavarian makeover. Brat Haus' Oktoberfest serves up brats, schnitzel and pretzels alongside Oktoberfest beers, music and competition. A complimentary firkin keg tapping kicks off at 1 p.m., followed by stein-hoisting contests at 1:30 and 3 p.m. and a brat-eating contest at 2 p.m. Lederhosen may not be mandatory, but this is certainly the place for it.

MacDonald's Ranch Pumpkin Patch

macdonaldsranch.com

When: October 3-31, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; closed Tuesdays. The ranch closes at 3 p.m. on Halloween.

Where: MacDonald's Ranch, 26540 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale

Price: \$15 per person; children 2 and younger are free. Pony rides and train rides are \$5, animal feed is \$3 and pumpkins range from \$2 to \$60 depending on size.

MacDonald's Ranch includes a petting zoo, gold panning, a hay-bale maze, pedal cars, scavenger hunts, lawn and carnival games and plenty of photo stops with admission.

Four Peaks Oktoberfest

fourpeaksoktoberfest.com

When: Friday, October 9, 5 p.m.-midnight; Saturday, October 10, noon-midnight; Sunday, October 11, noon-10 p.m.



Spooky Safari takes place at Phoenix Zoo on October 28-30.

Where: Tempe Beach Park, 80 W. Rio Salado Parkway, Tempe

Price: Friday and Saturday admission for ages 21 and older is \$22 presale or \$25 at the gate. Ages 20 and younger are free all weekend, and admission is free for everyone Sunday.

More than 50 years of Oktoberfest tradition return to Tempe Town Lake for a weekend of beer, bratwurst, German food, live music and a full-size carnival. There are also dachshund races, contests, free Kinderfest activities for younger festivalgoers and the Runnin' for the Brats 10K, 5K and 1K. In other words, there are multiple ways to earn the brat afterward.

Merchantile Market Fall Fest

merchantilemarket.com

When: Saturday, October 10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, October 11, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Where: WestWorld of Scottsdale, North Hall, 16601 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale

Price: \$12 general admission per day; parking is \$10 per vehicle per day. VIP options are available.

For anyone whose preferred fall sport is shopping, Merchantile Market is taking its Fall Fest indoors at WestWorld. More than 100 handpicked vendors will be joined by live bands, food and drinks, a costume contest and children's activities. The market will feature local makers, artists, boutiques, vintage curators and small businesses.

Strange Garden Spirit Walk

dbg.org

When: Thursday, October 22, 6-9 p.m.

Where: Desert Botanical Garden, 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix

Price: \$104.95 for members; \$114.95 general admission.

The desert gets a little stranger after dark. Desert Botanical Garden is launching its first Spirit Walk with SanTan Distillery as part of its expanded Strange Garden Halloween programming. Guests can dress in costume and wander the trails through spooky surprises while sampling seasonal bites and fall cocktails. Those looking for a family option can return October 23-24 for Strange Garden Family Weekend, featuring immersive activities, live entertainment, unusual plants and creatures and a pumpkin patch.

Spooktacular Hot Air Balloon Festival

azspooktacular.com

When: Friday, October 23-Sunday, October 25, 5-9 p.m. nightly

Where: Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, 7555 N. Pima Road, Scottsdale

Price: General-admission prices vary by age and ticket type; current listings begin around \$19.57. Tethered balloon rides cost an additional \$30 for adults and \$20 for children 10 and younger.

More than 20 balloons will glow on the field and double as trick-or-treat stations, with organizers preparing more than 4,000 pounds of candy. General admission also includes live music, a Kids Zone with inflatable attractions and a family-friendly Haunted Trail. Costume contests take place Friday and Saturday. The balloons remain tethered rather than launching and generally glow from around 5:45 to 8:30 p.m., weather permitting.

EEK! At the Peak!

scottsdaleaz.gov

When: Saturday, October 24, 9-11 a.m.

Where: Pinnacle Peak Park, Scottsdale

Price: Free; advance registration is required.

Halloween meets the Sonoran Desert at Pinnacle Peak Park's morning celebration. Eek! At the Peak! will feature treats and costume contests alongside educational activities and a Junior Ranger program, making this a Halloween event where kids might leave with candy and some new desert knowledge.

Día de los Muertos Fiesta

scottsdaleadelosmuertos.com

When: Saturday, October 24, 1-10 p.m.

Where: Scottsdale Civic Center, 3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd., Scottsdale

Price: Free

Día de los Muertos marks its 10th annual celebration with a day of music, art, remembrance and culture. Visitors can explore large-scale art installations and altars, shop from merchants and arts and crafts vendors and watch the Catrina Fashion Show at 5 p.m. The Desfile de los Muertos procession begins at 7 p.m., followed by Grammy-nominated artist Lupita Infante at 8 p.m.

Dunkin' for Pumpkins

community.scottsdaleaz.gov

When: Sunday, October 25, 1-3 p.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m.

Where: McDowell Mountain Ranch Park & Aquatic Center, Scottsdale

Price: \$15 per pumpkin; registration is required.

Pumpkin patches are usually known for hay. Scottsdale's version adds a swimming pool. The floating pumpkin patch returns to McDowell Mountain Ranch Aquatic Center, where participants can choose a pumpkin from the water before decorating it on dry land. Carnival games, crafts and music are also planned for both sessions.

Spooky Safari

phoenixzoo.org

When: Wednesday, October 28-Friday, October 30, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Where: Phoenix Zoo, 455 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix

Price: \$18 per person; children 2 and younger are free.

Lions and tigers and trick-or-treating! For three nights leading into Halloween, the Phoenix Zoo will trade its usual evening routine for Spooky Safari. Costumes are encouraged as guests make their way through trick-or-treating, face painting, an hourly costume parade, games and activities around the zoo.

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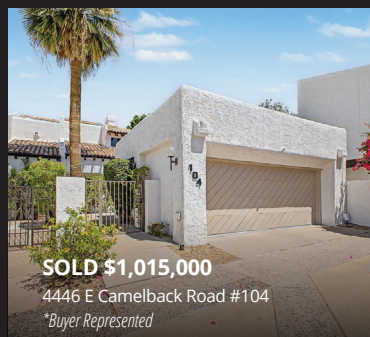
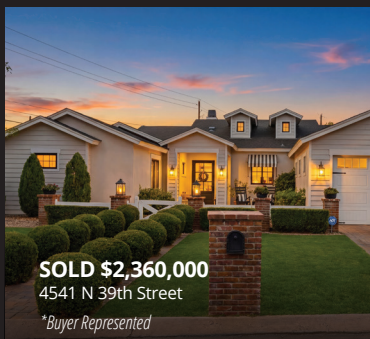
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Paige Alexandria, Tashi Gorzen, and Sasha Gorzen launched Zoni Girls in 2020 as an apparel and lifestyle brand that now serves as a pop-up skate rink.

Just roll with it: Zoni Girls lead community skate events

By Sherry Sklar

As dusk fell over Papago Buttes, skaters circled Zoni Girls' bright pink pop-up rink at Desert Botanical Garden to a steady beat during the three-day Saguaro & Skate event in September.

Zoni Girls evolved from a skate-inspired

clothing brand into an experiential business with an inclusive, local-first focus. It quickly grew through social media. Sisters Paige Alexandria, Tashi Gorzen, and Sasha Gorzen launched Zoni Girls in January 2020 as an apparel and lifestyle brand.

The business took an unexpected turn

a couple of years later at 2nd Sundays on Mill, a market where the trio ran a booth showcasing their accessories and merchandise. They were preparing to open their first skate shop on Mill Avenue in Tempe, where they would sell their own products as well as boutique lines in the skate, surf, and biking scene.

"It's easy to get large-scale brands, like Vans and Roxy, but we really wanted to highlight local creators," Alexandria said.

In addition to clothes and accessories, customers kept asking if they rented roller skates, which they didn't have at the time. At their mom's suggestion to be open to trying new things, they decided to purchase a small fleet of 10 skates, and rentals took off.

As the Downtown Tempe Authority (DTA) looked to expand family programming, it invited Zoni Girls to host their first roller-skating pop-up in front of AMC. That fleet grew from 10 skates to 50 and now numbers 1,000.

"If you just really listen to your community and don't get stuck in what you thought the business was going to be," Alexandria said, "then it opens you up to giving people what they need."

Alexandria and Sasha now primarily run Zoni Girls, with the family still involved in the background. Their mother helps coordinate events and make props by hand, while dad helps with the warehouse and supervises building the skate ramps they need. Alexandria said the close-knit family helps keep one another grounded and laughing.

Zoni Girls has hosted pop-up events in Phoenix, Las Vegas, and California. After closing their rink at Arizona Center in February, they now focus on traveling pop-up experiences instead of a permanent

location. Their website offers a curated skate shop and boutique merchandise. This fully mobile business model gives them flexibility a permanent location could not.

"The more we can travel and get to different communities and see different walks of people and different walks of life is really, really fun for us," Alexandria said.

That sense of community extends to the people who help bring the pop-up events to life. DJ Joey Torres, who has worked Zoni Girls events, said the sisters' hospitality is what stands out most.

"They make you feel safe, whether a team member blocks traffic while another helps you up after that embarrassing fall," Torres said. "Nobody on the team has to be told what to do. They jump into action, and they genuinely want you to have fun."

He said that spirit carries through the entire event: "The way that they treat their staff bleeds into the experience, and it shows. The staff will sing, dance and engage with guests, the DJs and the vendors."

Zoni Girls is looking toward fall. Alexandria said the company is planning its annual Freak Show for October 23, a Halloween event for ages 21 and older that combines roller skating, music, cocktails and circus-inspired performances.

"We try to mix art forms, so it's not just a roller skating event," Alexandria said. "You can come and dance, come and just watch, come and have a drink and enjoy and mingle."

The destinations might change, but the goal remains the same for the Zoni Girls: keep rolling into new communities and creating spaces where everyone feels welcome to join the fun.

zonigirls.com

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A sweet escape in Strawberry

We've been to Strawberry before, but we always knew we'd be back. The small mountain community has a way of drawing you in with its tall pines, cooler air, and easygoing pace. About 100 miles from Phoenix, it is close enough

for a spontaneous escape from the Valley, yet by the time you arrive, it feels as though you have traveled somewhere entirely new.

On our latest visit for Arizona Highways Television, two neighboring roadside destinations captured that feeling perfectly: Windmill Coffee and The Strawberry Inn. Together, they offer travelers a warm

welcome along State Route 87.

With its tiny gray-and-white building and unmistakable windmill, Windmill Coffee immediately caught our attention. We quickly learned we were not alone.



Robins' Adventures

BY ROBIN SEWELL

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



The Strawberry Inn.

Owner Dan Berryman said the landmark has become an unofficial welcome center.

"In Strawberry, the windmill is one of the first things you see," Berryman said. "A lot of people stop to take pictures."

The windmill may bring people in, but the creative menu gives them a reason to stay. The shop serves beans from Arizona-based Press Coffee and offers traditional favorites alongside drinks with a playful twist.

Naturally, we had to learn about the strawberry mocha. Berryman admitted he was skeptical when a customer first asked him to combine strawberry, chocolate, and espresso. The customer eventually persuaded him, and after Berryman tasted one himself, it earned a permanent place on the menu.

The Honey Bear Latte is the shop's

most popular drink. Created by an employee, it tastes like a cinnamon graham cracker and comes topped with real honey. Strawberry lemonade, cold brew, and frozen creations are also customer faves.

Just nearby, The Strawberry Inn gave us another reason to fall for the town.

Amber and Carson Eilers purchased the property after Amber saw potential in the aging roadside inn. Built in the 1970s, it was in rough shape and nearly disappeared from view beneath its dark green and maroon color scheme. Carson initially decided it was not the place for them, but Amber was captivated.

"It just felt like our own little fairy-tale place," she said.

The couple transformed the property without losing its character. They

introduced a fresh color palette, painted the decorative wooden railings white, and added strawberry-red doors. Inside, they chose a calm, comfortable style that allows the surrounding mountain scenery to speak for itself.

The inn operates much like a vacation rental, with digital check-in and a virtual concierge. Although Amber and Carson are not always on the property, guests stay connected through texts and social media, often sharing family memories, baby photos, and even wedding proposals.

As the Eilers family grew, so did the inn. The couple added larger cabins, about a dozen tiny cottages, and completely remodeled Airstream trailers that pair vintage charm with modern amenities. Accommodations range from studios with bunk beds to two-room spaces for four to six guests. Many are dog-friendly, and shared outdoor areas include games, picnic tables, and swings.

At an elevation of about 6,000 feet, Strawberry offers cooler summer evenings and occasional winter snow, often just enough to create a postcard-worthy scene.

For our crew, Strawberry delivered exactly what a good road trip should: a change of scenery, a little discovery, and the feeling of getting away without having to travel too far. As always, the best part: it's just off an Arizona highway.

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The Beau Collective offers retail and fitness therapy

By Rachael Bouley

Strength training, shopping, and social events all in one? That's the business model behind The Beau Collective, a concept that first took off in Park City, Utah, and made its way to Phoenix.

Whitney White Kozlowski, who grew up along Central Avenue and attended Xavier Prep, started The Beau Collective in 2014 while juggling three jobs as a fitness instructor, mom, and hotel concierge.

"I drafted the concept on a cocktail napkin one night, and from the beginning, it was instantly about more than fitness. It was a third place: somewhere between home and work where people could sweat, connect, shop, and treat community as a verb," White Kozlowski said.

The business has moved to five different locations in Park City, evolving each time before landing in Arizona and its new home at Uptown Plaza, a recently revived North Central shopping center.

"The business just keeps taking us where it wants to go. It's part of our charm," White Kozlowski said. "I love all parts of the Valley, but this area is special to me. I am still stunned that it unfolded to be here, within a mile of Xavier, Brophy, St. Francis, Meadows and All Saints – they've shaped a lot of my life."

Growing up nearby, White Kozlowski credits Xavier with instilling confidence and resilience, helping her find success in the health and fitness industries.

The Beau Collective is a boutique fitness studio at its core, but it's also a retail destination and a gathering spot. White Kozlowski describes it as "premium retail energy with a little surf shop soul mixed in."

The classes are held in studios with no mirrors; instead, inspirational quotes line the walls and upbeat music gives guests the feel of an "escape." After working out, people can enjoy engaging social experiences and do a bit of shopping.

Coach Brooke Sanches offers classes each week and integrates elements from popular drill sets in Park City. The lineup varies: HIIT for interval and cardio work, LIFTY for heavier, slower strength training, CRUSH for a combo cardio-lift-core format, HYROX for the competitor mindset with intervals followed by a more relaxed vibe twice a week.

"The goal is that no matter what someone needs that day, there's a class built for it," White Kozlowski said.

The retail side has been curated over a decade with a unique mix of goods, gifts, and gear. A partnership with lululemon in 2020 helped pave the way forward to a new model and ultimately created a new revenue line for The Beau Collective.

"We've stacked great brands like Free People Movement, Aviator Nation, Marine Layer, Criquet, Spiritual Gangster, and Truckers by Tams," White



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH DUNCAN

The Beau Collective is a boutique fitness studio, retail destination and gathering spot for events and workshops in Uptown Phoenix.



Whitney White Kozlowski

Kozlowski said. "We buy with depth over width; we love everything we sell and have a variety of price points for all."

The Beau Collective is on a mission to impact and delight people daily. White Kozlowski credits Sarah Duncan and the Phoenix team

for creating a consistent culture and collaborative spirit, with exciting events like a Fall Challenge and a Pilates Rave coming soon.

For the founder, the best part of The Beau Collective is creating space for people to dwell.

"I really do believe that good

people bring out the good in people. I love when it's crowded, and people are talking, laughing, working out, sitting, and shopping with great music on in the background," White Kozlowski shared. "We call it healthy hospitality, and it does wonders."

thebeauctollectivephx.com

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How a LinkedIn post became a life-changing connection

By Mallory Gleich

When Kim O'Donogue opened LinkedIn on February 29, 2024, she had one task: update a credential on her profile. She wasn't looking for a way to change someone's life... until she saw a post from a woman asking for help finding a kidney donor.

Kim had never met Linda. In fact, the two had never even interacted on LinkedIn. But something about the post stopped her.

"I have always followed my gut. For whatever reason, when I saw her post, it was something I had to do," she said.

That evening, she messaged Linda. The following day, she contacted Mayo Clinic in Phoenix and told the team she was interested in becoming a living kidney donor. Within weeks, Kim had gone through the extensive evaluation process required to become a donor. By April, she had been cleared. Her donation was scheduled for June 11, 2024. She met Linda in person for the first time the night before surgery.

Kim works in the cardiac medical device industry and was connected to Linda through their shared industry. Until that February evening, however, their connection had never gone beyond the digital world. Once Kim reached out, the process moved quickly.

"I knew that we would not be a match

due to our blood types; however, I was aware of the voucher program through the national kidney registry," she said.

Here's how it works: Kim's kidney would go to a recipient who was a match, and Linda would receive a voucher that moved her to the top of the transplant list.

Kim's left kidney was donated to a person in New Jersey. She has never met the person who received it. Linda, however, lives in Arizona, and the duo has remained close since that initial message.

Before the procedure, Mayo Clinic arranged phone calls with multiple professionals, including a caseworker and social worker, before Kim underwent medical testing and evaluations.

"The process is fascinating and is one of the main reasons I love to share our story," she said.

The evaluation included a CT scan, extensive lab work, and other assessments. Donors are evaluated for physical health and to make sure they are mentally and emotionally prepared for the decision. Kim said she was repeatedly reminded that she could change her mind at any point.

The toughest part, surprisingly, was a 24-hour blood pressure monitor that squeezed her arm every 15 minutes.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM O'DONOGUE

Linda and Kim have remained in touch over the past two years, sharing their story to raise awareness.

"I kept reminding myself that people with kidney failure spend hours each week on dialysis and this test was nothing compared to that," she said.

Her results went before an evaluation committee, which determines whether donors are appropriate candidates. When Kim received the call that she had been cleared to donate, she was getting her hair done.

"I was in tears; I was so happy. I couldn't wait to tell Linda!" she said.

As the surgery approached, the pair spoke several times. Kim knew that Linda was putting an enormous amount of trust in someone she had never met, and wanted her to know she was committed.

"I couldn't imagine being the one who needs a transplant and putting your trust in someone you don't know," she said.

She kept Linda updated throughout the evaluation process, letting her know when appointments were scheduled and how they went. The night before surgery, they finally met face-to-face.

Kim remembers one thing Linda told her when she first learned that a stranger was willing to donate a kidney for her.

"She told me, 'I'll take good care of it,'" Kim said. "It broke my heart."

Kim never expected Linda to explain why she needed a transplant or share her personal medical story. For her, the reason was enough: Linda needed a kidney, and Kim wanted to help. Meeting Linda and her husband before the surgery only made the experience more meaningful.

"They are lovely and wonderful

people, and getting to meet them before I donated was amazing," Kim said.

Linda received her transplant a few months later. The two still text every once in a while. During their first meeting, Linda and her husband shared a dream they had for after the transplant: taking a cruise once she was healthy enough to travel. A few months ago, they finally did it.

Kim's surgeon used a robotic procedure to remove the kidney, and she took six weeks off work. She experienced some weakness during her recovery but said she ultimately recovered beautifully. By August, she was hiking at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon with her mom.

Maybe the most remarkable part of the experience is knowing that somewhere in New Jersey, a person she has never met is living with the kidney she donated.

Kim hopes that person is healthy and happy. And every once in a while, she allows herself to wonder if their paths might someday cross. The experience reinforced a philosophy she carries: "we all serve in our own way."

She is now pursuing a master's degree and considers herself a lifelong learner.

"I like to share my story so that people know this is an option, and also to provide hope to those who are awaiting a transplant," she said. "You never know who is going to see it and will be called to be their donor. What do we have if we don't have hope?"



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EAT UP DRIVE IN

The Dining Scoop

Chili weather has officially arrived... or we're at least hoping to conjure it with this month's Dining Scoop. October is National Chili Month, giving diners the perfect excuse to seek out bowls of the hearty, spicy, stick-to-your-ribs favorite around the Valley. Here are a few spots serving up their own take.

CHICAGO HAMBURGER COMPANY

3749 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix
chicagohamburger.com

At Chicago Hamburger Company, chili isn't just for a bowl. This longtime Phoenix favorite puts its chili to work in three classic comfort-food combinations: chili dogs, chili fries and Frito pie. If you like your chili piled onto a hot dog, smothering a basket of crispy fries or spooned over crunchy Fritos, Chicago Hamburger is the spot to be.



PITA JUNGLE

4340 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix
pitajungle.com

At Pita Jungle, their new, seasonal 6-Way Chili puts a Mediterranean spin on the comfort-food classic, featuring kafta-spiced beef, Roman beans and guajillo peppers, topped with cheddar, pine nuts and fresh herbs.

EAT UP DRIVE IN

4001 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix
eatupdrivein.com

Eat Up Drive In is serving up two cozy chili options perfect for fall: a gluten-free turkey chili topped with sour cream, cheddar and chives, and a hearty vegan

chili made with beans, quinoa, tomato, mushroom, carrot, celery, onion, poblano and chives. Both can also be loaded onto Eat Up Drive In's baked potatoes for an extra-comforting option.



MIRACLE MILE DELI

4433 N. 16th St., Phoenix
miraclemiledeli.com

Miracle Mile's homemade chili is a hearty, classic favorite made from scratch with a rich tomato base, locally sourced ground beef, pinto and kidney beans, fresh peppers and onions, and their signature blend of seasonings. It's slow-cooked to bring all of those flavors together, creating a thick, comforting bowl with just the right amount of spice. Grab a cup for \$5 or a bowl for \$9.



TEXAZ GRILL

6003 N. 16th St., Phoenix
texazgrill.com

If you're craving a bowl of classic Texas-style comfort, Texaz Grill has you covered with its house chili, available by the cup or bowl. The Phoenix restaurant is known for bringing Texas favorites to the Valley, making its hearty chili a natural fit on a fall comfort-food list.



FOLEY RANCH

21001 N. Tatum Blvd., Phoenix
foleyranch.com

Foley Ranch offers their chili in a few different ways, all of which are loved by their guests. They have a chili bread bowl and Frito pie with their house made chili.



CALDWELL COUNTY BBQ

8315 W. Washington St., Peoria
caldwellcountybbq.com

Caldwell County BBQ's chili was developed by Head Pitmaster Chad Diamond, a fifth-generation Arizonan who wanted to create a dish that reflected Texas barbecue traditions and Arizona flavors. Caldwell County BBQ's version is made without beans, allowing the smoked beef and spices to take center stage. Chad also incorporates chiltepin peppers, a pepper native to the Sonoran Desert that adds a touch of heat. There's a Scottsdale location opening soon!

THE HERB BOX

7051 E. 5th Ave., Scottsdale
theherbbox.com

For a lighter spin on a classic, The Herb Box serves up its White Bean Chicken Chili, combining tender chicken and white beans with green chiles for a flavorful kick. It's finished with cilantro crema and crisp tortilla strips, adding a creamy contrast and a little crunch to every spoonful.

WHAT'S NEW?

Chompie's is bringing some new options to its menu beginning October 15. New offerings include the pastrami burger with Swiss and 1000 Island dressing, bacon cheddar burger, all American cheeseburger, Swiss mushroom burger, western burger with bacon habanero jam and onion strings, and a hot honey chicken biscuit topped with cheddar, a fried egg, bacon and hot honey. Each specialty item comes with a choice of coleslaw or French fries.

chompies.com



Sneakybird opened its first location in North Scottsdale in 2022 after its founders set out to answer a simple question: Could they make chicken that people enjoyed – and skip the fryer? After plenty of research and development, the answer became a menu built around 24-hour marinated, oven-grilled chicken and house-made breading.

The Arizona-born restaurant has since expanded to five Valley locations in North Scottsdale, Gilbert, Surprise, Queen Creek and most recently, Arcadia (4340 E. Indian School Road).

The biggest difference is pretty easy to spot: there's no fryer. The menu has seven dry rubs and 13 sauces to mix and match. Guests can choose their meal, seasoning, sauce and side, or opt for one of the restaurant's signature pairings.

The home-style breading is designed to provide the familiar look and crunch of fried chicken in tenders, sandwiches, sliders, wraps or in wing form. On Fridays through October, the restaurant is also offering \$12 flatbreads, \$5 four-piece wings and \$2 fountain drinks. Sides include crispy tots, salted maple sweet potato tots, fresh vegetables and sneaky slaw.

Sneakybird has expanded its focus beyond the menu through Camp Sneaky, a school program that supports teachers, students and parents through sponsorships and fundraiser nights. A recently launched app offers online ordering and rewards tracking and more limited-time menu items are planned for the coming months.

sneakybird.com

DISTRICT 6 UPDATE

As we head into October, I want to share a few updates, programs and upcoming opportunities that may be useful to residents across District 6. From preserving our historic neighborhoods to investing in our parks and infrastructure, there are several things happening around Phoenix that I encourage you to learn more about and take part in.

Historic Preservation Office Exterior Rehabilitation Grant Program

If you own a historic home and have been thinking about making exterior improvements, the City of Phoenix’s Exterior Rehabilitation Grant Program may be worth exploring. The program offers 50/50 matching grants of up to \$20,000 to help eligible property owners rehabilitate the exterior of historic properties.

I know that maintaining a historic home can come with unique challenges and expenses, and programs like this can help make necessary improvements more manageable while preserving the character of our neighborhoods. Applications are due October 9 by 5 p.m., so I encourage interested homeowners to review the requirements and apply before the deadline.

Family + Math at Phoenix Public Libraries

Phoenix Public Libraries are offering a great opportunity for families with young children this fall. The six-week Family + Math Storytime series is designed for children ages 3 to 5 and their favorite grownup.

Through stories, songs, rhymes and hands-on activities, children will explore early math concepts including shapes, counting, patterns and measurement. Just as importantly, participating adults will learn simple ways to support their child’s early math skills at home.

Registration is required, so if you have a preschooler who would enjoy learning through play and stories, I encourage you to check the Phoenix Public Library calendar for dates, locations and registration information.

Parks Master Plan Key Findings Meetings

Our parks are an important part of what makes Phoenix great, and community input plays an important role in planning for the future. The city is holding upcoming Parks Master Plan Key Findings Meetings, where residents can learn what the city heard during the community engagement process and review the key findings. You can find meeting information and additional details at parksmasterplanphx.com.

56th Street Improvements

There is also a significant infrastructure project coming to the 56th Street corridor between Thomas Road and Camelback Road. The City of Phoenix Street Transportation Department is moving forward with improvements designed to provide important safety and infrastructure benefits along this busy stretch.

Full construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2026, following the completion of utility relocations. The project is expected to take approximately two years, with completion anticipated in late 2028.

I know construction projects can bring temporary inconveniences for residents, businesses and drivers, but these improvements are an important investment in the corridor. I will continue to share updates as the project moves forward.

Upcoming Coffee Chats

Finally, I want to remind District 6 residents that my office is continuing to hold Coffee Chats. These are informal opportunities for you to bring concerns, questions or ideas directly to me and my team.

If there is something happening in your neighborhood that you would like to discuss, I hope you will join us at an upcoming Coffee Chat. Community feedback is one of the most important ways I learn what is happening across District 6, and I appreciate everyone who takes the time to reach out, attend a meeting or share an idea. I look forward to seeing you around the district this October!



KEVIN ROBINSON

Councilman
District 6

602-262-7491
District6@phoenix.gov

30 YEARS AGO



October is prime time for high school football! As of press time, the Arcadia Titans are 2-1. Coach Pasquel said that defense has played well, led by Milo Marinick and Cayd Sheaffer; offense has been better the last two games led by Konnor Kammes and Joseph ‘Chewy’ Hala. “We hope to keep getting better as the season progresses and play our best football by the end of the season!” Pasquel said.

All pumpkin everything

October in Phoenix means the coffee shops and grocery stores went full fall weeks ago – and I’m all in. The weather hasn’t caught up yet, but the mornings are finally a little cooler, and that’s enough for me to start cooking with fall flavors. This month is all about snacks that double as breakfast. Days fill up fast this time of year, and having something ready to grab makes mornings and afternoons a lot easier.

All three recipes lean on oats. They’re a whole grain with a type of soluble fiber called beta-glucan, which helps lower cholesterol, supports heart health, and keeps your blood sugar steady so you don’t crash an hour later. They also bring plant protein, iron, and magnesium. Instead of refined sugar, these are sweetened naturally with dates and maple syrup. Make a batch on the weekend and you’re set for the week.

Pumpkin spice granola bars don’t require an oven. Soaked dates hold everything together and do most of the sweetening, while cacao nibs and

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

almonds add crunch. Grab one on the way out the door or keep a stash in the fridge for the afternoon.

Five-ingredient pumpkin cookies: One bowl, five ingredients, and 12 minutes in the oven. Pumpkin and almond butter keep them soft and chewy, and a little maple syrup is all the sweetness they need. They’re good with an afternoon coffee or when you want something sweet after dinner. Pumpkin spice granola makes a big batch, and the whole house smells like fall while it bakes. It’s loaded with pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and dried cranberries. Have it over dairy-free yogurt in the morning or by the handful later in the day.

Pumpkin spice granola Serves 12



- 3 cups rolled oats
 - 1 cup pepitas
 - ½ cup slivered almonds
 - ½ cup chopped walnuts
 - ½ cup pumpkin puree
 - ¼ cup + 3 tbsp. maple syrup
 1. Preheat oven to 300 F.
 2. In a large bowl mix the oats, pepitas, slivered almonds, and walnuts.
 3. In another bowl combine the pumpkin puree, ¼ cup maple syrup, coconut oil, vanilla, pumpkin pie spice, and salt.
 4. Add this to the oat mixture and stir well.
 5. Spread onto a large baking sheet. Bake for 15 minutes then add the remaining maple syrup and stir. Bake for 25 more minutes.
 6. Let cool for 30 minutes. It will harden as it sits.
 7. Add the cranberries and store in a sealed container.
- ¼ cup coconut oil, melted
 - 1 tsp. vanilla
 - 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
 - ½ tsp. pink salt
 - 1 cup dried cranberries

5-ingredient pumpkin cookies Serves 12



- ⅔ cup pumpkin puree
 - ½ cup almond butter
 - ⅓ cup maple syrup
 1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
 2. In a large bowl combine the pumpkin puree, almond butter, and maple syrup.
 3. Add the oats and pumpkin pie spice and stir again.
 4. Scoop out ¼ cup of the dough for each cookie and place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. You should have enough for 12 large cookies. Once all the cookies are scooped out, wet your hands and pat them down and round the edges.
 5. Bake for 12 minutes. Let them cool for 10 minutes before serving.
- 2 cups rolled oats
 - 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice

Pumpkin spice granola bars Serves x



- 15 medjool dates
 - 1½ cups rolled oats
 - ¼ cup cacao nibs
 - 1 cup slivered almonds
 1. Pour boiling water over the dates and let them soak for 30 minutes, then drain. Remove and discard pits then put in a food processor and blend until they are smooth.
 2. In a large bowl combine the blended dates with the oats, cacao nibs, and almonds.
 3. In a small pot add the nut butter and maple syrup. Cook on low heat until it’s creamy.
 4. Add pumpkin pie spice.
 5. Pour the nut butter mixture into the oat mixture and stir well.
 6. Spread this into a bar shaped mold, or into an 8” x 8” pan and press down.
 7. Firm up in the freezer for 30 minutes. Store in the fridge or freezer.
- ¼ cup peanut or almond butter
 - ¼ cup maple syrup
 - 1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice

A mother's love inspires a mission to fight childhood cancer

By Alex Gross

Alveolar rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive cancer that starts in soft tissue, only affects a couple hundred children in the United States each year. When Heather Heineke's son Axel was diagnosed with it in 2023, she was stunned by how few options they were left with.

Though Axel went into remission until early 2024, the cancer came back, and eventually spread to his brain and spine. The next few months were a craze of surgeries and doctor's appointments, but Axel and his family didn't have to navigate them on their own. Friends and family rallied behind the youngster, forming an army of care.

Axel passed away in July 2024, but Heineke refused to let that end his journey. Axel's Army, a nonprofit named after those who supported the family through Axel's battle, is a way to honor her son by helping families facing the same struggle.

The organization operates with three main pillars. The first is funding research in childhood cancers, especially rare ones like rhabdomyosarcoma.

"It's really hard as a parent when you are eventually told there is nothing more that we can do," Heineke said. "In this day and age, it just feels like 'how is that possible?'"

There's never been a primary drug developed specifically for Axel's form of cancer, but the organization hopes to change that. By working with the Children's Cancer Therapy Development Institute, based outside Portland, Oregon, they hope to put more resources into a treatment that could eventually give families options when faced with ultra-rare diagnoses.

The second focus is creating moments that matter for families still in treatment.

"When your life revolves around scans and appointments and chemo and hospital stays and fevers, life literally revolves around terrible things," Heineke said. "Finding moments of joy was the lifeblood for us."

Axel loved holidays like Halloween and Christmas; days that are especially tough to celebrate while stuck in a hospital bed. Providing unique experiences for not only



Heather Heineke and her son Axel share a moment that still inspires the Phoenix-based group she later founded in his honor.



the kids in treatment, but also their families and siblings, has been a great way to elucidate joy in a time of struggle.

The last goal is to provide extended care for bereaved families.

"You carry the weight of everything moving forward. Life doesn't stop," Heineke said. "One of the most amazing things I did for my own healing was that I went on a retreat for other moms who had lost a child to cancer."

She hopes to offer a similar experience to a small group of Arizona mothers next year, taking a few days in Sedona to find community while grieving.

The nonprofit is still in its infancy, having just finalized its status at the end of last year, and is now focused on fundraising. Their first kickoff event is called Hope Rises, a masquerade ball inspired by Axel's love for superheroes.

"The minute I walked into the big red barn [at Schnepf

Farms], I was like, 'this is perfect,'" Heineke said. "It's one of his favorite places. We're trying to make everything have an Axel touch."

The evening will feature cocktails, dinner, and a silent auction beginning at 6 p.m. on October 10. Donations and volunteers are also welcome to help carry out their mission and spread Axel's story. For Heineke, Axel's Army is about turning an unimaginable loss into something that can help other families feel a little less alone. Whether through research, moments of joy, or support after a child's death, the organization carries Axel's spirit forward while giving families something his own family desperately needed: people in their corner when they need them most.

axelsarmy.org

From family fairways to winning the 2026 Curry Cup

By AJ Stone

Alexis Lamadrid and golf go hand in hand. From the time her father introduced her to the sport, she couldn't get enough, and it has led her to levels of success she never could've imagined. Most recently, she competed in and won the Curry Cup at Bethpage Black, New York.

She scored 3 over par on the notoriously difficult course, winning the championship by two strokes. Both Alexis and the boys' division champion, Evan Pena-Colon, have been part of UNDERRATED Golf since its inaugural season in 2022.

The tournament's overarching mission is to create a more inclusive environment for competitive golfers. The event is also a destination for future careers to take shape and stands by the idea that young athletes make great hires, as sport fosters discipline, leadership, and resilience.

After seeing her father's passion for golf and watching her sister follow in his footsteps, Alexis knew she wanted the same.

What began as a family passion project has quickly morphed into a potential career for Alexis. She's already taken home the Mexican Women's Golf Amateur Championship



UNDERRATED Golf Ambassador Mariah Stackhouse, Myra Tomer, Gabriella Gu, Alexis Lamadrid and Stephen Curry.

(2025), the AJGA Heather Farr Thunderbird Championship (2026), individual state championships in back-to-back years, and team state championships for Xavier Prep three years in a row.

"My favorite memory in this sport is definitely when my sister and I won the Holiday Challenge at Grayhawk Golf Club shooting -10. It was my sister's last year playing it, and we just had so much fun. It reminded me of when we were young and

how far we had come in our sport. Definitely a special day," she said.

Heading into such a prestigious cup that brought copious levels of competition, Alexis said she wasn't nervous – she was excited for the challenge.

"My mindset going into Curry Cup was definitely to enjoy the experience. Bethpage is such a tough track, but I always like to say it's a 'good challenge,'" she said. "It's a course

I learned from, and I just tried to prepare as much as I could!"

The Curry Cup was a big test before Alexis heads off to play Division I golf for the University of Texas at Austin. To her, like any aspect of the game, it's just another way to improve.

"I'm most looking forward to growing my game and being surrounded by high-level athletes. I felt that motivation on my visit, and I can't wait to be a part of that environment."

Texas finished last season ranked third in NCAA Division I women's golf, with a record of 139-33-4. To any aspiring young golfers who want to one day win championships like Alexis, her advice is simple:

"Stay patient and enjoy the game. Golf is a game of patience and determination. Time will take care of itself; stay consistent and always have fun."

For Alexis, the road ahead is just another opportunity to keep learning and growing. With the Curry Cup in the books and a Division I career at Texas waiting for her, she's taking the same approach she's had since first picking up a club with her family: stay patient, stay consistent, and, most importantly, enjoy the game.

2026 high school swim and dive preview

By Mark Hays

As the high school swim and dive season gets underway, teams are balancing the daily work of practices and meets with the bigger goal of qualifying athletes for the state championships.

Arcadia-area programs are entering the season with different strengths and experiences. Coaches emphasized that improvement, team chemistry, and helping athletes finish the season at their best are all part of the equation.

ARCADIA HIGH

Arcadia's swim and dive season typically runs through October, with athletes working toward the district and state championships at the end of the season. The program has approximately 35 swimmers and seven divers (four of whom also compete in swimming). For Coach Brittney Blystone, the season is about more than preparing athletes for competition.

"The ultimate goal is to have our athletes perform at their highest level and continue improving," Blystone said. "We want to qualify as many athletes as possible for state, compete at our best when we get there, and finish the season knowing we gave our best effort."

For divers, this season has included an especially steep learning curve. All seven are new to the sport, making each practice an opportunity to build new skills and confidence. Diving practices place a heavy emphasis on fundamentals and repetition.

"Dive practices focus on technique, form, consistency, and learning and improving dives," Blystone said. "We also spend a lot of time building confidence because diving can be a very mental sport."

Swimmers work on a combination of skills, including "technique, endurance, speed, starts, turns, and race strategy." At meets, the two portions of the program have different formats. Divers are scored individually based on a series of dives, competing against athletes from other schools, while swim features individual and relay events.

Blystone said meets give athletes a chance to compete and to see the results of their work in practice. One of Arcadia's biggest strengths, she said, is its team culture.

"Our athletes are supportive of one another and genuinely want to see their teammates succeed," she said. The team also features "a great mix of experienced athletes and newer athletes who are continuing to develop their skills."

Arcadia looked forward to larger invitational meets, including the Brophy/Xavier Invite and the Eagle Invite at Phoenix Country Day School, followed by the district meet and state championship.

For the dive team, Blystone has a more immediate goal: "I am hoping that a few of the divers learn enough dives to be able to compete at our district meet at the end of the season. Just as importantly, we want our athletes to have a positive experience and build a strong team along the way."



Arcadia High



Xavier Prep

BROPHY PREP

The Broncos enter the season with a new head coach and plenty of momentum. Robert Tolar has taken over as head swimming and diving coach, replacing recently retired Patrick O'Neill.

"I'm excited to take on the head coaching position with such a great group of returning swimmers both in and out of the pool," Tolar said. "The swim team has an incredible legacy that I'm humbled and honored to be a part of moving forward."

Tolar assisted O'Neill in 2025, helping lead the Broncos to the AIA Division I State Championship and a state-record point total. His coaching background includes assistant positions at Dobson High School, Mountain Pointe High School, and Brophy.

The Broncos are the two-time defending state champions, and they opened this season by winning the Brophy-Xavier Invitational with 576 points – more than 400 points ahead of the second-place finishers and more than the top three teams combined.

Brophy won nine events overall and swept all three relays. Nolan Guidry won the 200 freestyle and 100 freestyle, Brayden Harrison won the 50 freestyle, Finn Conley won the 100 butterfly, and Patrick Dunn won the 500 freestyle. Liam Ferguson also won the 100 backstroke, while the team opened the meet with a record-setting performance in the 200 medley relay.

"I was really proud of how the boys came together to host the meet. Everyone not swimming was there to work and was very inspiring to the swimmers. They stepped up in a state qualifying meet. They swam incredibly well," Tolar said. "The 200 medley really was really fun and set the meet record. It carried that momentum through the rest of the meet. We had some great standout and freshman performances."

With two consecutive state championships behind them, Tolar knows the Broncos can't rely on their past success.

"It is a legacy team where they know the job they have to do. The key is getting them

focused. The ticket does not get punched for free. They need to stay focused and flex their competitive muscles," he said. "It is important to show their sportsmanship and what we teach at Brophy to be a 'Man for Others.'"

PHOENIX COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Phoenix Country Day School's swim and dive season runs through early November, with competition concluding with the Division III State Championships on November 6-7.

The program has 23 swimmers and four divers competing this season. The team practices early mornings on Mondays and Wednesdays and after school on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. At dual and tri meets held at home, swimmers can compete in two individual events and two relays. Divers compete a six-dive list that contributes to the overall team score.

PCDS has started the season strongly, going undefeated through its first two dual and tri meets. The team was excited for several major competitions, including the Brophy/Xavier Dive Invite, the Eagle Invite with nearly 40 schools, and the Small School Championships.

The program enters the season with a strong combination of returning talent and younger athletes. Last season, the girls swim and dive team won the Division III state championship.

Senior Olivia Singer returns as the defending state champion in the 50 freestyle, while Julia Root is the defending girls' state diving champion. Felix Lehmann also returns as a state finalist in the 100 freestyle and 100 breaststroke.

That mix of experience and developing talent gives PCDS a strong foundation as the season progresses, but the team's goals extend beyond individual results.

"Our goal is to compete at our best and



Brophy Prep



Phoenix Country Day School

XAVIER PREP

Xavier's swim and dive team competes in dual meets and larger invitational competitions. Dual meets feature two schools, while Saturday invitationals can include anywhere from six to 30 schools. Those are particularly important because, according to Head Coach Glen Coy, they are the only way athletes can qualify for the state meet in November.

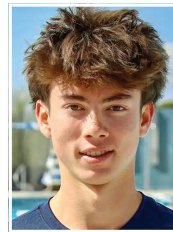
Xavier practices Monday through Friday from 3 to 5 p.m., following a regular weekday training schedule as it prepares for its biggest competitions.

The Gators recently faced Arizona College Preparatory High School in a dual meet and won 124-63. Coy noted the result's significance, pointing out that ACP finished third at the state meet behind Xavier last year.

They are also scheduled to compete at their first invitational at Brophy's pool and will face Desert Vista High School, last year's state champion. The team's biggest strength this season has been its versatility across events.

"We are really strong in free and backstroke," Coy said. "Overall, we do not have a real weakness. The team is pretty well-rounded this year."

That balance could matter as Xavier tries to improve its finish at last year's state championship. The Gators have a clear target for the remainder of the season: keep developing quality athletes through invitational meets, and challenge for the top spot when the season concludes.



Felix Lehmann

Girls' flag football surges – Lady Titans join the rise

By Kylie de Best

Over the past few years, women's flag football has grown immensely at a national level. Participation has skyrocketed from 15,700 girls in 2021 to more than 102,000 today, making it one of the 10 most popular girls' sports, according to The Gist, a women's sports online platform.

Now in its third season, Arcadia High has been part of this movement and shows no signs of slowing down.

Head Coach Mike Kelley and Assistant Coach Grant Sardachuk (also known as Coach G) are still promoting and developing the program to encourage participation.

Kelley is a Mental Performance Coach, and he brings a heavy influence to this role. He aims to build a program and culture filled with fun while challenging the girls and helping them learn valuable skills they can carry across sports and life.

This is Coach G's second year with the program, leading the team's defenses and dedicating time each week to practices, meetings, film, and more to ensure the girls are given the support they need to succeed.

"I joined this sport because of the graciously open arms every teammate has shown me, like I was already a part of the team," junior Gabby Noderer said. "The connection built between every player is filled with laughter, enjoyment, and uplifting in every aspect."

At Arcadia High, the game is seven-on-seven, with four quarters of 12 minutes each and timing that follows fairly close to tackle



PHOTO COURTESY OF AHS

The girls flag football team at Arcadia High School debuted in 2024.

football. Flag is a non-contact sport, although some blocking is permitted.

"It is tactical on both the offensive and defensive sides of the game, and one of our great joys is to teach the fundamentals of both offense and defense to many of the girls who are just learning about the game and how to play it," Coach G said.

Practices take place two hours per day during preseason on Mondays and Fridays, with a varying schedule, as teams typically play two games per week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the fall.

During practices, players focus on developing physical and mental skills. Coach Kelley believes in developing the girls as

whole people, not just athletes. An extensive pre-practice ritual filled with self-reflection, goal setting, and affirmations helps athletes reset, stay present, and prepare intentionally.

One exercise is a self-check with each player – how much sleep they got, how hydrated they are, and if they ate within a few hours of practice – to find the correlation between taking care of themselves and athletic performance.

The physical side of the game focuses on drilling the fundamentals of various offensive and defensive positions, as well as learning how to play the game, with practices including seven-on-seven scrimmages to introduce real-time game experience. They also have

days to watch videos from practices and scrimmages and discuss what they see to learn and improve.

"Girls flag football is seeing tremendous growth at every level, and with opportunities to play at the NCAA level, high school flag football provides the opportunity for learning, growth, and development so girls can take advantage of those expanding opportunities," Coach Kelley said. "We hope it provides the girls with new opportunities through high school and beyond."

The Lady Titans will play 12 games plus playoffs. Their first game, against Scottsdale Christian Academy, was a tough 41-0 loss, but junior athlete Meadow Nelson said that "this game was just the first of many and we are continuing to learn and grow as a team."

"It was a great experience to see how our team works together, and we will definitely be improving by and working hard in the days to come," she added. As of now, the team has 27 girls. They have only a varsity team this year, but they hope other schools will continue to grow their numbers as well, allowing everyone to field both varsity and JV teams with full schedules eventually.

"I love flag football because it is growing me as a player and a person, it is empowering and super fun!" athlete Brooklyn Howerzyl said.

As the season continues, the team looks forward to seeing how they can grow together, both mentally and physically, and how far their hard work can take them this season.

Veritas Prep's upgraded field is ready for cleats and calls

By Mark Hays

After nearly a decade of dreaming and more than four years of planning, Veritas Prep has completed a \$1.6 million expansion of its football field, giving students and families a new place to gather for games, school events, and celebrations.

The improvements include permanent field lights, stadium-style bleachers, a press box, and fencing upgrades designed to improve safety and traffic flow.

The project was made possible through philanthropy, including a major commitment from siblings Rachel Lund-Sinatra (yes, that Sinatra) and Brad Lund.

Veritas families, faculty, and athletes had been seeking improvements to the field for years, according to Brenna Norris, vice president of development for Arizona at Great Hearts, the charter-school network that operates Veritas Prep.

"As a charter school that does not receive funding from bonds or overrides for facilities upgrades, any significant campus improvements are only possible through the generous philanthropy of our families and community supporters," Norris said.

The effort gained momentum in 2023, when the Lund siblings joined with the school around a shared vision for the campus.

That led to the \$1.6 million Flagship to Fruition capital campaign. The Lund and Smead families, along with other donors, contributed to the effort. The campaign focused on the field, but school officials viewed the project as an investment in more than football.

"The goal of any campus improvement is to enhance the student, family, and faculty experience," Norris said. "The project is more than a field; it's an improvement to our shared



PHOTO COURTESY OF VERITAS PREP

Veritas Prep has completed a \$1.6 million expansion of its football field.

K-12 space that not only hosts athletics, but elementary field days and events."

Planning began in March 2022, when Great Hearts started working with an architect and conducting a feasibility study. The completed enhancements were finished in September 2026.

The result is a substantially upgraded venue for the campus, replacing some of the temporary infrastructure families had relied on for years.

"The feedback from families has been overwhelmingly

positive," Norris said. "No longer do they need to stand to watch games under portable field lights."

The new amenities also give the school a setting where families can spend more time together during competitions and other events.

"We have built a comfortable space where generations of families can gather in support of the Great Hearts mission," Norris said.

The project is also a tangible example of what private support can provide at a public charter school, where facilities improvements are not funded through local bonds or overrides.

For the Lund siblings, the project means more than the physical improvements. They see Freedom Field as a place where students can develop confidence, discover their potential, and learn to pursue ambitious goals.

"It is about giving our community and our kids a place they can be proud of. This is a place where they can dream, believe in themselves, work hard, and discover that their possibilities are limitless," Rachel said.

That message is also tied to their family history. Rachel said the field reflects the legacies of their grandfathers, Frank Sinatra and Walt Disney, both of whom built careers around turning ambitious ideas into reality. She said their examples reinforced the importance of persistence in the face of obstacles.

Brad said he hopes students will experience that same sense of possibility when they take the field. Rather than serving as a venue for athletic competition, he envisions Freedom Field as a place where students can form friendships, build confidence, and begin imagining futures beyond what they may currently see as possible.

DID YOU KNOW? BATS



HOW FAST?

100 MPH

Most species fly anywhere from 12 to 25 mph. Examples include the Little Brown Bat, which averages around 12 mph but can accelerate to 22 mph when hunting or evading predators. Larger species like the Big Brown Bat cruise around 20 mph and can reach bursts of 40 mph.

Which one is the fastest, you ask? That would be the Brazilian free-tailed bat. Studies using radio transmitters and aerial tracking confirmed that these little guys can achieve maximum ground speeds of approximately 100 mph during horizontal flight!

HOW OLD?

41 YEARS

In the wild, bats can live over 30 years, but the record holder is a male Siberian bat that lived to be at least 41 years old. Discovered in Siberia thanks to a forearm band used in recapture studies, this tiny mammal survived nearly 10 times longer than expected for an animal of its size. Researchers say their long lifespans are due to traits like hibernation, high metabolic rates combined with low reproductive output, and unique cellular adaptations.



HOW LONG?

1.3"

The bumblebee bat, also called Kittie's hog-nosed bat, is the world's smallest bat. From head to tail, it's about 1.1-1.3 inches long, with a wingspan of up to 5.7 inches. They weigh about two grams – less than a penny, which makes them 80 million times lighter than the blue whale, the largest mammal.

On the flip side, the giant golden-crowned flying fox, also known as the golden-capped fruit bat, is one of the largest species, boasting a wingspan of up to 6 feet. It's only found in the Philippines and has the longest documented forearm length of any bat species at 8+ inches.



HOW MANY?

4,500

A single little brown bat can catch and eat up to 3,000 to 4,500 mosquitoes and other small insects in just one night. Beyond that, many bats love fruit, nectar, and pollen, helping to pollinate crops like bananas, mangoes, and avocados.



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DID YOU KNOW? BATS

Bats make up about one-quarter of all mammal species, with over 1,400 different kinds found around the globe.

Bats are the only mammals on Earth capable of actually flying, rather than just gliding.

Their wings are modified hands with elongated finger bones covered by a thin skin membrane called a patagium.

Bats have distinct patterns and scars on their delicate wing membranes.

The scientific order for bats is Chiroptera, which translates directly from Greek to mean "hand-wing."

Many bats use echolocation, emitting high-pitched sound waves and listening to the echoes to navigate and locate prey in the dark.

Bats can see well, with some species even able to detect ultraviolet light.

Wild agave plants rely heavily on bats as their primary pollinators.

Out of over 1,400 species, only three feed exclusively on blood, typically targeting livestock or birds rather than humans. Vampire bats don't actually suck blood; they make a tiny nick and gently lick the blood away using a special anticoagulant in their saliva.

Bracken Cave in Texas hosts the world's largest known bat colony, sheltering up to 20 million migratory Mexican free-tailed bats in the summer.

Bat mothers can locate and identify their own babies out of millions of other pups in a cave using unique vocalizations and distinct scents. Female bats usually give birth to just a single pup per year.

While hibernating, little brown bats can slow their heart rate down to just 20 beats per minute and stop breathing for nearly an hour at a time.

The Spix's disk-winged bat uses specialized suction cups on its wrists and ankles to cling inside smooth leaves, making it one of the few bats that sleeps right-side up.

SAY WHAT?

These bats glow in the dark!

Forget plastic bats for the upcoming holiday! In 2025, researchers from the University of Georgia confirmed that six bat species across the United States exhibit biofluorescence, which means their wings, hind legs and tail membranes shine green when exposed to UV light. The glow appeared consistently regardless of the bats' age or species, suggesting the trait may have been inherited from a common ancestor.

Because these animals typically live and fly in environments with very little ultraviolet light, the fluorescence may not serve an obvious purpose today. Researchers speculate that it



could be a leftover evolutionary trait from a time when the glow helped bats communicate, coordinate while foraging or even confuse predators.

So this Halloween, remember: The glowing bats aren't decorations! They're real — and scientists are still trying to figure out their spooky secret.

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GEORGIA
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A STORY OF SHORTENING, SECRETS, AND SUGAR PIE

Take a good look at the pumpkin sitting on your front porch. At first, you might see a vegetable meant for a kitchen recipe or a rugged October decoration. More precisely, it's a fruit – specifically a botanical berry called a pepo which develops from a single flower and contains multiple seeds. Its thick skin, fleshy interior, and seed-filled center allows this single plant to be a fruit, a berry, and a vegetable all at once, making it a remarkable three-in-one creation.

When you grab your carving knife this season, you'll be cutting into one of the largest and most recognizable berries on earth – but the history of how this oversized berry became a Halloween icon is much darker. The tradition of carving jack-o'-lanterns dates back centuries to an ancient Irish myth about a devious man named Stingy Jack. Folklore says Jack tricked the Devil into a promise never to claim his soul. When Jack died, Heaven rejected him for his misdeeds, and Hell barred him due to the Devil's vow. Doomed to wander the eternal darkness, Jack scooped out a turnip, placed a burning lump of hellfire inside, and became "Jack of the Lantern."

To scare away Jack's wandering ghost during the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, people in Ireland and Scotland began chiseling terrifying, grotesque faces into turnips, beets, and potatoes. When millions of Irish immigrants crossed the Atlantic in the 19th century, they brought this tradition with them. On American soil, they discovered a native North American fruit: the pumpkin. Instead of hacking away at dense, rock-hard root vegetables, immigrants could easily slice through the rind,

scoop out the soft berry guts and leave a perfectly hollow chamber for a candle.

A pumpkin is born from a single flower, designed by nature to protect a hidden sweetness inside a tough, unyielding rind. How beautifully fitting for the matriarchs of our lives. Before I ever learned the science of a pumpkin's anatomy or the spooky lore of Stingy Jack, October didn't belong to ghosts or monsters. It belonged to the safe sanctuary of my childhood home. It was my grandmother's house, but it felt like my house, too. Every October, she would take my hand and lead me past the flashy storefront displays straight into our neighborhood Basha's. From down there, with my tennis shoes squeaking against the polished linoleum floor and the countertops sitting right at my chin, the world felt massive, but her warm hand felt safe. I always wondered why she bypassed the massive, jagged carving pumpkins stacked in giant cardboard bins and walked straight to the peaceful corners of the produce aisle.

To this day, I can still hear her voice vividly, a timeless whisper guiding me through the produce section to help pick out the perfect harvest. She didn't use written formulas because she knew the secrets hidden. She taught me to look for the small, heavy, and unassuming Sugar Pie pumpkins. I would stand right there in the aisle and listen to her knock on the rinds. The heavy, hollow thump against the dense, thick flesh that proved those perfect little orange orbs hadn't dried out. Gram understood that kind of resilience.

Come October, the air in our tiny house always smelled like toasted pecans and warm nutmeg. I remember



standing next to her, so small that the flour dust from her rolling pin would settle onto the worn fabric of her apron strings right at my eye level. Watching her tie those strings sparked a deep, lifelong love for aprons within me – to this day, putting one on feels like wrapping myself in her protection.

There were no timers or written recipes; she measured the world by touch, knowing exactly when the pastry dough was flaky enough just by the feel of it. Her gnarled, twisted hands, severely deformed by years of rheumatoid arthritis, would painstakingly cut the cold cubes of Crisco into the flour until it looked like small peas. The physical weight behind that smile rarely revealed the burden of keeping her interior soft, sweet, and bursting with nourishment for the grandchild she helped to raise. To this day, no matter how many times I try, I still can't make a pie crust like her. Mine turns out too heavy or breaks too easily, lacking that impossible, feather-light flakiness that she conjured effortlessly, forcing her hands to move with an elegant grace across the shortening and flour.

I watched her transform that hand-picked, oversized berry into pure gold. The kitchen became a symphony of small, honest sounds: the sharp crack of eggshells against a ceramic bowl rim, the rhythmic swish-swish of her wire whisk beating the pumpkin puree, and the sudden hiss of melting butter bubbling in a small pan on the stove. Right in the middle of it all, she would reach into the bowl, press her white-dusted finger gently against the tip of my nose, and break into that beautiful, crooked smile that instantly turned the corners of the world upright. It was her way of bringing me into the magic, a playful mark of love that always left us both laughing amid the flour dust.

At times, right in the middle of the music of that kitchen, the whisk would stop. Gram would pause and let her swollen knuckles rest against the edge of the ceramic bowl. She would stare out the window looking into a landscape only she could see. In those fleeting moments, I would look up and see a sudden, heavy shadow pass over her eyes – the unmistakable reflection of memories she never mentioned to a soul. She carried old, unvoiced heartbreaks and quiet histories behind her smile, secrets locked away too deep for words. Then, with a soft exhale, she would look back down at me, gently tuck a stray wispy strand of my auburn hair behind my ear, and crumble the browned butter, sugar, and pecan streusel over the warm

pumpkin pie for its final minutes in the oven, letting the rich, caramelized color wash the ghosts away.

Back then, I just assumed she would always be there to make the magic happen. I was too young to understand how quickly time disappears, too content just being small to realize I should have asked more questions while I watched her bake. I should have asked how she learned to brown the butter just right, what she was thinking when she stared out that window, and whose memory she was holding onto. Years later, I find myself standing in my own kitchen, reaching into a bowl, touching a flour-dusted fingertip to the nose of one of my grandchildren, and watching that familiar laughter break across the room. Sometimes I do it to an adult friend, too, just to bring back that same moment of childhood mischief. For an instant, my grandmother's hands are there again – not because I remember exactly how they moved, but because I am moving them for her.

Bourbon pumpkin pie with brown butter pecan streusel

- 1 unbaked 9-inch-deep dish pie crust, thawed
- 1¾ cups pumpkin puree
- 1 egg
- 2 egg yolks
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1¼ cup evaporated milk
- 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. bourbon
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. sea salt
- 1/8 tsp. white pepper
- 1/8 tsp. cloves

PECAN STREUSEL TOPPING

- 1/3 cup unsalted butter
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup pecans, coarsely chopped
- ¼ tsp. sea salt



Remove stem, cut in half and seed one large sugar pumpkin. Brush insides with olive oil and place face down on baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Roast at 350° for about 45-50 minutes. Cool. Use a large spoon to peel the skin away from the flesh. A blender or emersion blender will puree the flesh to a smooth and buttery consistency.

Preheat oven to 425°. Beat the eggs in a large mixing bowl. Whisk in the pumpkin puree and remaining ingredient until completely smooth. Pour the mixture into an unbaked pie crust. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 350° and bake for an additional 30 minutes.

Melt butter in a small pot over medium heat. Let it bubble and swirl the pan occasionally. The butter will foam and form tiny golden-brown bits at the bottom. Transfer to a separate dish to stop the cooking and let it cool slightly. Stir ¼ cup of brown sugar into the warm butter until smooth.

Stir in the flour, sea salt, and chopped pecans until a crumbly texture forms. Remove the pie briefly from the oven after its 30-minute mark. Crumble the pecan streusel evenly across the top. Return to the oven for the final 10 minutes. Check for doneness with a toothpick. Cool. Chill in the refrigerator before slicing.

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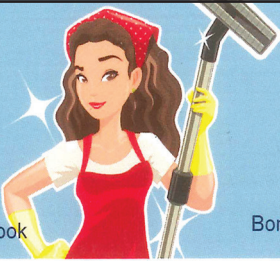
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Titan Times

From the students of Arcadia High School

VOL. 3 NO. 12

OCTOBER 2026

Where to study this fall

By Braya McCormick

As we begin to adjust back to the structure and course load of school, it can be a little overwhelming trying to manage it all. From homework and readings to large group projects, it all adds up, and with the many distractions that plague our society, it can be hard to focus.

My favorite remedy for such stress is finding the perfect place to study. Here are some places with a wide array of characteristics that will hopefully meet your needs.

#1- The Civic Center Library

The Civic Center Library is a 10-minute drive from Arcadia High School and offers numerous resources. Not only is it free, it also provides a teen room with closed-off spaces and whiteboards that are great when



working in groups as well as study rooms you can reserve online.

There is also plenty of seating around

the main section of the library. It is the perfect, quiet place to study, and you are surrounded by resources to help you if you need it!

#2- Black Cat Coffee House

Black Cat is definitely a favorite amongst Arcadia students, with it being just across the street. It is very convenient for after school study sessions, especially for students who can't drive yet. It provides a perfectly noisy atmosphere, though seating can be limited. With tasty treats and delicious drinks, the Black Cat Coffee House is a great option for studying.

#3- Starbucks

Starbucks is somewhat a controversial

place to study, but for those who thrive in a livelier atmosphere, it can be enjoyable. They are very accessible – the odds of you having a Starbucks near your house are fairly high, making it a dependable place to go.

They also provide consistently good food and drinks, which can be used as an incentive for studying. My personal favorite is on 28th Street and Indian School, providing a closed off room (great for group meetings) as well as various people watching opportunities.

As the school year ramps up, it is important that we stay on top of our work, and the perfect study spot is a great way to motivate ourselves to do just that!

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NOVEMBER 2026

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