



ENTERTAINMENT:

The Arts

Local receives ACA
grant; **12**



SPORTS:

Basketball

Ibarra named Athlete
of the Month; **24**



RECREATION:

Activities

Town plans fun for
teens, adults; **34**

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and forecasts go to
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P&Z makes recommendation on home businesses

Plan to update regulations

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills
Planning and Zoning
Commission is recom-
mending changes to
several rules and regu-
lations related to home

occupations or busi-
nesses operating from
residences.

In his staff report to
the commission, De-
velopment Services
Director John Wesley
pointed out that the
Zoning Ordinance
does allow residents
to operate businesses
from their residence.

There are rules and
regulations in place,
which Wesley said
have been in place for
many years.

“With the digital
age and the types of
businesses evolving,
town staff have identi-
fied situations where

• See **Business** on page 2

P&Z recently took up the issue of home businesses. (Metro Creative)

TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS

Council endorses staff request for grant approvals

With unanimous vote

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills
Town Council has unan-
imously approved a re-
quest by town staff to
apply for grant funding

through the remainder
of the current calendar
year.

In the past, grant re-
quests have been taken

to the council for approv-
al on an individual basis.
However, according to
staff this can create issues
with time constraints on

deadlines that go with
grant applications.

“Timing requirements

• See **Town** on page 2

Buisness

• From page 1

activities of a business nature are being operated from a home, but the nature of the activity does not fit within the current definitions and regulations for home occupations,” Wesley said.

As a result, there are situations that staff have not been able to address related to their impact on the neighborhood.

Wesley said the changes will provide tools for staff to use in addressing

concerns.

In addressing the definition of “dwelling” changes were made to better define underlying use.

“It is not sufficient to just design the structure as a residence to be defined as a dwelling,” Wesley said. “But it also needs to be used as one.”

Another change clarifies that home occupations shall be conducted only by persons who live at the property and in a manner that is

clearly incidental to the primary use as a residence.

There shall be no one working at the residence who does not live there.

The amendments also address vehicular traffic, including deliveries, and parking. In some cases, there are businesses operated from a home where employees stop by at the start of the day for assignments and equipment before heading out for work in the field.

The ordinance was

changed to set trip generation to no more than six vehicle trips per day. This is an increase in the number from five. Wesley said it makes more sense to use an even number for this. The provision allowing a commercial vehicle on site was changed to “no more than one,” parked in compliance with parking regulations in the ordinance.

Commissioners also asked that the changes apply to all residential zoning districts, not just single-family.

Language related to prohibited uses was also updated.

A prohibition on the “temporary or overnight keeping of animals for hire” resulted in some concern by commission members. There was a belief that this might be too broad and prohibit someone from simply doing a favor for a neighbor by watching their dog for the weekend.

Wesley said this was included because staff has been dealing with ongoing issue with some-

one operating a dog day-care from their home, which has raised some neighborhood concerns.

The commission was unanimous in its recommendation that the council approve the changes.

The Town Council is scheduled to consider the proposed changes at its regular meeting on Tuesday, March 19.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bburns@iniusa.org.

Town

• From page 1

for grant applications is often a critical factor and can vary drastically,” Public Works Director Justin Weldy said in a presentation to the council. Public works is a significant user of grants for funding projects.

“Often the application window is short and does not allow staff enough time to ask permission from the council before applying.”

Weldy said that often leads to asking permission after the fact which creates a backlog and a loophole in authorization.

In 2019 the Public Works Department received \$4.5 million in grant funding at a cost to the town in matching funds of around \$400,000, according to Weldy.

The staff report states that the comprehensive approach includes research on available grants, potential benefits to the community and consistency with the town’s strategic objectives.

If the town is selected for a grant, staff will return to the council with



This drainage channel between Grande Boulevard and Rosita Drive was grant funded through the Flood Control District of Maricopa County. (Image courtesy of Town of Fountain Hills)

proposals for a dialogue to address any concerns and provide additional information on the grant.

Councilman Gerry Friedel said he supports the plan based on how valuable grants are for funding town projects. At a cost of about 10% Friedel said this is a good proposal.

Councilwoman Brenda Kalivianakis asked whether a professional grant writer would benefit the town. Town Manager Rachael Goodwin said that comes with a number of issues, and it is difficult to say whether that would be beneficial in the long run.

Councilman Allen Skillicorn said one of his concerns is that grants often have conditions that the council may not approve.

“This is a good conversation to have,” Goodwin said. “Originally grants were not brought to the council. We do not use a shotgun approach, it is a very thoughtful approach.”

“We don’t want to be in a position of turning down a grant we receive, it would still come back to the council.”

Goodwin said grant applications often become available at the end of the fiscal year (June) when the council begins its summer break, making council approval before applying difficult, if not impossible.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bburns@iniusa.org.

ELECTIONS

State Legislature updates voting rules

Will impact primary elections

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Arizona State Legislature has made changes to the rules governing elections in the state that will have an immediate impact on the calendar for the 2024 primary elections across the state.

In an effort to alleviate what has become something of a logjam in tallying votes after the polls close, the new regulations will spread things out a little to provide more time for election officials.

The bill the legislature passed earlier this month takes the primary election, originally scheduled for Aug. 6, and moves it up a week

to Tuesday, July 30. This has a domino effect on all the other dates related to the primary election.

Fountain Hills Town Clerk Linda Mendenhall says now the last day to register to vote in the election is Monday, July 1. Early ballots will be placed in the mail on Wednesday, July 3. Voters will be reminded of the deadlines to get their ballot back in the mail so they are received by officials in time to count.

There is also an impact on potential candidates planning to run in the primary.

“Due to the adjustment in the primary date, the nominating petition filing period has also shifted,” Mendenhall said. “It will now commence on Monday, March 4 (the first

day completed petitions may be filed), and concluded at 5 p.m. on Monday, April 1 (the deadline to file petitions).

There is also a new date related to campaign signs. The first day for political sign installation for the July primary election will be Monday, May 20.

The new law also includes provisions related to handling early ballots turned in on election day, as well as curing questions about signature verification on early ballots. The bill also has provisions that do not apply until future elections.

The Times Independent invites readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bburns@iniusa.org.

TRANSITIONS

Foster your Future bringing in new blood in leadership role

By **Cyrus Guccione**
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

At the age of 60, Ginny Paulsen made a commitment to spend the next decade running her nonprofit organization, Foster Your Future, which aids fostered youth gain a foothold on life.

Paulsen, now 70, is ready to pass the torch on to someone new.

"My goal is to transition this person, and I will stay in it to help them figure out what we're doing," Paulsen said.

The challenge now is finding the right fit to take over the nonprofit organization that helps 40 students a year turn their lives around.

The future of FYF

While running Foster Your Future is a dream come true for Paulsen, she has done so on a volunteer basis for the last nine years.

It's why Paulsen says the only way for FYF to survive is to replace herself with a salaried position to ensure the long-term success of FYF and its mission of encouraging success in the growth and independence of young adults.

In order to pay for a salaried position and a possible office space,



Ginny Paulsen (right) is stepping down from leadership of Foster Your Future and is seeking applicants to apply to the open position. (Photo courtesy of Foster Your Future)

Paulsen is seeking donations from the community.

"It would be for a person to work full-time to keep this going," Paulsen said, adding that those with experience in grant writing, volunteering, nonprofit or social work should apply at Support@FosterYourFuture.org.

A heart for the youth

One of six children, Paulsen was raised in a Catholic Polish family with hardworking parents.

Giving back to the community was a central pillar of Paulsen's family unit, a trait she has taken into her own career as an occupational therapist, owner of a staffing agency, a Girl Scouts volunteer and an usher at her church.

thing in our family that you give back," Paulsen said. "My goal was just to help somebody that had it worse than I did."

In her research on underserved groups, Paulsen found that fostered youth, particularly those who have aged out of foster care, had little to no resources to guide them through life's toughest decisions.

"I saw these young adults leaving (foster care) with no life skills. They don't drive. They don't have credentials. I was just amazed," Paulsen said.

When she would visit various group homes, Paulsen said when the youth did obtain a stipend, they had little to no money management skills, typically spending

"It was kind of a • See **Transitions** on page 7

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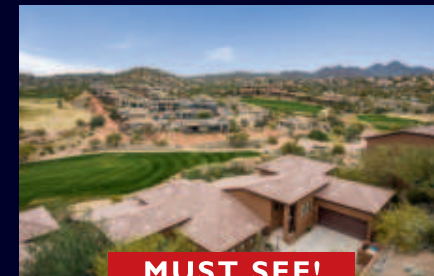


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Memberships



ZONING

Fountain Hills Town Council delays decision on medical marijuana

Request for more hours, delivery

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Town Council has postponed a vote on a zoning request from the Phoenix Cannabis medical marijuana dispensary in Fountain Hills.

The dispensary is asking for a zoning amendment that would allow them to operate extended hours, between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., as well as allow for delivery of products to customers.

The council asked representatives of the dispensary to sit down and talk with representatives of the Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition to see if some of the concerns presented by the coalition might be allayed.

Coalition Director

Tammy Bell told the council that access to marijuana products by youth is a key concern of the coalition, and the potential for greater tax revenue for the town with increased operating hours and delivery service are not worth the risk to youth.

"I'm asking you to vote no," Bell said. "This should not be a single request that applies to medical marijuana alone, and increased hours do not result in increased foot traffic. Potential tax revenue does not outweigh the risk to the most vulnerable."

Lindsay Schube, an attorney with the Phoenix law firm of Gammage and Burnham representing Phoenix Cannabis talked about the security and safeguards in place for the delivery system ranging from strict, detailed routing logs, sealed product and strict identification requirements for

"Potential tax revenue does not outweigh the increased risk to the most vulnerable."

Tammy Bell

Director, Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

the recipient. She also acknowledged that when the State Department of Health Services provides new rules to take effect in 2025, the delivery will include recreational marijuana products. At this time, it is not certain what those new rules will be.

"Fountain Hills cannot preclude its residents from accepting deliveries from other jurisdictions," Schube said. "... Marijuana products can already be delivered in Fountain Hills, but other jurisdictions are seeing the benefits."

She stated that amending the ordinance to allow delivery would give a competitive advantage to the business in town and would make Fountain Hills a more competitive jurisdiction by redirecting tax revenue currently going to other municipalities.

"The Town of Fountain Hills is currently underserved, causing residents to either travel long distances or seek delivery services from other jurisdictions," she said.

Schube said she had been invited to talk to

Bell prior to the council meeting but chose not to. However, she said she is willing to talk to her at any time.

Councilman Gerry Friedel said the town has turned its share of funds received from the opioid settlement over to the coalition to support its efforts. "We owe it to the (coalition) to get their input and wait on the state's new rules."

The council seemed initially inclined to postpone the vote indefinitely, however, Schube asked that the motion include a specific date.

"We are open to communication with the coalition," Schube said. "We have a lot of data showing the system is safe and secure. We request a date certain."

The public hearing and the consideration of the request was continued until the council's March 5, regular session.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bburns@iniusa.org.



Potential action on local dispensary requests has been delayed. (Metro Creative)

GRASSROOTS PROGRAM

Fountain Hills Leadership Academy seeks applicants

Applications currently accepted for class of 2024

The Fountain Hills Leadership Academy (FHLA) is now accepting applicants for its 2024 class.

This comprehensive experience is a community program offered through the non-profit I Love Fountain Hills and is designed to develop better-informed citizens, according to a press release from Class VII graduate, Frank Colella.

The eight-week course is an immersion into the town's governmental processes, civic and community services, public safety and environmental management.

Approximately 15 people will be selected for the FHLA Class VIII, which will run from mid-September through mid-November, Colella said.

The course kicks off with a brief orientation and reception in the days before the first day of class and ends with a graduation ceremony after the completion of the last session.

Classes will take place on Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Along the way, participants will meet community leaders and share ideas about the future of Fountain Hills, Colella said in the press release, adding that class participation fee



Fountain Hills Leadership Academy is seeking applicants for class VIII. Class VII is graduates are pictured. (Metro Creative)

is \$250 per student and students must commit to help plan the following year's program.

The general sessions include Know Your Town Government, Nonprofits/Business Development, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Fountain Hills Unified School District, Environmental Stewardship/Community Services, Public Safety, Sanitary District/Fountain Park and I Love Fountain Hills.

Larry Cole, a Class III alumnus and member of the FHLA Board, noted, "This program is designed to give class participants a front-row seat into the many facets that make up our community. At the same time, it challenges participants to bring forth their leadership skills to help improve our community."

"Participants will also work to develop projects that may eventually be implemented in the community." Past classes have created initiatives such as the AED Project,

the Fountain Hills Wellness Fair and the Young Minds Initiative, just to name a few, Colella said.

The FHLA has now graduated over 100 participants, Colella added, many of whom have assumed leadership roles in town government, volunteer organizations and various businesses.

This year's committee is made up of class alumni under the leadership of Larry Cole, Steve Bolton, Frank Colella and Will Hurst.

Residents of Fountain Hills and surrounding communities who have an interest in learning more about their town and getting involved are invited to apply for this extensive leadership information program at ilovefountainhills.org/leadership-academy.

Local businesses are asked to become sponsors at a cost of \$250. Sponsors can choose to be included in one of the class days, get to know the participants and share information about their business.

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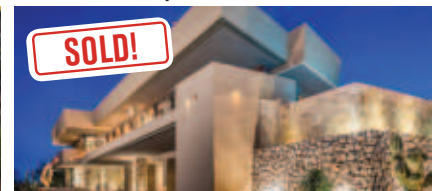
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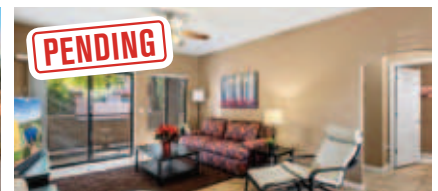
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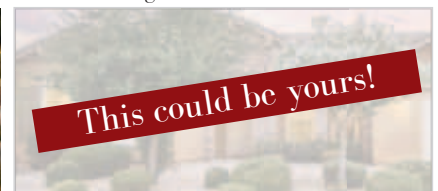
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SHERIFF'S CALL LOG

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 7 substation based in Fountain Hills reported deputies responded to the following calls during the week from Thursday, Feb. 8, through Wednesday, Feb. 14.

Thursday, Feb. 8

*Deputies responded to the intersection of Palisades and Shea boulevards. It was reported that a vehicle ran a red light and caused a traffic collision. No injuries were reported, and one vehicle was towed from the scene.

*A resident of the 16000 block of Palisades Blvd. reported that the victim received threatening text messages from a known suspect.

*A resident of the 16000 block of Monterey Drive reported that an unknown suspect used their personal information fraudulently.

*A resident of the 16000 block of Monterey Drive reported that an unknown subject damaged the mailbox of a residence.

*A resident of the 13000 block of Fountain Hills Blvd. reported that a known suspect threatened them.

Saturday, Feb. 10

*A resident of the 16000 block of Arroyo Vista Drive reported a violation of a court order.

*A resident of the 14000 block of Aguilar Drive reported a domestic violence assault.

Sunday, Feb. 11

*A resident of the 17000 block of Fontana Way reported an unknown suspect(s) defrauded them of approximately \$6,000 in an online scam.

*Deputies responded to the 16000 block of Palisades Blvd. where it was reported that an unknown suspect shoplifted items from a business.

*Deputies responded to the 16000 block of Avenue of the Fountains where a domestic violence assault was reported.

Monday, Feb. 12

*Deputies responded to Fountain Hills Boulevard and Arroyo Vista Drive where a rear end traffic collision was reported. No injuries were reported; one vehicle was

towed from the scene.

*A resident of the 16000 block of Monterey Drive reported that an unknown suspect used the victim's personal information without permission.

*Deputies responded to the 16000 block of Palisades Blvd. where it was reported that an unknown suspect shoplifted from a business.

Tuesday, Feb. 13

*A resident of the 13000 block of Manzanita Lane reported an unknown suspect took packages from the porch of a residence without permission.

*A resident of the 16000 block of Avenue of the Fountains reported that unknown suspects entered a vehicle and took items while it was parked in a parking structure.

*Deputies responded to the 16000 block of Pepperwood Cir. where it was reported that an unknown suspect damaged town Sanitary District property.

*Deputies responded to Shea and Saguaro boulevards when they received a report that a subject with a warrant was in the area. The subject was later located and taken into custody by deputies for a felony warrant.

*A resident of the 14000 block of Sherwood Drive reported that an unknown suspect defrauded them out of approximately \$3,000 after an online scam.

*Deputies made a traffic stop at Nicklaus and Indian Wells drives for a driver who failed to stop at a stop sign. The traffic stop resulted in a DUI investigation with charges pending lab results.

Wednesday, Feb. 14

*Deputies responded to Saguaro Boulevard and Rand Drive where a non-injury rear end traffic collision occurred. No vehicles were towed from the scene.

*Deputies made a traffic stop on Golden Eagle Boulevard at Cactus Wren Court. A motorist was stopped for criminal speed traveling 60 miles per hour where the speed limit is 35. The driver was issued a criminal citation.

COMMUNITY CENTER

Check out upcoming activities

Week of Feb. 21 – Feb. 27

Fountain Hills Community Center is maintaining its schedule of weekday events at the Community Center, 13001 N. La Montana Drive at the Cutillo Civic Center.

Activities are scheduled as follows:

Wednesday, Feb. 21

*8 a.m., Back fit with Pilates.

*9 a.m., Video gentle yoga; intermediate bridge; Time 4-U.

*10 a.m., Open paint studio.

*12 p.m., Poker.

*1 p.m., Scrabble; beginning Spanish.

*1:30 p.m., Euchre.

*2 p.m., Open jam session; Ghost Towns of Arizona.

*2:15 p.m., Spanish for beginners.

*3:30 p.m., Beginning Spanish.

*5:45 p.m., Bunco.

*6:30 p.m., Ukulele for beginners.

Thursday, Feb. 22

*8 a.m., Peer-led exercise; aerobic chair exercise.

*9 a.m., Canasta; video gentle yoga.

*9:30 a.m., Beginner line dancing.

*10 a.m., Spanish Club; open paint studio, Alzheimer's support.

*11:15 a.m., Improv line dancing.

*1 p.m., Table Talk for Women; Hand & Foot Cards; advanced Mah Jongg; Great Decisions; improv line dancing.

*4 p.m., Poker.

*5 p.m., Open paint

studio; movie.

Friday, Feb. 23

Community Center Closed/Fountain Festival

Saturday, Feb. 24

Closed

Sunday, Feb. 25

Closed

Monday, Feb. 26

*8 a.m., Back fit with Pilates.

*9 a.m., Geri-Fit fall prevention; table tennis, diabetes self-management.

*10 a.m., Men's Discussion Group.

*10:30, Conversation-al Spanish.

*11:45 a.m., Duplicate bridge.

*12 p.m., Poker.

*12:30 p.m., American Sign Language.

*1 p.m., Cribbage, Pi-

noche, beginning Mah Jongg.

*5 p.m., Aerobic chair exercise.

*5:30 p.m., Hand & Foot Cards.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

*8 a.m., Peer-led exercise; aerobic chair exercise.

*9 a.m., Video gentle yoga.

*9:15 a.m., Spooner Health talk.

*9:30 a.m., Intermediate line dancing.

*10 a.m., Hooks & Needles; open paint studio; 10 weeks Younger You.

*11 a.m., American Sign Language.

*1 p.m., Finding Meaning and Hope; Mah Jongg; movie; bingo.

*5:30 p.m., Table tennis.

PROPERTIES

NPOA update for the week of Feb. 11

Meetings held every Tuesday

The Neighborhood Property Owners' Association's Committee of Architecture reviewed and approved six permit applications at the meeting held on Feb. 13, with no applications in need of further review.

Approvals were as follows:

*15483 Cavern – wall.

*17207 Rand – addition.

*15021 Maple – win-

dow/door replacement.

*16338 Nicklaus – repair.

*16760 Nicklaus – repair.

*17105 Malta – repair.

The NPOA Annual General Meeting will be Saturday, March 16, at 10 a.m. in the Fountain Hills Community Center.

The NPOA welcomes member homeowners who are interested in serving the NPOA Board of Directors or the

Neighborhood Committee of Architecture.

All interested members should contact the NPOA office at 480-837-5317 or visit the NPOA/NCOA website at npaafh.org for more information.

The Neighborhood Committee of Architecture (NCOA) meets Tuesday mornings at 8:30 a.m. to review plans submitted during the previous week. Deadlines for permit submittal is Fridays at

2 p.m. to be reviewed on the following Tuesday.

The NPOA Board of Directors meets the second Wednesday of each month at 9 a.m.

Anyone interested in volunteering on the 2024-25 NPOA Board of Directors should contact the office.

Any questions may be directed to the NPOA office at 480-837-5317, or visit the NPOA website at npaafh.org for more information.

Transitions

• From page 3

it all very quickly with no thought of saving.

It's why at Foster Your Future, Paulsen and her team of volunteers encourage every young person to get a GED, college or vocational training degree.

Emphasis on education

Several FYF students are currently enrolled at Scottsdale Community College, Arizona State University, Mesa Community College and other Valley schools studying for various degrees including nursing, construction management and international trade. Other students are completing their certification to become pharmacy technicians,

dental assistants and commercial truck drivers.

While working or in school, the youth are supported financially by FYF through community donations, private donors, the Arizona Tax Credit, local clubs and Paulsen herself.

Foster Your Future works with 40 students per year. Alongside each student is a volunteer mentor/case manager who is tasked with looking after their every need.

From obtaining a driver's license, applying for jobs or preparing taxes, volunteers are the lifeblood of the operation.

"You get some really nice relationships which is what I was going for," Paulsen said. "Then they don't want to disappoint you."

While the future of

FYF is in flux, Paulsen says when she does find a good fit, she will stay on to help in the transition of new leadership.

"Then maybe I could get to work with young adults because that's what I wanted to do more than the management part of it," Paulsen said. "There aren't a lot of programs like ours, and I'd like to at least try to keep it going."

To inquire about a future at Foster Your Future, visit fosteryourfuture.org or send an email to Support@FosterYourFuture.org.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Cyrus Guccione can be reached at cguccione@iniusa.org.

HEALTHCARE

Duet hosting long-term care seminar

At Fountain Hills Community Center

Duet, a Valley organization providing health-care and aging services, is hosting a seminar at the Fountain Hills Community Center on Thursday, March 7, from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

This program, Planning and Paying for Long-Term Care, offers information to caregivers of those with dementia, and how to successfully navigate

the financial, legal, emotional and physical challenges of this disease.

Speakers for the event include Attorney Megan Selvey, Esq., with Bivens & Associates, PLLC; Charles Scott, AIF, CDP with Pelleton Capital Management; and Stephanie Russell, BSN with Concierge Senior Care Management.

Register for the free seminar by calling 480-816-5200 or online: Catalog - Fountain Hills

Community Services (rec1.com), Course #2534.

Duet has been in the Valley for 40 years. The organization started its kinship program to help grandparents raising grandkids 26 years ago. They offer support groups, legal assistance, respite assistance, educational workshops and grandfamily outings. To learn more about Duet's kinship services, visit duetaz.org/grandparents-raising-grandchildren/.

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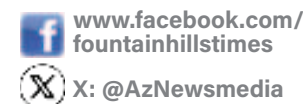
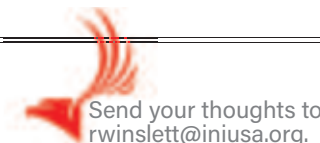
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OPINIONS



OPINIONS

Take the Civility Pledge

Yes, I want to become a Civility Advocate. I will do my part to help my community become a safe place for citizens to engage in civil discourse about public issues.

Visit our sister newspaper website yourvalley.net/civility-pledge/ to take the pledge.

Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our submissions. All opinions must be no more than 300 words.

For consideration, opinion submissions are due noon Thursday the week before publication. Please include your name and phone number so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We also welcome your photo. Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month. Two submittals in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submits it.

Corrections

Independent strives for accuracy and pledges to bring errors that have appeared in our newspaper to the attention of our readers. We offer a "right of reply" to the people about whom we write. Readers who disagree with a news story or the way it was handled or edited are welcome to respond with an opinion to: rwinslett@iniusa.org.

Target center apartment project makes sense for Fountain Hills

By Brenda Kalivianakis
TOFH COUNCIL MEMBER

Fountain Hills has a housing shortage because there is not enough housing at prices that working, middle-class people can afford. In some ways, we are victims of our own success – Fountain Hills is expensive. It's extremely difficult to find attainable housing with elevated land prices, record high material and labor costs, a lengthy approval process, and political headwinds opposing new construction. We are almost built out and our focus is mainly redevelopment now.

To provide more housing at lower prices, we need to build more dense housing options where it makes sense – along the Shea corridor, in our growth areas, and away from residential neighborhoods. Our population is aging. Most of our residents are over 55 years old. Not everyone wants or needs a large single-family home on an acre. We need to offer a healthy balance of housing types for all our residents at every stage of life.

Our growth has been virtually stagnant for two decades. I find that alarming. Does the average FH citizen want this council to manage the decline of our town and sit idly by as property values drop?

I ran on (and continue to advocate for) controlled, thoughtful

growth, always in alignment with our general and strategic plans.

My vision is a thriving, vibrant downtown with a year-round flow of both residents and tourists to support shopping and activities. Downtown is the heart of Fountain Hills' economic engine and part of a winning formula.

The Target Center project is all about energizing an essential revitalization for our community, plain and simple. Had the council voted against it, we would be sowing the seeds for an empty strip mall, a shuttered Target center, and a haven for the homeless.

Prosperity and stable home values are accomplished through thoughtful planning, not by accident.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Politicians are supposed to be held to a higher standard

By Sherri James

During the Feb. 6 Town Council meeting many of our town's citizens spoke about the unethical behavior of Councilperson Skillicorn on social media, where he regularly insults and demeans people. Some of those citizens asked that the council consider sanctioning Skillicorn for violating the council's Ethics code.

Instead, Gerry Friedel defended him and tried to embarrass one of the citizens by holding up a meme that she posted on her Facebook

account. Friedel would seemingly like to have us believe that he doesn't understand that elected officials are held to a higher standard and that they pledge to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct. Friedel posted demeaning memes on social media until he became an elected official, proving that he does understand the different standard for politicians.

A full year has passed since Gerry was joined by the ROT candidates and the council meetings are devolving. One of the speakers at the Feb. 6 meeting said that Skillicorn described himself as an agent of chaos and he is certainly fulfilling that role.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Councilman Friedel displayed lack of integrity

By Robyn Heimbuch

"8.4 Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor, and integrity in all public and private relationships." This sentence is taken directly as it is written in Section 8, Code of Ethics of our Fountain Hills Town Council's Rules of Procedure.

The obviously planned and prepared ambush of a local citizen/resident Feb. 6 by Gerry Friedel at the Town Council meeting was a despicable display of "what aboutism," a common defensive measure used by the right to deflect any personal responsibility for one's

actions. Apparently, Councilman Friedel and Councilman Skillicorn (seven ethics violations have been filed against him) were never taught that "two wrongs don't make a right." I don't know what response they were expecting, but they certainly got what they deserved.

Gerry Friedel does not deserve to be, nor should he be elected to the honorable office of mayor. His disrespect for residents of Fountain Hills, and disrespect for our current mayor, Ginny Dickie, was on full display. There was no honor or integrity in his actions last night.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Fountain Hills is indeed at a crossroads

By Albert Ronca

Mayor Dickey in her State of the Town address passed an important message to all in Fountain Hills: We're "at a crossroads." I rewatched her presentation and took notes.

She begins that her service has been a natural progression of volunteerism and experiences. A journey of involvement. She points out that It is important to seek professional expertise with reasoned debate and public input to guide mature decision-making.

She warns that we are at a "tipping point" when discussing the maintenance of our roads and our 50-year-old town infrastructure. But this is an opportunity, she says,

optimistically; a chance to take the right action, spreading ideas and messages until they reach a critical mass, "the tipping point."

Her goals are to continue to build on our economic development by adding housing options, jobs, partnering with schools and supporting business vitality, assist with the transition of our new fire department, and continuing to keep our town safe through MCSO.

She discussed welcoming the International Dark Sky Discovery Center and continuing our vital relationships with Fort McDowell, the Salt River Pima community, and our chamber, councils, county and state associations.

She ends with the importance of resisting national interests that can undermine goals for a local community including civility, unity and lawful, predictable, fair governance; putting aside unnecessarily controversial issues and revisiting decisions, and giving equal voice and respect to all our neighbors and staff.

It's clear to me that Mayor Dickey has the pulse of the community and of the council. I think she's saying we (elected leaders and residents) are the designers of our own destiny of which the collective town is the benefactor. I, for one, favor Fountain Hills over personal gain. The mayor is right. Fountain Hills is at a crossroads. Choose the

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course wisely!

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Reasoning for attempted referendum is disingenuous

By Steve Thomas

The Reclaim Our Town (ROT) group is attempting to get the Four Peaks Plaza re-zoning request referred to voters.

A statement from Crystal Cavanaugh and Larry Meyers, representatives of ROT, was published in the Jan. 31 edition of The Fountain Hills Times Independent. The statement read, in part, “We believe a decision that will affect so many residents should not be made by only four votes on our Town Council.”

I believe ROT’s effort is not in any way due to “only four votes” deciding the re-zoning. I find their statement both disingenuous and a smoke-screen for the real reason, which I believe is the council did not vote the way ROT wanted them to.

I also believe it would not have mattered whether four, five, six or seven votes had been in favor of the re-zoning; ROT would be trying to get the request referred in any case. If “only four votes” is really the issue, then ROT would have also been attempting to get the re-zoning referred to the voters if the council had voted 4-3 to deny the re-zoning.

Will the representatives of ROT publicly state, truthfully, that they would be taking the same action if Council had de-

nied the re-zoning?

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Partisan politics and divisive rhetoric must end

By Beth Culp

In a video intended as a response to Mayor Dickey’s recent State of the Town address, Councilmember Skillicorn proclaimed, “the common-sense Conservative majority has done more in one year than the previous six combined.” The list of accomplishments was limited to bringing back prayer, firing a lobbyist, “fixing” the sign ordinance and “banning” future mask and vaccine mandates.

No item on this list has resulted in any tangible improvement to our community.

Terminating the contract with the town lobbyist reduced expenditures by approximately \$25,000. The legal fees incurred to hire outside counsel to investigate the eight ethics complaints brought against Skillicorn are likely to exceed that amount.

One need only drive down Saguaro or Shea to know that the sign ordinance has not been “fixed.”

Banning future mask or vaccine mandates, like the 5G moratorium, is a meaningless gesture. A mandate issued by Maricopa County or the State would preempt any inconsistent provision enacted by the town.

During her presentation Mayor Dickey took no credit for the remarkable improvements to our shared spaces and business climate that we have witnessed during her

tenure. Rather, she gave credit to the town’s staff and commissions, volunteers and community and business leaders.

Despite her obvious and longstanding enthusiasm for the town, the mayor did end her speech on a solemn note. Observing that in the prior year’s address she described the state of the town as “vibrant,” for this year the mayor chose the phrase, “at a crossroads.”

The mayor did not expressly identify the toxic partisan politics and divisive rhetoric brought to our town by Skillicorn and his supporters as a factor in bringing us to this crossroads. But there are many of us who believe it is the only factor and that it must end.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Questioning referendum process was shameful

By Alan Grosso

Arizona has a strong history of the initiative and referendum process which enables its citizens to truly demonstrate what the phrase “we the people” signifies. It gives us the right to put an issue before the electorate that either supports or rejects what our elected officials have decided.

In a shameful show of disrespect for this process, there were Town Council members accusing citizens of willful deception in collecting signatures for the Target Plaza rezone at the Feb. 6 council meeting. This was parroted by Betsy LaVoie of the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce. They actually called for people who

willfully signed the petition to contact them if they were “deceived” and wanted their signature removed. It appeared this was a deliberate attempt to undermine our right to collect signatures.

I personally know several of the people who are collecting signatures. They are not deceiving anyone. They present the issue and ask if you wish to have this voted on by the residents of Fountain Hills – nothing more. If you support the decision or not, it is up to you to put it before the voters or not.

I lost a great deal of respect for those on the Town Council who would put forth such nonsense while at the same time having to listen to personal attacks on one of the signature collectors.

This is democracy at work. As an elected official, if you don’t like it or support it, then you have no business representing the people.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

The PAC, ROT, is against almost everything

By Michael Scott

It’s surely clear now that the organized PAC “ROT” is against almost everything, including Councilwoman Kalivianakis, whom it supported just more than a year ago to get elected.

The ROT leadership has now decided that any changes to the Target center, a more than half-empty shopping plaza, is bad for Fountain Hills. They bemoan vacant commercial shops

• See **Opinions** on page 10

Civility Checklist

How to engage in respectful, honest & civil dialogue about public issues.

□ Take the high road. Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.

□ Be respectful. Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment and threats directed at another person — or that person’s race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone’s character or motives.

□ Be truthful. Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes. When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.

□ Don’t misrepresent. Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.

□ Listen and learn. It’s both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don’t agree with your own.

□ Look for common ground. When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.

□ Respect privacy. Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.

□ Set a good example. Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it’s OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.

Now that you have read this, take our Civility Pledge: yourvalley.net/civility-pledge/



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and abhor taxes, but refuse to welcome residents that could help spur new businesses and support existing ones, and – now that they have abandoned Kalivianakis (who supports the redevelopment) – they must rely on Jerry Friedel as their loyal lap dog. Kalivianakis demonstrated the ability to think for herself. Friedel, not so much, lacking the leadership qualities of a mayor wannabe.

After all, former council member (and Joe Arpaio supporter) Art Tolis wants the project, former mayor Schlum wants it, too. So does the Chamber.

So just where should the ROT self-proclaimed saviors turn now? When will they ever be for something— anything? Maybe they could volunteer in town for a change, or serve on a commission, or participate in a com-

munity activity – gain some perspective.

It's time to stop listening to ROT's noise. Their only real contribution is being virtually against everything. As far as the recent petition they are circulating, some collectors are telling potential signers misinformation. For example, problems with the Sanitary District, big-time traffic problems and supposed expansion of the project.

According to the lawyer for the shopping center, without the project, we are going to lose both Target and Petco.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

How many ethics investigations before actual consequences?

By Ciel Villawatkins

Is there an infinite number of ethics investigations? According to the Fountain Hills Times Independent, there were seven ethics investiga-

tions filed against Allen Skillicorn.

He already displayed road rage against a town employee for simply enforcing our signage laws. He chased that town employee down our streets, causing that alarmed employee to contact MCSO. Seriously? A car chase down our streets over an inanimate object, a sign? That action is already endangering someone's safety and others. It should have qualified for an immediate sanction. Reckless endangerment comes to mind. Yet, he quotes Bible verses during Town Council meetings?

My opinion: Guard band the number of ethics investigations and sanction him until all ethics investigations are cleared. Make it a finite number of investigations with actionable consequences.

Protecting public safety should be paramount. One ethics investigation

for that should be immediately sanctionable.

Is it strike three, "you are sanctioned?" If he worked for any employer, there are clear consequences. Sometimes, it only takes one employee to attack or threaten a customer or a colleague, verbal or written. Sometimes the employee will have three chances. Job termination is enforced after the third.

Is it five ethics investigations and "you are out?"

What are the consequences of multiple investigations? Is it not allowing him to vote on any Town Council decision until cleared of all investigations? Even the GOP sanctioned Rep. George Santos and eventually un-seated him. Seven ethics investigations should be more than enough.

Let this be a lesson to anyone else in public service so that our public servants serve within our

Code of Ethics.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Council members should be held to a higher standard

By Pam Cap

Under Mayor Gerry Friedel's reign as king the residents of Fountain Hills will be held to a higher standard than the elected officials. They will be subjected to condemnation and ridicule if they approach the council for help.

Friedel was part of the vote to make the process to file ethics complaints against elected official harder for the residents. Yes, the guy running for mayor wants residents to follow stricter rules than he does. The change to the ethics process was seemingly imposed to discourage and punish residents who stepped up with concerns.

Obviously, it didn't work out the way they

planned. With seven ethics complaints alone against Skillicorn, it shows the roadblocks the council majority put into place is not discouraging valid complaints from being filed. Which is good for the residents.

Councilmember Friedel must be reminded he is the elected official. Councilmember Skillicorn is not the only council member that attacks, ridicules and disparages marginalized communities. Mayoral candidate Gerry Friedel has history, too. Screen captures of his since-deleted posts are still making the rounds online.

Now what kind of example is Gerry Friedel setting for Fountain Hills? Is he the guy Fountain Hills deserves? Luckily, we have an election coming up to find out.

Reader reactions, pro or con, are welcomed at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Asphalt paving continues in Fountain Hills

Phase III work includes Jacklin Drive

The Town of Fountain Hills Streets Department and its contracted road construction company, M.R. Tanner Construction, have begun work on the third phase of street paving projects for the current fiscal year.

Work began the week on Feb. 20, for repaving on Jacklin and Firebrick drives with Jacklin to be done first. This phase is set for completion in March.

The first phase completed in December 2023 was a rebuild or repair of streets in the industrial

area of Kiwanis Drive from Saguaro to El Lago boulevards, Enterprise and Colony drives. The second phase included the removal and replacement of pavement on neighborhood streets on Ibsen and Sherwood drives, Sterling Way, and Ashbrook Drive between Fountain Hills Boulevard and Cameo Drive.

During these road projects, residents and those using these streets must obey all construction notifications and instructions from on-site safety personnel. No parking is permitted on the streets during working hours once construction begins. The town's construc-

tion working hours are 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday. Contractors typically work between 6:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. during the week. For more information about the Phase III road project, visit the Town's website at fountainhillsaz.gov/Pavement-Projects.

In 2022, the town hired Roadway Asset Services to laser-test the entire road network to help determine which roads needed urgent repair. This report and review of the age of streets helped formulate the four-phase road repair and replacement plan.

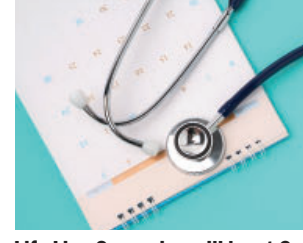
HEALTH CARE

Life Line Screening plans April visit to Fountain Hills

Check for various conditions

Residents living in and around Fountain Hills can learn about their risk for cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, diabetes and other chronic, serious conditions with screenings by Life Line Screening.

Cornerstone Family Church of Fountain Hills will host this community event on April 1, according to a press release. The church is located at



Life Line Screening will be at Cornerstone Family Church April 1. (Metro Creative)

10215 N. Saguaro Blvd.

Screenings can check for the level of plaque buildup in your arteries, related to risk for heart disease, stroke and overall vascular health; HDL and

LDL cholesterol levels; diabetes risk; bone density as a risk for possible osteoporosis; kidney and thyroid function, and more.

Organizers say screenings are affordable, convenient and accessible for wheelchairs and those with trouble walking. Free parking is also available.

Consultants will work with participants to create a package based on their age and risk factors. Call 1-877-237-1287 or visit lifelinescreening.com. Pre-registration is required.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Dark Sky Discovery Center seeks sponsors

Naming rights available

The International Dark Sky Discovery Center (IDSDC) planned for construction in Fountain Hills is nearing its goal of breaking ground on the facility this spring.

In preparing for the next big step for the project, the IDSC Board of Directors has issued a release announcing opportunities for those interested in naming rights sponsorships.

The Andromeda Galaxy is 2.5 million light years from earth. The IDSDC has a fundraising goal of \$25 million. Both are big numbers. That's why the IDSDC board has set the amounts for key naming rights for what will be one of marquee facilities of its kind. It is a rare opportunity for those who want to add their names to this project.

The IDSDC board is seeking \$8 million for signature naming rights for the entire center. Naming rights are also available for \$2 million for specific elements of the center such as the observatory, theater and the "Night Sky Experience" exhibit hall.

The IDSDC board, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, has been raising funds for several years, ensuring the center's future, so that Arizonans and visitors to the state can experience the wonders of dark skies, like viewing the Andromeda Galaxy. The fundraising is now in the home stretch.

The IDSDC has raised

more than \$18 million so far. Now the final push is on for donors ahead of the center's groundbreaking this spring, according to the release.

Fountain Hills was the 17th community worldwide to have earned the prestigious designation of an International Dark Sky Community, a rare achievement so close to a metropolitan area.

The IDSDC is to break ground this spring on the 23,000-square-foot facility that will include a planetarium, an observatory, a theater, and "Night Sky Experience" exhibit hall so the entire state can experience the night sky, the solar system, and beyond. Individual donations are welcome at all levels.

Elements of International Dark Sky Discovery Center include:

*A first-class 20.5-foot domed observatory with a 27.5-inch PlaneWave telescope.

*A 65-seat, state-of-the-art planetarium utilizing immersive digital technology to deliver sharp laser images on the 39-foot diameter dome.

*A multi-use, 150-tiered-seat theater/auditorium/lecture hall.

*A 3,300-square-foot "Night Sky Experience" exhibit hall with interactive experiential displays designed to educate and inspire visitors of all ages.

"The International Dark Sky Discovery Center will not only be an extraordinary accomplishment for Fountain Hills, but also a major attraction worldwide and

a focal point for knowledge, science and wonder," said Fountain Hills Mayor Ginny Dickey.

"We sincerely thank everyone who has brought us to this point. As we get ready to break ground, we are offering naming rights to this facility. It is a rare opportunity for donors or sponsors to put their name on this new chapter in Arizona history," said IDSDC board President Joe Bill.

In addition to working with K-12 educators, the IDSDC will also serve as a resource at the college and university level. There are no observatories with large, research grade telescopes in the Greater Phoenix area. Students at Arizona State University and the Maricopa County Community colleges could have the opportunity to learn how to use a large telescope, conduct research and attend classes and lectures.

"Arizona State University looks forward to developing a collaborative relationship with the International Dark Sky Discovery Center," said Dr. Michael Crow, President, Arizona State University.

A significant objective of the IDSDC is to convey the importance of preserving dark skies. Today, 80% of people can no longer see the Milky Way from where they live. Light pollution is having a terrible impact on the environment, safety, wildlife, and human health. Visit darkskycenter.org for more information.

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24

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Encompass Health

10:00-11:00 AM

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CHOREOGRAPHY

Gillmer Duran awarded research and development grant

21 artists awarded by Arizona Commission on the Arts

By **Cyrus Guccione**
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Gillmer Duran of Fountain Hills is one of 21 Arizona artists to receive a \$5,000 research and development grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts (ACA).

Awarded through a competitive application and review process, these grants support artists who seek to advance their artistic practice, expand their creative horizons and deepen the impact of their work, according to an ACA press release.

Duran is a dance instructor at the School of Ballet Arizona as well as the Arizona School for the Arts. He and his wife Dubraskha Arrivillaga have traveled throughout North and South America chasing their dreams as artists.

Grant purpose

Duran says this research and development grant will help him develop his choreographic voice and return to his classical and contemporary ballet roots, teaching his students and preparing them to showcase their work professionally.

The funding will also allow Duran the opportunity to purchase recording equipment and

materials for costumes to bring his choreography to a more professional level.

"Choreography is close to my heart," Duran said. "I am super excited and grateful that I got this opportunity."

Chasing the dream

Hailing from Venezuela, Duran spent his formative years learning ballet at Ballet Metropolitano in Caracas.

Duran began dancing at the age of 11 at the Fundación Arte Nuevo, an age that he considers later than many professional dancers who begin their careers at the age of seven or eight.

With a repertoire of Venezuelan folk dance, contemporary dance and also jazz, Duran says his earliest years shaped the dancer, choreographer and teacher he is today.

At the age of 21, Duran began to delve into classical ballet, working at Ballet Nuevo Mundo de Caracas and the National Ballet of Caracas.

"It was a life-changing experience for me because I grew up admiring people that I worked with," Duran said. "That was very important for me."

Duran came to America initially on a tourist visa. A friend of his



Gillmer Duran is a ballet instructor at the Arizona Ballet for the Arts. (Photo courtesy of Nikiana Medansky)

had worked at the Tulsa Ballet Theatre in Tulsa, Okla., and encouraged Duran to apply.

Duran auditioned and was accepted as one of many experienced dancers from around the world learning and performing at the Tulsa Ballet Theatre.

At that point in his career, Duran's visa had also transitioned into an O-1 visa, reserved for individuals who possess, "extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics..." according to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

As time passed, Duran had opportunities to work with choreographers who inspired his journey including Nicolo Fonte, Robert Battle, Mauricio Wainrott, Edwaard Liang, Jessica Lang, Toni Pimble and the highly revered Vicente Nebrada, who Duran considers to be a Venezuelan pioneer for dance.

"Vicente Nebrada was sort of bringing to Venezuela what was happening in the United States and infusing all of that with his own style. So, working under him was very inspiring for me," Duran said.

By 2010, Duran and his wife had traversed the country, moving from Idaho to Oregon and eventually Alaska where he had transitioned into a role as artistic director and resident choreographer at the Alaska Dance Theater. It was here where Arrivillaga also served as the ballet company mistress and rehearsal director.

Following their stint in Alaska, Duran and his wife went east, teaching ballet at conservatories from Maryland to Virginia before returning to the Pacific Northwest to teach at the Evergreen City Ballet in Renton, Wash.

Duran and his wife moved to Arizona in 2019 where he now works for the School of Ballet Arizona and the Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix.

"We were kind of chasing work in a sense," Duran said of their travels from Venezuela and throughout the United States. "People will ask me, 'So why Idaho?' because we were in places that are not necessarily the first pick on anybody's list, but we were able to explore opportunities to be part of so many communities and we've been living our dancing lives."

Throughout his travels, Duran completed his bachelor's degree in fine arts from Saint Mary's College of California.

In Arizona, Duran and his wife chose Fountain Hills primarily because of its support of the arts. It's also a safe community and matches the lifestyle that Duran and Arrivillaga were looking for, he said.

Duran and his wife celebrate their 20th anniversary in April and have spent their lives dancing since their youth in Venezuela. Through recognition like this research and development grant from ACA, Duran says it makes him feel like he is right where he needs to be in life.

"We came to America with the goal to become assets to the cultural landscape and to provide knowledge and art for all the places that we were in," Duran said. "It's been more than 20 years from that time and we are very happy."

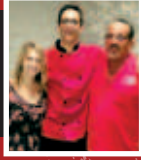
For more information on the Arizona Commission on the Arts, visit azarts.gov.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Cyrus Guccione can be reached at cguccione@iniusa.org.

Fountain Festival is this weekend

The Fountain Festival of Fine Arts and Crafts will run from Friday, Feb. 23, through Sunday, Feb. 25, marking the event's 50th anniversary. In case you missed our reporting in last week's paper, read all about it online here: fhtimes.com/stories/fountain-festival-of-fine-arts-and-crafts-celebrates-50-years,476769

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HAND-MADE CREATIONS

Artists' Gallery hosts April Bower

Jewelry artist presents Tuesday, Feb. 27

The community is invited to the next Fountain Hills Artists' Gallery weekly demonstration on Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Bower creates contemporary jewelry from Argentium sterling silver, copper, gold, bi-metals or Mokume Gane. (Submitted photo)

The featured artist for this event is jewelry artist April Bower, an artist fascinated by the many varied processes involved in metalworking, according to a press release from the Fountain Hills Artists' Gallery.

Bower's work, ex-

cuted in Argentium sterling silver, copper, gold, bi-metals or Mokume Gane, features primarily metal with textures, sparingly accented with gemstones, diamonds and semi-precious stones.

Specializing in earrings, cuff bracelets and pendants, Bower creates wearable jewelry with contemporary styling, the press release said.

"I love forming jewelry in a low-tech way: with hammers and wood block," Bower said. "There is much satisfaction in turning a flat sheet of metal into a beautiful and wearable three-di-

mensional thing with limited tools, hands and brain."

Bower will demonstrate anticlastic forming, a metalworking technique that involves shaping a sheet of metal in opposing curves, creating a saddle-like or shell-like structure, perfect for lightweight sculptural earrings, the press release added.

The gallery is located at 16858 E. Avenue of the Fountains and is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information about exhibitions,



The community is invited to watch April Bower create her contemporary jewelry at the upcoming Artists' Gallery weekly demonstration on Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (Submitted photo)

events, workshops and fountainhillsartistsgallery.com. For more information about exhibitions, visit lery.com.

ARTS & CULTURE

SAACA and Town of Fountain Hills launch inaugural photo contest

Showcase life and people of the community

The Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance (SAACA) and the Town of Fountain Hills are joining forces to capture the essence of life in Fountain Hills with the announcement of the inaugural "Fountain Hills Photography Competition." This creative placemaking project encourages creativity and exploration while illuminating the community through diverse perspectives and eyes. Through this contest, people will be able to see the landscapes, everyday living, wildlife, dark skies, culture, and commerce that

make the Fountain Hills community and region.

The Fountain Hills Photography Competition is open to both amateur and professional photographers, allowing them to explore and appreciate the unique landscapes, culture, and wildlife in the community. Photographers don't have to live in Fountain Hills, but all photos must be taken in Fountain Hills. The contest will award cash prizes in multiple categories, publish the winning photographs locally, and showcase the winners through media outreach and social media promotions. Additionally, all winning photos will be displayed on a dedicated website.

The Fountain Hills Photography Competition not only aims to celebrate the town but also provides an opportunity for photographers to showcase their talent. This competition will not only capture images but also help foster a sense of community pride and appreciation for the unique features of Fountain Hills.

Contest entries will be judged on overall quality, creativity, and how well the photograph portrays the Town of Fountain Hills.

2024 CATEGORIES

Category 1: Life in Fountain Hills and surrounding neighbors in Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and Salt River

Pima - Maricopa Indian Community.

Photos should reflect what people do or see every day - photo examples include special events or community celebrations, sports, parades, people taking a walk and having fun, positive aging, children playing, street scenes, town crews at work, etc.

Category 2: Places in Fountain Hills, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and Salt River Pima - Maricopa Indian Community, Photo examples include neighborhoods, shopping districts, streets, parks, trails and green spaces, businesses, etc.

Category 3: Plants and Wildlife in Fountain Hills - Photos should re-

flect the close-up beauty of Fountain Hills - its environment and wildlife.

Category 4: Digitally Altered Artistic Photographic Images - This category is designed for more than just enhanced photographs through digital fine-tuning. Alterations may include using an oil paint effect or significant digital alteration of light and lines. The photographer should describe the digital enhancement or manipulation applied to the image.

Category 5: Youth (entrant/photographer must be under 18) - Photos taken in Fountain Hills, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, and Salt River Pima - Maricopa Indian Community can

reflect any subject matter the entrant wants to submit.

Category 6: Dark Skies - Fountain Hills is designated as an International Dark Sky Community. Photo examples include deep space objects with telescopes, wide fields, moonlit and long exposure landscapes, timelapse and stargazing, panoramas, and community members enjoying and experiencing the dark skies.

Learn more and submit photos at fountainhillsphotocompetition.com. The photo competition is open for community submissions through May 1. There is no cost to submit to the competition.

COMMUNICATIONS

Town Council extends moratorium on 5G

To June 30, 2024

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Town Council has voted to extend a moratorium on the installation of 5G telecommunications equipment in town.

The moratorium was originally approved by the council in May 2023 and expired as of Jan. 1, 2024. The renewal was approved on the same 4-3 vote it passed last year.

The resolution calls for "all utilities operating in the Town of Fountain Hills to cease and desist the build-out of so-called '5G' enabled small cell antennas."

Last May, Town Attorney Aaron Arnson told the council it was free to impose the moratorium, but the town has no legal recourse to enforce it. It was noted that federal law provides that "no state or local statute or regulation, or other state or local legal requirement

may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting the ability of any entity to provide any interstate or intrastate telecommunications service."

In the recent staff report, council was told this does not change. The resolution does not stop any applicable 'shot clock' under federal or state law and will not prevent the approval of new applications for 5G-enabled small cell facilities. The "shot clock" provisions allow for automatic approval if the local jurisdiction does not approve an application within a specified time period.

"It is clear on its face this is not an enforceable ordinance," Councilwoman Peggy McMahon said.

Councilwoman Brenda Kalivianakis said the council is at "loggerheads" on the issue. "We can respectfully agree to disagree," Kalivianakis said. "The extension gets us to when an ordinance is approved. Whether you think this is enforceable or not, it will get us to

where a new ordinance is considered."

The Planning and Zoning Commission is just beginning the process of reviewing a proposal for regulation that relates to broadband and focuses on requiring infrastructure to be buried underground with cable access.

The updated resolution refers to "completion of an ultra-wideband ordinance providing services via underground fiber optics, point-to-point, zero antennas, no wireless attachments on streets is codified and adapted."

The new moratorium is to expire as of June 30, 2024, or with the approval of an ordinance.

Staff also reported that the town had received no wireless facility applications during the moratorium last year, and currently has no new requests.

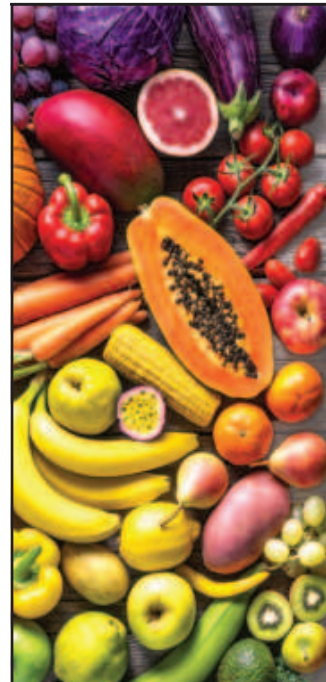
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VETERANS

Fountain Hills Middle School VFW essay contest

Three winners recognized

Eli Brandsetter, Whitney Carponelli and Mikaela Smith were named the winners of the Fountain Hills Middle School Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) essay contest Tuesday, Feb. 13.

Carponelli and Smith are eighth grade students, and Brandsetter is in the seventh grade.

The essay contest was organized by the Fountain Hills VFW, hoping

to recognize and celebrate the patriotic spirit of the younger generation. The topic of the essay was "What Inspires Me about America."

The VFW worked with social studies teacher Chris Peterson to start the essay contest in October 2023. The three winners received a certificate of recognition and will have their essays displayed at the VFW post for visitors and members to see.

"The three students from Fountain Hills Middle School, whose essays stood out among



Fountain Hills middle school teacher Chris Peterson, VFW Post 7507 Commander Bill Luzinski, Eli Brandsetter, Whitney Carponelli and VFW Post 7507 Senior Vice Commander Dick Holper. Not pictured, Mikaela Smith. (Submitted photo)

many submissions, were commended for their

thoughtful reflections on the values and ideals that make America great," Peterson said in an email submission. "Each essay eloquently expressed the students' admiration for the country and its rich history of freedom, democracy and opportunity."

Dick Holper, Senior Vice Commander of the Fountain Hills VFW Post, previously served as a Coordinator for Youth Programs including VFW Patriot's Pen and Voice of Democracy.

Holper also coordinated the American Legion High School Oratorical scholarship programs in both Arizona and Montana.

"It's important to foster a sense of patriotism and pride in our youth, and events like these help reinforce those values," Holper said in a press release. "We hope that these students will continue to carry the torch of American patriotism and become future leaders who uphold the ideals of freedom and democracy."

FALCONS

Fountain Hills High School reunion planning underway

Drumming up funds for a formal reunion

By George Zeliff

INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Former Fountain Hills High School student government members are putting together a 10-year reunion for the class of 2014.

Allie Bice, former class president of 2014, is organizing the reunion with the help of another former student government member, Lianne Chung. They are looking to host the reunion sometime after Thanksgiving this fall and hope most of their classmates can make it.

The reunion is in its early planning stages,



The Fountain Hills High School class of 2014. (Submitted photo)

and Bice has a fundraising goal of \$2,500 due to the cost of vendors. Bice has set up a gofundme website for donations.

"We're looking to fundraise as much as possible to pull off a worthwhile event," Bice wrote in an email. "It seems that's been the biggest struggle for class reunions in the recent past, but we have an engaged group

of 2014 alumni who are looking to reunite in a more formal capacity."

More details about the reunion will be posted on social media at [instagram.com/fhhs204](https://www.instagram.com/fhhs204). You can also search for fhhs2014 on Instagram.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.



FOUNTAIN HILLS STUDENTS PUT ON A SHOW

The Fountain Hills Middle School and High School dance departments performed "Grace, Power & Force" earlier this month. The dance department will perform another concert later this spring. (Submitted photo/Chris Hartmann)

FHUSD

New Fountain Hills School Board member announced

Dr. Richard Rutkowski will fill vacant seat

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Unified School District announced on Wednesday, Feb. 14, that Dr. Richard Rutkowski will serve as the Governing

Board replacement to Dana Saar for the remainder of Saar's term.

Saar resigned from the FHUSD Governing Board on Nov. 9, and Maricopa County School Superintendent Steve Watson had the sole authority to appoint a replacement. Saar's seat was up for reelection this November, so

Rutkowski will serve through December, until new elected board members are installed in January 2025.

Rutkowski will be an active member of the board at the next meeting starting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 21. The board will elect a new board vice president shortly after Rutkowski

is installed.

All board meetings are held in the FHUSD Learning Center and are livestreamed and recorded on the FHUSD YouTube channel.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

Elementary School planetarium almost ready for instruction time



The McDowell Mountain Elementary School Library renovations are nearly complete, and the planetarium dome is already installed. Staff are currently being trained in dome technology. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)



An inside look at the planetarium dome. Students will be able to learn about all sorts of topics, including marine biology. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

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DONATION

VFW Post 7507 supports Honor Flight Arizona

In support of future Honor Flights to Washington D.C.

Honor Flight Arizona board member Karen Friddle recently accepted a donation Hills of \$5,000 from the VFW Post 7507 in Fountain Hills to help fund future Honor Flights for veterans to the various veterans memorials in the Washington D.C. metro area.

All Honor Flights have veterans from across branches of service from the Korean War and all conflicts up to the Vietnam War, according to a press release from VFW Post 7507 Adjutant Boe James.

"Since the majority of WWII veterans have already participated in Honor Flights, not all include WWII veterans, but any WWII veteran who signs up is given priority for future flights," James said.



From left, VFW Post 7507 Commander Bill Luzinski, Honor Flight Arizona Board member Karen Friddle and VFW Post 7507 Senior Vice Commander Dick Holper. (Submitted photo)

Honor Flight Arizona took its first flight of 11 WWII veterans in November 2009. In addition to WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans, trips have also included close to 2,000 guardians who assist the veterans along the way, James said.

Veterans from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and other conflicts between those dates are invited to sign up for their no-cost Honor Flight, James said.

Honor Flight Arizona is part of the nationwide Honor Flight Network. Both are 501(c)3 non-profit organizations able to do the work they do because of generous private donations and corporate support, said James in his press release.

For more information about Honor Flight and Honor Flight Arizona, visit honorflight.org or honorflightaz.org or visit the Facebook, X or YouTube pages.



'REAL HOUSEWIVES OF FOUNTAIN HILLS' TAKE A TRIP ACROSS THE WORLD

A total of 14 women from the Fountain Hills area ventured to Asia, flying into Bangkok from the U.S. They enjoyed a cruise to sample parts of Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia. Participants included Katie Scheele, Gloria Hachikian, Kathleen Rubin, Kathy Dietz, Nancy Jones, Gina Waldo, Linda Wilson, Nancy Safnick, Gayle Pedrick, Linda Kester, Barb Wagenseller, Judi Yates, Maria Wagaman and Nancy Stevens. (Submitted photo)

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SCHWEIKERT HELD OFFICE HOURS AT VFW POST 7507 IN FOUNTAIN HILLS

Congressional District 1 Representative David Schweikert's staff members Madison Rovelli (left) and Chelsea Lett talk with Fountain Hills resident Nick Flynn (right) during Schweikert's recent Mobile Office Hours held in Fountain Hills at VFW Post 7507. All CD-1 constituents are invited to speak with the congressional staff to address concerns on casework matters including issues with the VA, Social Security, Medicare or other federal agency for one-on-one assistance. Those who were unable to meet with staff can visit Schweikert's Scottsdale office at 14500 N. Northsight Blvd., Ste. 221, or call 480-946-2411. (Submitted photo)

VETERANS' SERVICE ORGANIZATION

VFW Post 7507 welcomes new members

Dr. Elaine Niggemann and Laura College join the ranks

VFW Post 7507 welcomed two new female members at its last meeting.

Dr. Elaine Niggemann and Laura College are believed the first two female members to have joined the award-winning VFW Post at the same time, according to a press release by Post Adjutant Boe James.

Niggemann was an Army nurse who served in Vietnam, mostly at the Army hospital at Long Binh, leaving the service as a captain, James said in the press release.

After her Army service, Niggemann attended medical school and has now retired from a career as a cardiologist.

Her personal military decorations include the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation



From left, New Post Member Laura College, Immediate Past Post Commander Don Hervey and New Post Member Dr. Elaine Niggemann. (Submitted photo)

Medal, as well as the Vietnam Service Medal, the Vietnam Campaign Medal and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm device. She also was awarded a Meritorious Unit Commendation.

College was an Army human resources officer who served in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, leaving the Army as a major, James said.

Among her personal awards are two Meritorious Service Awards, an Army Commendation Medal, two Army

Achievement Medals, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

College was also awarded a Meritorious Unit Commendation. She is the daughter of Don Hervey.

Post 7507 is the local Fountain Hills, north Scottsdale and Verde Communities chapter of the national VFW organization, James said, adding that the Post has been recognized as both an "All American" and an "All State" Post for its service.

The VFW's mission is to "honor the dead by helping the living" through veterans service, community service, national security and a strong national defense.

The VFW Post 7507 is located at 9624 N. Monterey Drive., Suite 1. For more information, visit vfwpost7507.org or call 480-836-5520.

Noon Kiwanis Club hosts successful 'Super' pancake breakfast



The annual tradition continued Sunday, Feb. 11, when the Noon Kiwanis Club celebrated its "Super" pancake breakfast. Kiwanis members are from left, Jerry Comeau, Bernie Hoenle, David Johnson, Kristin Wiener and Jim Pierson. (Submitted photo)



The Fountain Hills Noon Kiwanis Club held its annual breakfast the morning of the Super Bowl from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Kiwanis Activity Center. Noon Kiwanis President Phylliss Kern thanked Bashas' who offered 10% off food, Copy Express who created bulletins and flyers for free and Thrivent Financial who helped fundraise for the event. From left, Phylliss Kern, Keith Junk, Paul Appeldorn, Toni Keyes and Pat Muscarella. Not pictured is Russ Albanese. (Submitted photo)



Approximately 150 people attended the "Super" pancake breakfast according to Phylliss Kern, a record attendance for the event. (Submitted photo)

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TOWN COUNCIL

Ethics complaints are piling up

Councilman Skillicorn main subject

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Since he took office in December 2022, Fountain Hills Town Councilman Allen Skillicorn has had seven complaints filed against him for potentially violating the ethics code established by the Town Council Rules of Procedure.

While one of those complaints, filed earlier in 2023, was reviewed with a finding of no violation, the other six complaints, all filed since Dec. 1, 2023, are still pending review of the attorney retained by the town to review such complaints.

Three of the complaints stem from a September incident in which Skillicorn is alleged to have confronted a town Code Enforcement Officer over removal of a political sign. An MCSO report of the incident states that Skillicorn fol-

lowed the town employee to Town Hall, where, in the presence of a Sheriff's deputy with a body camera on, accused the code officer of stealing the sign. Skillicorn is alleged to have violated the law by attempting to stop the officer enroute to Town Hall. No action was taken regarding such violation.

The three complaints relating to this incident were filed by two fellow council members as well as a private citizen. Vice Mayor Sharron Grzybowski and Councilwoman Brenda Kalivianakis both filed related to the incident involving a town staff member.

Skillicorn defended his actions related to the sign issue stating, "When I ran for Town Council, I promised to repeal the unconstitutional sign ordinance and after 10 months of work, I'm proud to say we got the job done. The law is much clearer now, which hopefully means it will be fairly and consistently enforced. As a public of-

ficial, I swore an oath to uphold our Constitution and I will always vigorously defend our First Amendment rights."

There are also multiple complaints related to Skillicorn's alleged use of social media to attack and ridicule constituents.

Two complaints are directed at Skillicorn's use of social media where he is alleged to have demeaned and disparaged private citizens.

"Councilman Skillicorn continues to violate the code of ethics that each council member is sworn to uphold," Pam Cap states in her complaint filed Jan. 16. "His childish and unprofessional actions damage the public trust and the council's integrity."

Beth Culp also calls out social media posts attributed to Skillicorn. "Councilmember Allen Skillicorn has repeatedly used his social media accounts to demean, degrade, attack, harass and jeopardize the safety and well-being of members of the public," Culp states.

"(He) has also blocked constituents from viewing social media accounts he regularly uses to communicate with constituents. Skillicorn has also prevented constituents from making comments on his posts entirely and deleted comments made by constituents he has not blocked."

After this story related to ethics complaints against Skillicorn ran online, it was brought to the attention of The Times Independent that a citizen had also filed an open meeting law complaint with the Arizona Attorney General's Office against Skillicorn in January 2023 related to blocking of citizens from social media accounts. That complaint also has no resolution at this time.

There is also a complaint challenging Skillicorn's actions at a recent Town Council meeting in which he allegedly challenged the integrity of other council members related to a vote on a zoning change to accommodate an

apartment complex.

That complaint from Grzybowski cites the language of the ethics rules that councilmembers should "refrain from making verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the council, board, commissions, the staff or the public" and "Refrain from making disparaging remarks about other members of the council, boards, commissions, the staff or the public."

In an email statement to The Times Independent Skillicorn continues to state the complaints are political and he has a right to free speech.

"These complaints are purely political in nature. Most of them revolve around things posted to social media and questions I raised in a public forum. The last time I checked, we still had a right of free speech in this country," Skillicorn said. "The people pushing these baseless complaints are wasting time and wasting taxpayer resources. They may not

like me, and they may not agree with my positions on the issue but that does not give them the right to file complaint after complaint against me. I have a right to express my opinions and I am not going to be intimidated by a bunch of bullies who are upset because the people of Fountain Hills elected a person who does not agree with their extreme far-left world view. I will win these cases and I will continue to serve the people of our great community."

At the present time there is no breakdown of the costs related to the most recent complaints. However, according to Town of Fountain Hills Community Relations Manager/PIO Bo Larsen, the town paid for three such complaints during 2023 at a total of \$11,000, averaging \$3,600 each.

The Times Independent invites readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bburns@iniusa.org.

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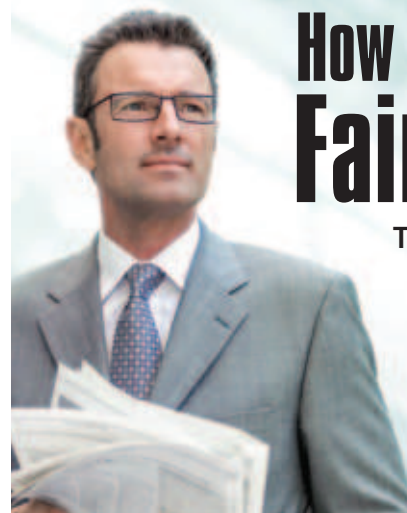
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RELIGIOUS GATHERING

Lent services held at Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church

Community invited to join

The Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church extends an invitation to the community to

join the church each Wednesday of Lent, beginning Feb. 14, for a special Lenten journey.

This year's theme, "Jesus in His Own Words," is taken from

the Gospel of John where the church will examine the "I AM" statements of Jesus, according to a press release from Jeff Rand, the communications chair at the Fountain Hills Presbyterian

Church.

Similar to last year's Lent services, the Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church will host guest preachers who will present in these services.

Held each Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., Lent is held through March 20. Following Lent, the community is also invited to attend the Maundy Thursday service held March 28.

The Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church is located at 13001 Fountain Hills Blvd. For more information, call 480-8347-1763 or visit fhpresbyterian.info.

DELICATESSEN DELIGHTS

Chabad of Fountain Hills hosts kosher deli pop-up

Authentic New York deli has new menu items

The Chabad Edelman Jewish Center in Fountain Hills is once again hosting its kosher deli pop-up Sunday, Feb. 25, from 12 to 4 p.m.

Available for dine-in or take out, the pop-up has two new menu items

this year including potato knishes and cinnamon buns, according to a press release.

The menu includes an option of corned beef, pastrami or smoked turkey sandwiches, cole slaw or potato salad, kosher dill pickles and matzo ball soup.

All sandwiches are served on rye bread and stuffed with one-third

pound of deli meat imported from New York.

The sandwich plates come with a side salad and a kosher dill pickle with options for additional items.

The Chabad Edelman Jewish Center is located at 16830 E. Avenue of the Fountains.

To pre-order, visit JewishFountainHills.com/deli.



The Chabad of Fountain Hills is hosting its kosher deli pop-up Sunday, Feb. 25, from 12 to 4 p.m. (Metro Creative)

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church supports Arizona Hunger Fight



Members of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (SOTH) served at the fourth annual Arizona Hunger Fight in Gilbert, Ariz. (Submitted photo)



SOTH contributed to the cost of materials and participated in packaging the "Taco Mac" meals. The goal of packaging 150,000 meals in three days was accomplished. (Submitted photo)

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Fountain Hills girls continue postseason

Alicia Ibarra is the February Athlete of the Month

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Alicia Ibarra and the No. 6 Falcons (17-1) hosted No. 22 Holbrook at home in the second round of playoffs on Friday, Feb. 16, after press time.

Ibarra led the Falcons to its first region title in over a decade with 17.9 points per game on 63% shooting this season. She's the only senior on the team, and she was named the 3A North Central region Player of the Year on Feb. 14.

Head coach Amanda Baca was also named 3A North Central region Coach of the Year.

"I think it took all of us to get where we're at now," Ibarra said. "Just everyone coming together. Me personally, I'm

not thinking about it too much, I'm just thinking about the game, like how its going to go, and the outcome of it."

Ibarra played her first playoff game at Chinle as a junior last year and the Falcons gained valuable experience from that first round exit. Ibarra said she's both excited and nervous about this year's playoff run.

"Not like a scared nervous, but more like a good nervous, because I know we can win, it just has to take all of us," Ibarra said. "I tell them, it's okay to be nervous. If you're nervous, that's good, just take it all out on the court."

Ibarra scored at least 22 points in each of the first three wins this season, but the Falcons didn't need her to score



Senior Alicia Ibarra is the 3A North Central Player of the Year. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

that many points as the season went on. Freshmen Saedee Smith and Mani Williams adjusted quickly to the varsity speed and were both named in region superlatives.

Junior Seesee Smith joined Ibarra on the all-region first team, and Saedee was named

to the all-region second team. Williams, sophomore Kynzi Schaunaman and junior Kaylee Lewis all received Honorable Mentions.

Sophomore Taleigha Bonaha also returned from injury in late January and averaged eight points per game, giving the Falcons another reli-

able scorer on the floor.

"I was scoring a lot the first half of the season, and then coming in towards the end, I feel like I was more of a team player," Ibarra said. "I was before, but you know, passing the ball more and trying to get everyone else points."

Ibarra is happy to fin-

ish her high school career with Baca, who was also her first coach in the sixth grade. Ibarra received an invitation to work out with the Phoenix College women's basketball team and said just practicing with the college team would cross off a bucket list item for her.

The quarterfinal round was Monday, Feb. 19. If the Falcons advance to the semi-finals, they will play at the Arizona Veteran's Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix on Friday, Feb. 23. The championship game will be at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 24, also at Veteran's Memorial Coliseum.

We invite our readers to submit recommendations for future Athletes of the Month.

George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

Fountain Hills sends five to state wrestling tournament

Tyler Flynn eyes third straight state placement

BY George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills High School wrestling team finished fourth out of 12 teams at the Division IV Central sectionals Saturday, Feb. 10.

The Falcons traveled through a snowstorm to reach sectionals, and five of the 12 Fountain Hills wrestlers qualified for the

state championship tournament. The Division IV state tournament began on Friday, Feb. 16, after press time, and was held at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

Seniors Tyler Flynn, Tyler Langer and Lucas Phillips all returned to the state championship. Flynn placed fourth at state the past two years and sophomore Tyler Trapani qualified for the first time in his career. First-year wrestler senior Nate Barnard also made

his first state appearance.

Flynn (132), Langer (175) and Barnard (285) finished second in their weight class at sectionals, and Trapani (126) and Phillips (157) each placed fourth. Flynn's loss in the championship round was only his second loss of the season.

Phillips missed almost all of January with a shoulder injury but finished the regular season with a 14-6 record. Barnard went 30-17, and Trapani ended his sec-



State-bound wrestlers. From left, senior Lucas Phillips, senior Tyler Langer, sophomore Tyler Trapani and senior Tyler Flynn. Not pictured, senior Nate Barnard. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

ond regular season 37-20.

Captains Flynn and Langer led by example

all season long and had fewer than 10 losses on the year. Flynn went 52-2, and Langer finished 49-6.

Wrestlers had a consolation bracket in the double-elimination tournament and finished the tournament after press time on Saturday, Feb. 17.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org.

George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Fountain Hills boys fall in first round

Scottsdale Christian advances in basketball tournament

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills High School boys basketball team lost 56-44 at home in the first round of playoffs on Wednesday, Feb. 14.

The No. 12 Falcons (13-5) drew a familiar region opponent in the first round, No. 21 Scottsdale Christian (8-8). The Falcons beat the Eagles 59-38 at home on Dec. 13 and lost on the road 63-50 to Scottsdale Christian on Feb. 2.

The Falcons took an early lead but fell behind 13-7 at the end of the first quarter. Scottsdale Christian went on a 7-0 run to start the second quarter and took a 12-point lead into halftime. Fountain Hills junior Matthew Heaney made a three-pointer with nine seconds left to make it 28-16.

The Eagles outscored the Falcons 19-10 in the third quarter and took a 21-point lead at the end of the quarter. Not wanting to lose at home, the boys gave everything they had in the final minutes of the season.

Fountain Hills went on a 7-0 run to start the fourth quarter and turned several defensive steals into offensive points. They scored 18 points in the quarter, and limited Scottsdale Christian to only one made shot from the field.



Senior Keaton Ort made three three-pointers in his final game as a Falcon. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

Scottsdale Christian made 7-of-14 free throw attempts in the fourth and held on to win 56-44. Freshman Jackson Harrison led the Eagles with a game-high 23 points.

Only senior Keaton Ort had started in a play-off game for the Falcons prior to this season. He led the Falcons with 11 points.

Juniors Lucas Grieco and Heaney both scored eight points, and

junior Sam Barnard added seven points. Sophomore Ahren Lloyd scored six, and junior Michael Fitzherbert and senior Brayden Hardison each chipped in two points.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzelliff@iniusa.org.

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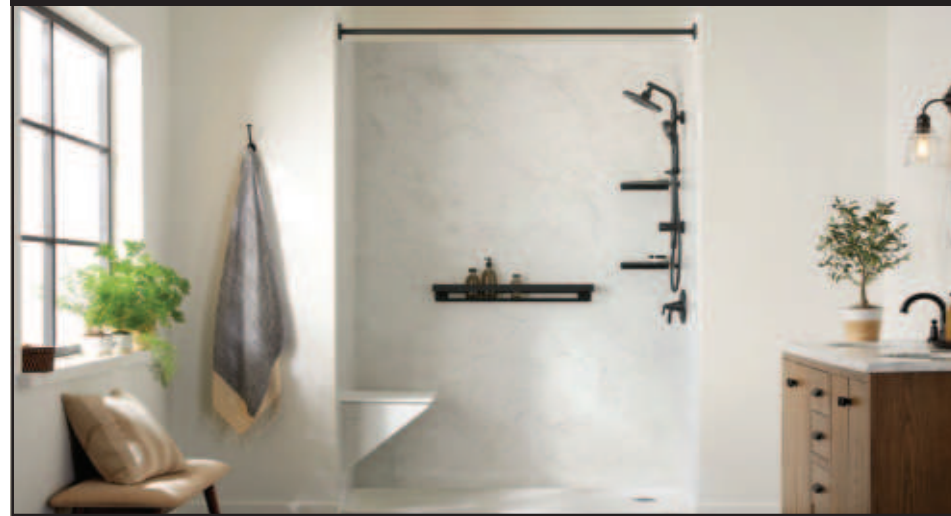
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BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Beach volleyball season starts Feb. 21

Jimmy Belluscio replaces long-time coach Pete McGloin

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Bella Garman and Sydney Boeshans return to the sand to lead the Fountain Hills High School beach volleyball team.

They went 12-1 as the No. 1 pair last year and are ready to go for their senior season this spring.

New head coach Jimmy Belluscio could see the pair's talent and leadership right away. He said Boeshans is a vocal leader, and Garman leads by example. Garman earned her 29th win last season, which moved her to fifth most all-time in school history.

"The team looks good," Belluscio said. "I'm blessed to have the experience I have. I'm

coming into the program with a bunch of seniors and juniors... We look really good. We have high expectations. Definitely our shorter-term goal is to make playoffs, obviously state championship is in the back of our minds. I'm already trying to get them to visualize that goal."

The Falcons beat No. 9 Mesquite 3-2 in the first round of last year's playoffs and fell in the second round to the eventual state champions, No. 1 Salpointe Catholic. They retained some of their most talented players but have a new coach to lead them this year.

Long-time Falcon's head coach Pete McGloin retired from coaching last fall. McGloin helped Fountain Hills become one of the first five schools in the country to have a varsity beach volleyball program in 2012. McGloin led the Falcons



Seniors Bella Garman, left, and Sydney Boeshans, right, celebrate after winning a set last year. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

to five state championship appearances and won back-to-back titles in 2017 and 2018.

"They come from a well-oiled machine," Belluscio said. "Pete was here, he built a system. He had a great system. They all know their fundamentals better than I

did at their age."

Belluscio is originally from Rhode Island and played indoor volleyball all through high school. He earned a scholarship to play for the University of Tampa, and while he was in Florida, Belluscio was exposed to beach volleyball.

One of his old high school teammates got Belluscio into coaching, and he's had experience in both indoor and outdoor volleyball over the past few years. He and his girlfriend recently moved to Arizona, and Belluscio is thrilled to have the views and facilities he has in Fountain Hills.

Belluscio asks that his players be adaptable and stay resilient. He holds mental workouts at the start of practices to get players in the right headspace, and he'll take them inside the gym once a week to work on strength and speed off the court.

"My philosophy is staying resilient, coming every day to work hard and just buying in and being a family," Belluscio said. "That's my biggest thing. You need to buy in. Everybody needs to visualize winning a state championship."

Belluscio expects ju-

niors Kitrick Garman and Lucia Kalmbach to be a reliable No. 2 pair that will push Bella and Boeshans in each practice. Kitrick has expressed interest in continuing her playing career after high school, and Belluscio is excited to have her and Kalmbach for two years.

The Falcons have a week and a half from the end of tryouts to their first game. They host Scottsdale Prep in the season opener at Golden Eagle Park at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 21, and then travel for their next two games.

The Falcons play at Eastmark at 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 23, and go to Deer Valley to play at 4 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

Fountain Hills Baseball ready for season

Cougar Classic tournament starts Feb. 21

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills High School baseball season begins with the Cougar Classic tournament, from Wednesday, Feb. 21, to Saturday, Feb. 24.

The season opener was supposed to be at home against Show Low on Wednesday, Feb. 21, but that game has been rescheduled for a later date. The Falcons first non-tournament game will be at Valley Christian on Wednesday, Feb. 28, at 6:30 p.m.

The Falcons also play in the Phoenix Country Day School tournament on Friday, March 1, and Saturday, March 2.

The tournament games don't count in the overall record, and Head Coach Bob Langer wants to get his players used to executing little things well as soon as possible.

The Falcons will add five more players after the winter basketball and wrestling seasons finish, and those players will only have two practices under their belt before the first tournament.



Kyan Taylor was an all-region second team pitcher last year. He returns along with senior pitchers Nathan Hughes and Lucas Williams, an all-region first team pitcher last season. (Independent Newsmedia/George Zeliff)

"I'm not asking them to hit two or three home runs a game," Langer said. "We're asking for a

quality at bat. You know, they get a walk, get a hit, hit the ball hard, that's all we're asking them to

do. We have to do that, because we're going up against, I mean, Northwest [Christian] has eight college commits, two DI pitchers."

The Falcons finished last season 14-3 and No. 3 in the conference. The only two teams to beat Fountain Hills in the regular season, Valley Christian and Northwest Christian, played each other for the state championship.

The Falcons retained a lot of talent from last year, and Langer said they have a strong group

this year, headlined by three senior pitchers: Nathan Hughes, Kyan Taylor and Lucas Williams.

After the tournaments, the Falcons have three road games against Payson on Monday, March 4, at Scottsdale Prep on Wednesday, March 6, and at Chino Valley on Tuesday, March 12.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Bogey Boys weekly results

The Bogey Boys did not play at Orange Tree Golf Course on Monday, Feb. 12, due to a scheduling conflict around the WM Phoenix Open.

The Wednesday travel group played the Grand Canyon University course in Phoenix on Feb. 14. The winning team at -10 was Lyman Schliep, Bill O'Callaghan and Charley Sparks. Closest to the pin winners were Jim Kidwell

(2) and Al Wahlstrand.

The Bogey Boys next travel to Lookout Mountain on Wednesday, Feb. 21.

VOTS swings again

The Valley of the Sun (VOTS) golf group played at Painted Mountain Golf Resort on Wednesday, Feb. 14. The winners of this week's three-man best ball were Dean Hasz, Clifford Romme, Jim Kelly and James Frank. Coming in second place was the team of Randy

Eckerson, Brent Morrison, Jack Murray and Donald Hrdlicka.

Low net A/B flight winners were James Sandow and Randy Eckerson. Low net C/D flight winners were Jim Kelly and Richard Crane. Closest to the pin and long putt winners were Jack Cranmer, Bob Stubbs, Tony Leslie and Jim Kelly. Anyone interested in more info about joining the VOTS, contact Ray Yusko 216-272-4173.

SPARTAN RACE

Fountain Hills hosts a true Spartan

Paul Lachance completes 200th Spartan Race

By George Zeliff
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Crawling under barbed wire in the mud, climbing over obstacles and carrying sandbags up to 80 lbs. during Spartan Races for fun sounds like a young man's game, but Paul Lachance has a blast doing it.

The 82-year-old Navy veteran ran his 200th Spartan Race at Fort McDowell on Saturday, Feb. 17.

Lachance flew down from Grand Junction, Colo., and has raced at Fort McDowell at least five times before. He runs in different events all around the country, and was instantly hooked after his first Spartan obstacle course in 2013.

"Ironically, I had a major heart event where they did a quintuple bypass, so they literally cracked my chest open and worked on the heart and repaired five arteries," Lachance said. "They had me on pretty strict physical regimen



Paul Lachance carries logs for a Spartan challenge. (Submitted photo)

there for a while on rehab, and I was getting pretty bored with a bicycle and, doing the treadmill and all that good stuff, so I started looking on the Internet for other

exercises."

Lachance said it became a lifestyle for him to do Spartan Races regularly, and he called the

• See **Spartan** on page 29

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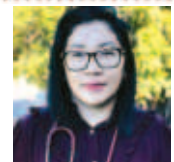
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BUSINESS



KIDPRENEURS

Children's Entrepreneur Market takes over Fountain Hills Farmers Market

Student-led market set March 13

The Fountain Hills Farmers Market is set to host the first of three Children's Entrepreneur Markets this year on Wednesday, March 13.

There are 50 booths of children (ages five - 16) from over 10 local Fountain Hills families selling just about anything, according to a press release from Fountain Hills

Farmers Market organizer Betsy Hess.

"It can be handmade food or art, any type of hobby, store-bought items, games or services," she said. "The kids must do all the selling. Their parents are welcome to help set-up but strongly encouraged to stand back and let the children deliver the pitch and close the sale."

This non-profit organization is helping kids



More than 10 local Fountain Hills families will sell their wares at the upcoming Fountain Hills Farmers Market Wednesday, March 13. (Submitted photo)

learn business with firsthand experience, Hess added.

"So, I ask you as a community to come join us for a day of shopping fun, as young entrepreneurs showcase their creations at the market."

The normal Fountain Hills Farmers Market vendors and extra food trucks will still be on site located at both ends of the Avenue of the Fountains.

The Children's En-

trepreneur Market tent will be set up to answer all questions about how others may participate in future markets in Fountain Hills or throughout the Valley.

The Fountain Hills Farmers Market is held every Wednesday through April from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 16831 E. Avenue of the Fountains.

For more information, call Betsy Hess at 480-227-6113.

REAL ESTATE SOLUTIONS

DeGeorge Partners launches 'Retirements Next Steps'

Monthly workshop series begins Feb. 28

DeGeorge Partners Russ Lyon Sotheby's International Realty announces the launch of a new monthly workshop series entitled, "Retirements Next Steps."

This educational initiative is designed to provide valuable resources for individuals entering or already in retirement coupled with essential real estate market updates and insightful tips on buying and selling properties, according to a press release from Realtor Jill Templeton-Haislip of DeGeorge Partners Realtors.

The "Retirements Next Steps" workshop series will feature indus-

try experts each month, delivering essential information to empower attendees in their retirement journey, Templeton-Haislip said.

The inaugural workshop, scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 28, will feature Richelle Hopkins, a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM) specialist with Mutual of Omaha.

Hopkins will delve into the intricacies of HECMs, purchasing options, reverse mortgages and other senior real estate solutions, Templeton-Haislip said.

Future workshops will cover a range of topics crucial to retirees with expert speakers in Medicare, 10-31 exchanges, long-term care, home care, re-

modeling with "aging-in-place" in mind, VA loans and estate planning, Templeton-Haislip said.

Future workshops will feature Karen DeGeorge, principal at DeGeorge Partners and realtor with 23 years of experience, and Jill Templeton-Haislip, a designated seniors real estate specialist with over 10 years of experience in the senior living industry.

DeGeorge holds certifications as an Accredited Buyer Representative and Short Sale and Relocation Resource and is recognized as a luxury home marketing specialist.

Templeton-Haislip says she will share her insights on assisting in-



DeGeorge Partners is hosting its monthly workshop series entitled "Retirements Next Steps" starting Feb. 28. (Metro Creative)

dividuals with decisions related to downsizing, upsizing into multigenerational living, senior living options and embracing the full richness of retirement by incor-

porating the joy of a second home.

The event is held at the DeGeorge Partners office, 16872 E. Avenue of the Fountains, Suite 103, from 4 to 5 p.m.

Those interested in attending should RSVP to Jill.templeton-haislip@russlyon.com or by calling 303-204-4432. Light refreshments will be served.

Spartan

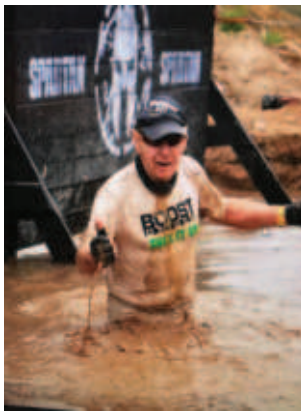
• From page 27

aces a big family affair. He recruited his son and two others for his first race at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, and he became close friends with the other racers the more he ran.

Spartan Races are divided up by distances: a sprint is a three-mile obstacle course, a super is six miles, and a beast is 13 miles. Lachance ran a super for his 199th race in the morning and reached 200 with a sprint starting in the afternoon.

"The second year, my son and I, we did a few more," Lachance said. "The third year we got our first trifecta, which is three miles, six miles and then 13 miles. Do that in one year, it's a trifecta, and we did that in one weekend just two weeks ago."

Lachance jogs on the



Paul Lachance has fun with the obstacle courses, even when he's soaked in mud. (Submitted photo)

courses, and said some people walk faster than he jogs. He has no problem being one of the slowest, because his goal is to finish the race, and he almost always does. He said the only time he was unable to finish a race was when a hailstorm caused the entire course to shut down.

His training consists of walking and jogging on hiking trails near his home. Lachance grew

up in the countryside of upstate New York and spent many days walking miles to hunt and fish close to home.

He's always enjoyed challenging himself and said Navy bootcamp would be a piece of cake compared to the 13-mile beast course.

In 2018, Lachance overcame lip cancer and ran 15 Spartan races that year, and in 2023, Lachance completed 44 Spartan races in nine states. He still works full time as a real estate appraiser and doesn't know how to slow down.

Lachance has already set his goals for 2024 and plans to reach his 250th Spartan race by the end of 2024 after turning 83.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. George Zeliff can be reached at gzeliff@iniusa.org.

Fearless Kitty Rescue announces Silver Whiskers Program

Fundraiser and special adoption packages for senior kitties

Fearless Kitty Rescue has announced a new program specifically benefiting senior kitties and their adopters.

Through the Silver Whiskers Program, a percentage of monthly intakes are cats in need, aged seven or older, along with special adoption packages, according to a press release from Mel Stevens of Fearless Kitty Rescue.

"Kitty Factoid: The average life expectancy of a cat is 13 to 17 years and many cats even survive to the age of 20 or

more," Stevens said. "As cats gradually become bigger parts of the family, it is especially heart breaking to see older cats in the prime of their lives suddenly homeless for one reason or another."

Christine Fixico-Silver, director of Fearless Kitty Rescue, said, "Due to the fact that these older kitties often come with a variety of special needs and medical issues, we are fundraising to be prepared for such expenses throughout this ongoing program.

"We will also be offering special adoption packages for the adopters of our Silver Whiskers cats and we are waiving the adoption fee for adopters 60 years of age and older when they

adopt one of our Silver Whiskers kitties."

Fixico-Silver added, "What is especially exciting is that longtime FKR volunteer and donor Dr. Crystal Baxter wanted to be the first to step up and make this program a reality for the cats.

"She has pledged to match all donations for the Silver Whiskers program up to \$10,000."

The fundraiser kicks off on Valentine's Day.

Those who want to donate to this program and help match the \$10,000 can visit fearlesskittyrescue.org/silver-whiskers/.

To learn more about Fearless Kitty Rescue and the Silver Whiskers Program, visit fearlesskittyrescue.org.

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ON THE ROCKS

Local reaches wildcard round in Bar Boss competition

Matthew McDonald thanks community for support

By Cyrus Guccione
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Euro Pizza Café Bartender Matthew McDonald did not expect to make it as far as he did when he placed second in the wildcard round of the Dos Hombres Bar Boss competition.

Intended to celebrate talented bartenders around the world, the Bar Boss competition invited bartenders around the world to compete for a grand prize of \$10,000 with support from their loyal patrons.

McDonald made it through five rounds of competition before getting eliminated in the wildcard round but counts himself lucky to have the support he has as a bartender in Fountain Hills.

“Just the amount of support I got was incredible,” McDonald said. “I expected to get some, I just didn’t expect the amount that I did.”

Presented by Bryan Cranston’s and Aaron Paul’s mezcal compa-



Bartender at Euro Pizza Café Matthew McDonald made it to the wildcard round before getting eliminated in the Dos Hombres Bar Boss competition. (Submitted photo)

ny Dos Hombres, the Breaking Bad duo are the faces behind the worldwide competition where all proceeds support the Kind Campaign, a company founded by Lauren Paul that brings awareness to the lasting effects of girl-against-girl bullying.

Supported by Euro Pizza patrons and friends and followers online, McDonald said the response he has received from everyone is “very positive,” adding that the extra exposure for the local Greek-inspired restaurant is a big bonus for restaurant owner

Merita Kraja.

When asked if McDonald would participate again next year, he responded, “If I see it pop up again next year, I’ll jump all over it.”

According to the Bar Boss Team, the competition is currently in its final stage with winners announced around Feb. 16. For more information, visit barboss.org.

We invite our readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Cyrus Guccione can be reached at cguccione@iniusa.org.

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION

Fountain Hills resident earns Home Watch accreditation

Jennifer Allshouse promotes safety and security for local homeowners

Allshouse Home Watch Services has earned accreditation from the National Home Watch Association (NHWA) for the sixth year.

The NHWA was formed in 2009 to establish and maintain the highest industry standards for home watch and absentee homeowner services throughout the United States and Canada, according to a press release from NHWA.

Home watch is a visual inspection of a home or property, looking for obvious issues, which means that it is a service that “keeps an eye on things” at a vacation or primary home while the owner is not in residence, according to the release. All principals of NHWA accredited member companies including Allshouse Home Watch Services are background-checked, insured and bonded.

An eight-year resident of Fountain Hills, Allshouse owner Jennifer Allshouse knows far too well how important safe-

ty and security are to homeowners and communities, the release said.

“Allshouse investigated burglaries, thefts, vandalism and much more while serving for over 27 years in the law enforcement and security fields in Pennsylvania and Arizona,” the release continued.

Allshouse Home Watch Services is a premier home watch business, specializing in home watch, concierge and key holder services for residential homes and vacation and investment properties.

Allshouse Home Watch Services serves Fountain Hills, Scottsdale, Rio Verde and Tonawanda.

NWHA said Allshouse’s business is highly recommended and reputable. It says Allshouse works hard for clients and goes the extra mile in providing excellent service.

“Jennifer’s law enforcement career has trained her to notice details that may be over-



Fountain Hills resident Jennifer Allshouse owns Allshouse Home Watch Services. (Submitted photo)

looked by the average observer,” according to the release.

Allshouse is a graduate of the NHWA’s Home Watch Boot Camp and has earned the designation of Certified Home Watch Professional (CHWP).

“The CHWP designation and Boot Camp training exemplify Jennifer’s commitment to Home Watch excellence,” NHWA’s release said. “She is also one of our Home Watch Boot Camp instructors.”

Allshouse holds a bachelor’s degree in criminology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and has a graduate degree in health education from The Pennsylvania State University. Allshouse also holds an associate degree in business administration.

In 2019, Allshouse received a nomination for Entrepreneur of the Year through the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce’s annual awards and recognition program.

For more information, contact Allshouse directly by phone at 480-739-7483, by email at allshousehomewatch@gmail.com or by visiting allshousehomewatch.com.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Happy Hour Wine Walk planned in Fountain Hills

‘Carnaval del Vino’ is Friday, March 1, along the Avenue

The “Carnaval Del Vino” is the title of the

upcoming Happy Hour Wine Walk along the Avenue of the Fountains.

The event is Friday, March 1, from 3 to 6 p.m. and presented by The Avenue Merchants

Association (TAMA).

According to a press release, this wine walk will bring the lively spirit of Argentina’s carnival to the Avenue of the Fountains.

The community is invited to pair wines with mouthwatering bites and enjoy visiting local businesses while walking the Avenue.

The event is \$20

which includes wine tasting, food pairings and a commemorative Fountain Hills souvenir wine glass.

Those wanting to enjoy the experience with-

out the wine tasting can purchase a discounted ticket (without the commemorative glass).

To register for the event, visit fhchamber.com.

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Area home sales

January 29, 2024 - February 2, 2024

The Verdes

18444 E Four Peaks Blvd	\$487,000	18127 E Massai Point Dr	\$768,736
18902 E Latigo Ln	\$700,000	18125 E Parker Creek Rd	\$795,250
18123 E Massai Point Dr	\$1,206,933	18022 E Vista Desierto	\$1,050,000

Homes sold this period:	6	Median Price:	\$781,993	Average price:	\$834,653
Same period last year:	6	Median Price:	\$771,672	Average price:	\$812,663

Fountain Hills

14607 N Adero Canyon Dr	\$1,029,995	11817 N Nightingale Cir Unit B	\$595,000
14723 N Adero Canyon Dr	\$2,942,944	9710 N Palisades Blvd	\$3,400,000
16423 E Bainbridge Ave	\$520,000	16336 E Palisades Blvd, #16	\$262,500
14807 E Bobcat Plz	\$600,100	17005 E Player Ct	\$2,235,000
16800 E El Lago Blvd, #1014	\$647,000	12438 N Saguaro Blvd, #118	\$450,000
16800 E El Lago Blvd, #1058	\$568,008	12438 N Saguaro Blvd, #207	\$357,500
17541 E Hawley Dr	\$785,000	14405 N Teakwood Ln	\$242,000
11615 N Mission Bell Ct	\$550,000	15951 E Thistle Dr	\$695,475

Homes sold this period:	16	Median Price:	\$597,550	Average price:	\$992,533
Same period last year:	15	Median Price:	\$625,000	Average price:	\$1,068,488

Properties listed may have been sold by various Brokers &/or Owners.



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THE VERDE COMMUNITIES



RIO VERDE

Doris Findling stepping down

Long-time RVCA executive director

The Rio Verde Community Association has announced that its executive director, Doris Findling, is stepping down after 30 years with the

association. Her departure is set for June 30 this year.

RVCA Board President Mark Ohlendorf made the announcement in an email to members recently.

"On behalf of the Board and all residents,

we wish Doris all the best and thank her for her commitment and dedication to the community," Ohlendorf said. "She will be greatly missed."

A committee has been identified to begin a search process for her replacement.

LECTURES

ASU series at the Verdes

Event Feb. 27

The annual ASU Lecture Series at the Verde Communities wraps up the 2024 season Tuesday, Feb.

27, at the Community Church of the Verdes at 4 p.m.

The series concludes with Professor Besty Fahlman, Art Historian, School of Art presenting Landscapes of

Extraction: The Art of Mining in the American West.

All Verdes residents and their guests are invited to attend the lectures. The lecture series is organized by Frank Haggard.

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE VERDES

Lecture series continues

Scheduled through March

Community Church of the Verdes is continuing its series of lectures on Monday, Feb. 26, with Sarah Porter discussing "Water in Arizona: What's gone right, and what should we be worried about?"

Porter is Director of the Kyl Center for Water

Policy at Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy and Professor of Practice in ASU's College of Global Futures.

March 18, at 4 p.m. Dr. Clara Curiel-Lewandrowski will discuss "Leading Edge Cancer Services and Technology."

Dr. Curiel-Lewandrowski talks about the Cancer Center's

game-changing discoveries that are advancing the development of cancer prevention, screening and treatment.

Monday, March 18, at 5 p.m. is the church's annual Spring Dinner (reservations accepted beginning in March.)

All concerts and lectures take place at the Community Church of the Verdes on Danny Lane.

Community Church hosting art tours

Two events scheduled

Community Church of the Verdes is hosting two events in the coming weeks inviting people to learn about and experience the artwork at the church.

On Thursday, Feb. 22, people are invited to experience a collection of more than 150 art pieces

on a guided tour beginning at 2 p.m. at the church, 25603 N. Danny Lane in Rio Verde.

For those who would like to arrive before 2 p.m., a scavenger hunt will be held. What hidden gems will be discovered?

Thursday, Feb. 29, at 2 p.m. Movement in Art is the theme as visitors take a deeper dive into the stained-glass windows

at the church with a guide who will focus on techniques of art observation. What will participants learn from one another?

Following the one-hour tour for each of the programs, participants are invited to take part in an unstructured art activity with pastels on paper. Bring inspiration and explore to discover the joy of creating art.

COMMUNITY

APPOINTMENT

County Supervisors name Skinner sheriff

Over 30 years with MCSO

By Bob Burns
INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

In a move of particular interest to the Town of Fountain Hills, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors Feb. 8 named Russ Skinner to succeed Paul Penzone as Maricopa County Sheriff.

Penzone resigned effective Jan. 12 this year. The Town of Fountain Hills receives its law enforcement services under contract with MCSO.

Sheriff Skinner had been serving as the MCSO chief deputy for the past six years under Penzone.

It was something of a minor controversy that the supervisors are obligated by law to appoint a successor of the same political party as the person they are replacing. Penzone is a Democrat



Maricopa County Sheriff Russ Skinner. (Photo courtesy of Maricopa County Sheriff's Office)

and up until immediately after Penzone announced his departure, Skinner was a registered Republican.

Supervisors' Chairman Jack Sellers had a response related to that. "Sheriff Skinner has served under sheriffs from both political parties, including his most recent six-year tenure as chief deputy for Sheriff Penzone," Sellers said. "The board decision to appoint Sheriff Skinner

was about choosing the most qualified candidate and ensuring the stability and result for Maricopa County residents."

Skinner has had a tenure of more than 33 years with MCSO and in the role as chief deputy he had oversight of 4,000 staff members and managed a \$507 million budget, according to a statement released by Maricopa County.

In an email to The Times Independent Fountain Hills Mayor Ginny Dickey reacted to the appointment of Skinner.

"The Town of Fountain Hills has had the opportunity to work successfully with Chief Deputy Russ Skinner," Dickey said. "His appointment to complete the term of Sheriff Paul Penzone will lend continuity to law enforcement locally until the voters

Presbyterian Church marks 50 years

The Fountain Hills Presbyterian Church was established five decades ago and has been serving the community ever since. If you missed our previous reporting, you can catch up online at: fhtimes.com/stories/fountain-hills-presbyterian-church-celebrates-50-years/476725

Sheriff

• From page 32

make their choice in November. We are confident that we will partner with whoever becomes Sheriff in order to continue to be among the safest communities in the nation.

"Our thanks to Sheriff Penzone for his excellent leadership, and to Capt.

(Larry) Kratzer and all the deputies and staff from MCSO who serve us so well."

Board of Supervisors Vice Chairman Thomas Galvin, who represents District 2, which includes Fountain Hills, said, "The sheriff we appointed today is a proven leader with decades of law enforcement service. This appointment provides certainty and

continuity of leadership at the Sheriff's Office, which benefits not only the residents of Maricopa County but Sheriff Skinner's fellow law enforcement colleagues who work hard to keep the community safe."

In a statement released by the Sheriff's Office, Skinner said, "It's truly an honor to serve the community and support our dedicated agen-

cy members in this new role. Unchanged, is my unwavering commitment to uphold the mission of safeguarding lives and property in Maricopa County, alongside MCSO's best-in-class detention officers, sworn deputies, civilian employees and volunteers.

"Building on Sheriff Penzone's foundation, MCSO will continue providing professional

law enforcement services and enhance our response to diverse public safety needs. I firmly believe and aspire while united with our community and partner agencies, MCSO can navigate Maricopa County's dynamic growth, assuring a secure and thriving environment for all. Thank you for your confidence; I take this duty to heart."

Skinner has been run-

ning MCSO since Penzone resigned effective Jan. 12. He will serve as sheriff until Maricopa County residents elect a new sheriff in the November 2024 General Election.

The Times Independent invites readers to submit their civil comments on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Bob Burns can be reached at bbburns@iniusa.org.

ENTERTAINMENT

DESERT FOLIAGE

Community Garden to host plant sale

Fundraising event set March 2

The Fountain Hills Community Garden is set to host its annual Plant Sale Fundraising Event.

The event is at the Community Garden Saturday, March 2, from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., rain or shine

The plant sale is open

to the general public and features healthy, hearty Arizona-grown vegetables, herbs and flower starts, all of which have started in the Community Garden's new greenhouse, according to garden board member Marilyn Maiwald. A variety of succulents are also available for purchase.

The price of the plants is \$4 each. Prices on succulents vary depending

on size.

The Fountain Hills Community Garden is located near the Fountain Hills Library and River of Time Museum, at the corner of El Lago and Boulevard and La Montana Drive.

For more information and to sign up for the Community Garden newsletter, visit fountainhillscommunitygarden.com.



The annual Fountain Hills Community Garden Plant Sale is March 2 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. (Photo courtesy of Marilyn Maiwald)



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RECREATION

Town has upcoming programs

Adults and teens can enjoy

The Town of Fountain Hills has several upcoming programs in which community adults and teens are invited to participate.

A Teen Wiffle Ball Tournament will be held Tuesday, March 9, from 3 to 7 p.m. at Four Peaks Park ballfields.

This is for ages 13 to 17, and there is no cost to participate. The top teams will win prizes, and there will be snacks, drinks and all equipment provided. Register as a team or individual.

The award-winning Return to Recess began Feb. 13 and continues each Tuesday for seven weeks through April 2.

The town's Parks and Recreation Department has partnered with multiple community groups

to bring youth ages 8 to 14 a program that teaches a new sport each week.

Each participant will receive a Return to Recess T-shirt. The program concludes with a pizza party. There is a cost of \$40 to participate. Location will change with activity.

Seeing the success of the youth program, an Adults Return to Recess program has been developed. There is a new active, but not too active, game each week. All those registered will receive a program shirt. There is also a drop-in to allow people to choose what activities they want to participate in for \$10 each week. The cost for all activities is \$45.

Adult Return to Recess is for those 21 years of age and older and takes place on

Thursdays, Feb. 22, through March 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Location will change with activity.

There are also Teen Adventure Trips on the schedule this spring. Each trip includes transportation (bus), entry to activity and a meal. There is a special of buy two trips and get one free. The cost is \$50 per trip. The schedule includes Saturday, Feb. 24, from 12 to 5 p.m. – Diamondbacks Spring Training; Friday, March 29, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. – Main Event; Friday, April 12, 5 to 9 a.m. – Bam Kazam, and Friday, May 10, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. – Fat Cats Bowling. Teen adventure trips are for those ages 13 to 17.

Registration for all these activities is done online at fountainhillsaz.gov/REC.



Adults can participate in Return to Recess and enjoy activities like kickball. (Submitted photo/Town of Fountain Hills)

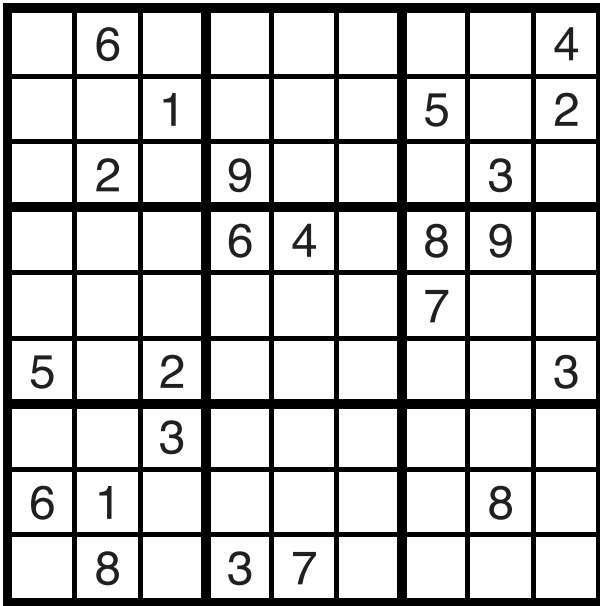


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FOUNTAIN HILLS COMMUNITY CHORUS SPRING 2024 CONCERT TICKETS ON SALE

Tickets are now on sale for the Fountain Hills Community Chorus Concerts for Saturday, March 23 and Sunday, March 24, at 4 p.m. in the Fountain Hills Community Center. Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$17 at the door. Tickets are available from any chorus member, at the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce, Cards of Fountain Hills or by visiting the Community Chorus website at fhcc-az.org. (Times Independent file photo)



Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works: See Below

Guess Who?

I am an actress/singer born in California on February 20, 2003. I started out on television in a series based on the "American Girl" books. I moved on to Disney television, and later released my debut single about driving past a former flame's house.

Answer: Olivia Rodrigo

WORD SCRAMBLE

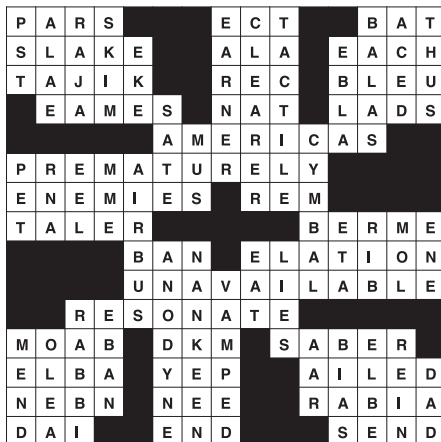
Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to getting married.

C R T I E E

--	--	--	--	--	--

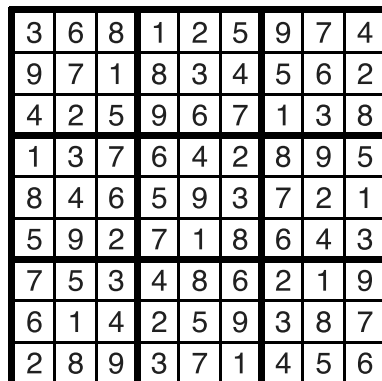
Answer: Rectie

Answers:



Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!



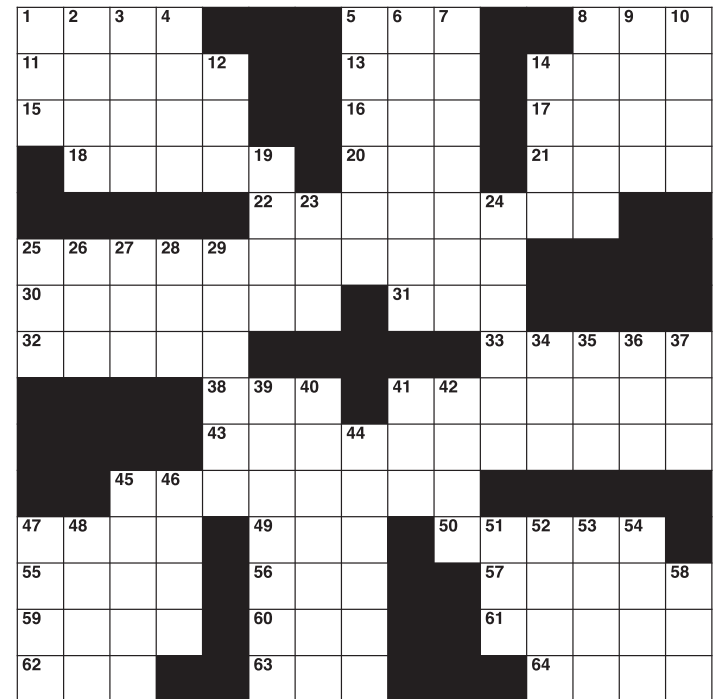
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CLUES ACROSS

- Golf scores
- Shock therapy
- Ballplayer's tool
- Quench one's thirst
- Female relatives of American war vets (abbr.)
- Every one of two or more things
- Member of Muslim people
- Play
- Type of cheese
- Type of lounge chair
- ___ King Cole, musician
- Fellows
- North, Central and South
- In an early way
- Foes
- Georgia rockers
- Cryptocurrency
- Narrow path along a

slope

- Disallow
- Joyousness
- Inaccessible
- Evoke emotions
- Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
- Boston Celtic punk rockers (abbr.)
- Sword
- Actor Idris
- Affirmative (slang)
- Afflicted
- One point north of northeast
- Born of
- Arabic name
- Traumatic brain injury (abbr.)
- Extremity
- Post

CLUES DOWN

- Pacific Standard Time

- Protruding ridge on nematodes
- Indian king
- Type of milk
- One who brings home the bacon
- More comprehensible
- Connected with sense of touch
- Red mineral
- Breezed through
- Therefore
- Supplement with difficulty
- Early kingdom of Syria
- Satisfy
- They confuse doctors (abbr.)
- Brass instrument
- Domesticated animal
- Ribonucleic acid
- Snakelike fish
- Woman (French)

- Economically-minded aircraft
- When you hope to get somewhere
- Tease
- Actress Gretchen
- Midway between northeast and east
- Inoffensive
- Yellowish cotton cloth
- Consume
- Does not tell the truth
- Improved something
- Spiritual leader
- Abba ___, Israeli politician
- Fix
- Evergreen tree genus
- Swiss river
- Prejudice
- Major C. European river
- Long, narrow strap
- Male parent

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SUPERIOR COURT OF ARIZONA, MARICOPA
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Notice is given that Gerald A. Friedel was
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BY GIVEN that Joan Schrempp is the named
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& Testament of Alfred Leo Schrempp, dated
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May 18, 2023. No probate estate will be opened.
All persons having claims against Alfred Leo
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HEALTHY CHOICE

Community Garden hosts monthly cooking class

The Healing Foods series continues March 2

The Fountain Hills Community Garden is offering a healthy cooking class Saturday, March 2, at 11 a.m.

The cooking class is part of the Healing Foods Series held monthly at the Garden Pavilion.

The cooking class is led by Chef- Owner Carolyn Redendo from Sofrita, who will cook up healthy Puerto Rican dishes.

The beauty of Puerto Rico is not just in the geography but in the state of being, a press release said of the event. It's about generosity, the sharing of good spirit and good food.

Sofrita is about the celebration of all things beautiful – the celebration of life, the release

continued. Sofrita is about having a full heart and a full stomach.

This class is free to Community Garden members and open to the public for \$5

Additionally, Friends of the Garden annual memberships are sold at the event.

Yearly memberships are \$20.

A monthly cooking demonstration is held every first Saturday of the month.

For more information or to sign up for the Community Garden newsletter, visit fountainhillscommunitygarden.com.

Sofrita is located at 16848 E. Avenue of the Fountains. To learn more about Sofrita, visit sofrita.com or call 480-816-5316.



The Fountain Hills Community Garden will host Sofrita owner and Chef Carolyn Redendo at its monthly cooking class March 2 at 11 a.m. (Times Independent file photo)

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