

Community
Goodyear vice mayor
reappointed to NLC; 5



LITCHFIELD PARK/GOODYEAR INDEPENDENT

Business
PebbleCreek
developers win 3
awards; 12



March 2025 Volume 6 Issue 3

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net



Women's History Month: Celebrating entrepreneurs in the Southwest Valley

Laura Hansen and the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce celebrate Women's History Month. (Mary Goldmeier/Independent Newsmedia)

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Laura Hansen has always been an entrepreneur.

Hansen, owner of Saddle Mountain Brewing Co. in Goodyear and partner at New Penny Café in Avondale, is a lifelong entrepreneur whose journey into business ownership is one of persistence, adaptability and passion for her community.

Hansen has built businesses across multiple industries, from photography and floristry to teaching and car rent-

als. However, it was her venture into the food and beverage industry that cemented her role as a leading businesswoman in the Southwest Valley.

"I've been an entrepreneur since I was 9-years-old," Hansen said. "I bought my first VW Bug and rented it to the guy who lived in my parents' trailer park."

Hansen is one of scores of women in the Southwest Valley who epitomize the impact woman have had in the region's community. And every March, Women's History Month

honors those struggles, achievements and contributions of women throughout American history.

Established through a series of presidential proclamations beginning in 1980, the celebration has grown from a local movement in Santa Rosa, California, to a nationally recognized month dedicated to recognizing women's impact across industries, communities and cultural landscapes.

Women's contributions to the

• See **Women** on page 18

Goodyear sends wastewater to cool powerplant in \$9.2M deal

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Goodyear City Council unanimously approved a \$9.2 million engineering, procurement and construction agreement with Arizona Public Service Co. and the city of Buckeye aimed at facilitating brine disposal.

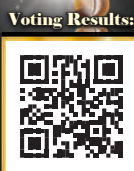
The effort is part of the ongoing Palo Verde Power Generating Station Improvements Project aimed at helping the nuclear power plant about 50 miles west of the Phoenix area.

The proposed agreement is part of the broader Brine Management Project, which has a total budget of \$15.5 million.

The project is designed to enhance infrastructure, allowing brine — highly concentrated wastewater left over after water treatment —

• See **Water** on page 27

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And now, the results are officially in!



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If you're thinking about transferring to ASU for fall, now is the time to act. Fall classes begin Aug. 21. Review the transfer admission requirements and steps to apply at links.asu.edu/westvalleytransfer.

Scholarships

Explore available scholarships, including some unique to ASU West Valley, at financialaid.asu.edu/estimator.



Sun Devil Day

You and your family are invited to tour the West Valley campus, including its newest residence hall, learn about classes and majors and discover what it's like to be a Sun Devil. You'll also meet with representatives from academic colleges as well as current students.

Friday, April 4, 8:15 a.m.

Register at visit.asu.edu/sundevilday.

Supporting West Valley entrepreneurs



Sophomore Bryana Mora, a business major at ASU West Valley, helped develop an email marketing campaign for Daphnie Kelly, owner of Modern Grind in Avondale, Arizona.

We match students with small and medium-sized business owners throughout the West Valley so they can apply what they learn in the classroom to solving real-world business challenges. Part of the West Valley campus expansion, the School of Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship within the W. P. Carey School of Business offers innovative degrees that emphasize data analytics skills and experiential learning.

Explore over 130 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, including honors curriculum at asu.edu/west-valley.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Goodyear councilor appointed to national public safety committee

Goodyear Councilwoman Vicki Gillis has been appointed to the National League of Cities Public Safety and Crime Prevention Federal Advocacy Committee for a one-year term.

In this role, she will assist in developing National League of Cities' federal advocacy agenda on topics such as crime prevention, substance abuse, gun violence, juvenile justice, homeland security, and disaster preparedness.

Visit nlc.org more information on the Federal Advocacy Committees.

Goodyear honors deputy chief's retirement after 30 years of service

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Goodyear Police Deputy Chief Jeff Mercy is retiring after 30 years of service with the city's department.

"I am so proud of Jeff," said Goodyear Police Chief Brian Issitt. "I could not be more proud of all of the accomplishments that Jeff has made and the mark he has left on our police department."

Mercy moved to Goodyear in 1982 and graduated from Agua Fria High School. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in psychology from Grand Canyon University and a master's degree in counseling from

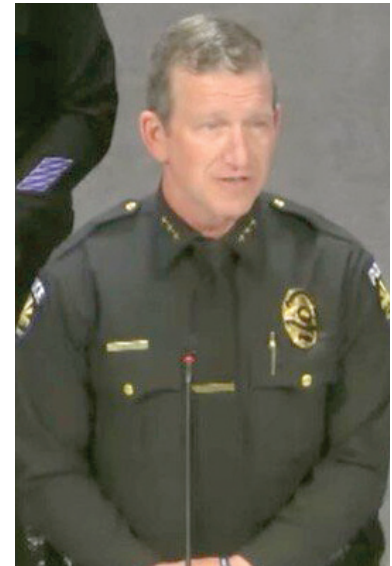
Northern Arizona University.

He was recognized by city officials during a late-February council meeting.

"It's such an honor to be here tonight. It's been an honor to have worked for such a supportive and awesome council and such a great city," said Mercy.

Mercy also thanked his family for their consistent support throughout his career.

Mercy joined the department in 1994 and worked in several divisions, including Patrol, Narcotics, Training, and SWAT. See full story on YourValley.



Goodyear City Council recognized Deputy Chief Jeff Mercy for his retirement from the police department. (Submitted photo \ City of Goodyear)

Estrella Mountain volunteers fight against invasive species

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department is calling on local residents to volunteer for the Desert Defender program, a community-driven initiative aimed at improving the health of regional parks and combating invasive species that threaten the desert ecosystem.

The program is held 7-10:30 a.m. Friday, March 21 at Estrella Mountain Regional Park, 14805 W. Vineyard Ave. in Goodyear.

Participants will meet at the

park's Nature Center to receive hands-on training to identify invasive plant species, understand their environmental impacts before participating in their removal.

"The whole purpose of the Desert Defender series is really to improve the biodiversity of our parks, using conservation efforts and getting the public involved in becoming stewards of the land," said Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg, natural Resource Specialist for Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation

• See **Volunteers** on page 8



Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg plans the Desert Defender program, improving the health of regional parks. (Submitted photo \ Maricopa County's Parks and Recreation Department)



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Goodyear vice mayor reappointed to National League of Cities

Goodyear Vice Mayor Wally Campbell has been reappointed to three National League of Cities groups for 2025: the Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee, the First Tier Suburbs Council and the Military Community Council.

Campbell, who has been involved with the National League of Cities since 2011, will serve another one-year term, working with local leaders nationwide to develop policies and initiatives benefiting communities with similar demographics and challenges.

"Appointment to these councils and committee is an honor," said Campbell. "My previous involvement in the Transportation and Infrastructure Services Committee enabled me to assist our city in obtaining a \$650,000 grant for Safe Streets and Roads for All. I look forward

to continuing to work with (the National League of Cities) to protect the interest of Arizona and Goodyear as we propose best practices and policies for communities throughout the country."

As a member of the National League of Cities' committees, Campbell will contribute to discussions on infrastructure, transportation, suburban development and military community support.

The groups focus on fostering collaboration, sharing resources and developing programs that can be replicated in cities nationwide.

"(The National League of Cities') federal advocacy committees are vital for uplifting the voices and needs of America's 19,000 cities, towns, and villages to decision-makers in Washington," said National League of Cities President Steve Patterson, Mayor of Athens, Ohio. "I am excited



Goodyear Vice Mayor Wally Campbell has been reappointed to three National League of Cities groups for 2025 (Submitted photo\ Corinne Holliday)

to work with Vice Mayor Campbell this year to help strengthen the relationships between local and federal leaders."

Campbell's continued involve-

ment with the National League of Cities ensures Goodyear has a voice in national policy discussions, helping shape initiatives that directly impact the city and beyond.

Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce's City to City Update

Join the City to City Update Breakfast to hear about growth, new businesses, and developments directly from city leaders!

Goodyear Recreation Center

April 3rd, 2025

9-11:30am

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FIRST THINGS FIRST



Liberty waits on board member appointment

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Liberty Elementary School District governing board couldn't narrow down a list of potential candidates to fill a vacant seat, so it sent all of its applications for potential consideration.

That doesn't mean any one of them will be chosen when Maricopa County Superintendent Shelli Boggs chooses, however, as rules allow her to pick anyone.

What it means for the district and its residents is that at some point in the next month or so they will have a new board member.

After former President Bryan Parks resigned from the governing board on Feb. 7, the district hosted a community forum where district leadership asked four questions of each candidate who submitted their name for appointment to get to know their policies better.

After the event, the LESD board asked community members for input on who they would like to have representing their district by asking community members to complete a survey asking participants to select up to three candidates they believe should be considered for the position.

The standing board had the option to recommend three candidates to the Boggs and county staff who can select the new board member.

Board members could not decide during a March 4 meeting, so they forwarded all who had applied through them for consideration.

"At the end of the day, Shelli Boggs is going to appoint who she's going to appoint," said board member Kris Kenyon.

While discussing favorite applicants, the board discussed community involvement, experience and effective communication while re-



Liberty Elementary School District recommends all candidates to Maricopa County Superintendent's Office. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

specting the decisions made by their voting audience.

"(The school board) election happened recently and the stakeholders gave their say," said Kellie Zimmerman. "I'm not comfortable putting somebody forward that the voters of this district already voted to not put into office."

Other board members disagreed and stated that running showed continued investment in Liberty community.

"The other side of that is, why didn't the other candidates run? They received no votes from anybody," said board member Bryan Cirrincione.

Applicants Kori Tillmon and Kourtney Kelly were not in attendance at the community forum, but the remaining five interviewees in-

troduced themselves and their goals for the district. One person, Ashley Wright, has submitted an application that had not gone through the governing board.

• Doni Bond described herself as a mother and grandmother who cares about the safety and education of children. Bond is a retired tax accountant who would bring 25 years of retail experience to the board. In the recent school board election, Bond ran and came in fourth as voters filled three seats.

• Paul Bixler is an Arizona native, parent, educator and veteran. Bixler was the first trans woman to be elected in Arizona and offers nearly four decades of public school experience at all levels from educator to administrator. If appointed, she would be returning to the board after her term

PROCESS TO REPLACE A BOARD MEMBER

To replace a board member, district governing boards may solicit candidates from the community and submit three possible candidates to the Maricopa County Superintendent of Schools. District residents also may submit an application directly to the county superintendent.

Once all applications are received, the county superintendent will interview applicants.

The county superintendent may select from the district's recommendations, may select someone who applied directly, or they may call for a special election.

The county superintendent's website still lists the Liberty board appointment process as open, with no time line set for filling the seat.

Anyone interested in filling board seats can look for vacancies here: <https://schoolsup.org/govern-ing-board-appointments>

ended in December.

• Ana Gutierrez is a parent to a student in Liberty Elementary School District and a former administrator. Gutierrez said she looks forward to promoting policies that promote equitable learning opportunities and collaboration of the board to support students and teachers.

• Mike Lyon is a veteran who worked in leadership and budget management before his career in education. Lyon describes himself as a peacemaker and said he wants the board to empower teachers, support students and respect taxpayer dollars.

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West Valley readers pick their favorite businesses

The Daily Independent at YourValley.net hosted an online best-of competition where readers vote for their very favorite places to visit. 48,959 people voted for their favorites.

At its core, Valley Favorites helps businesses and organizations serving our communities and keeps them top of mind with local consumers. Congratulations to those who take home the honors for their local community.



Shopping & Beauty

Pet Store	Pet Smart	Aesthetician
Pet Store	Petco	Optimal Weight and Wellness MedSpa
Thrift Shop	SC 4 Paws Bargain Boutique	Aesthetician
Thrift Shop	Peyton's Hidden Treasures	Taylor O'Hara of Trinity Aesthetics
Sporting Goods	Dick's Sporting Goods	Aesthetician
Make-up Artist	Cindy'S Beauty Salón	Angel Garcia-E3 Cryo & Wellness
Jewelry Store	Just Be You(tiful)	
Jewelry Store	Setterberg Jewelry	
Jewelry Store	V Jewelers	
Hair Salon	Salon Plus Hair Additions	
Hair Salon	Great Clips / Bell & Del Webb / Sun City	

Hair Salon	Chace
Hair Salon	Eclips Hair Salon
Hair Salon	Hot Desert Hair
Hair Salon	Sassy Hair Salon
Gift Store	Just Be You(tiful)
Gift Store	Cynthia's Fine Gifts and Cards
Gift Store	At Home
Bridal Shop	Just Be You(tiful)
Bridal Shop	Cactus Valley Creations
Boutique Clothing	Just Be You(tiful)
Boutique Clothing	Sher's Clothing Boutique
Boutique Clothing	Consigning Women
Beauty Supply	Donna Milam Mary Kay

Check out next month's edition for the remaining list of winners. If you can't wait, go to YourValley.net and click on Favorites.

Vehicles & Services

Used Car Dealer	Skoro Auto Sales	Car Wash	Cobblestone
Used Car Dealer	Yates Buick GMC	Car Wash	Fast & Friendly Express Car Wash
Tire Services	Pete Nelson Automotive	Automotive Salesperson	Trevor Skoro - Skoro Auto Sales
Tire Services	Discount Tire	Automotive Salesperson	Josh Reeves
Oil Change	Pete Nelsons Automotive	Auto Service Departments	Pete Nelsons Automotive
Oil Change	Seabee Jack's Mobile Oil & Lube	Auto Service Departments	Seabee Jack's mobile oil & Lube
Oil Change	Sun City Auto	Auto Service Departments	Yates Buick GMC
New Car Dealer	Yates Buick GMC	Auto Glass Repair	11 Bravo Mobile Auto Glass
New Car Dealer	Arrowhead Honda	Auto Glass Repair	Phil's Glass LLC
Golf Cart Store	West Valley Golf Carts	Auto Glass Repair	Trinity Auto Glass
Gasoline Stations	Costco	Auto Detailing	Dillon's Mobile Detailing
Car Wash	Mr. Shine Car Wash	Auto Body Shop	Sun City Auto Service on Santa Fe Dr

Volunteers

• From page 4

Department.

Invasive plants such as Buffelgrass, Salt Cedar, and Stinknet pose a threat to Arizona's desert landscapes. These species not only out-compete native plants local wildlife depend on for food and shelter but also increase the risk of wildfires due to their high flammability.

Invasive species have become problematic in Arizona's desert parks. Buffelgrass, originally introduced for livestock grazing, forms dense, fire-prone monocultures that can alter ecosystems and increase the fre-

quency and severity of wildfires.

Similarly, Stinknet, a highly allergenic plant introduced from Africa, is spreading rapidly across the Phoenix area and poses a serious environmental threat.

Volunteers will learn about the growth cycles and removal techniques for these species and others, such as Malta Star Thistle, a species known for depleting soil moisture and out-competing native plants.

The program also emphasizes mapping invasive species as a tool in managing their spread. Volunteers use a smartphone app to document the presence of

invasive plants and assess their life stages. This data helps the county better target resources for removal efforts and track the success of interventions.

In addition to invasive species removal, the program focuses on sustainability through native seed collection and restoration. Volunteers help to gather native plant seeds, which are processed and stored for future planting efforts.

Seed Pellet-Making Workshops teach participants how to prepare the seeds with protective coatings, ensuring they thrive in the harsh desert climate. These pellets are later distributed during Native

Seed Toss Events in the fall, helping to reintroduce native plants and stabilize soil in areas impacted by wildfires and invasive species.

The program is open to individuals age 13 and older, and those age 13 to 17 must be accompanied by an adult or provide a waiver from a guardian. Volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves, water and a snack. They are advised to wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, and closed-toed shoes for safety.

The Desert Defender program is part of a broader collaborative effort between the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, the Central Arizona

Conservation Alliance, the White Tank Mountains Conservancy, the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, and other local agencies. Together, they are making strides in restoring native biodiversity and ensuring the long-term health of the region's desert parks.

Volunteers are needed at several regional parks, including Estrella Mountain, Cave Creek, Usery Mountain, McDowell Mountain, San Tan Mountain, and Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.

Visit maricopacounty-parks.net to learn more about the Desert Defender program and register for upcoming events.

Congratulations to the 2024 West Valley Favorites!



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our community has to offer -
the West Valley Favorites!**

Voting Results:



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wvf.yourvalley.net**

IN BRIEF



Office rental company, Spaces, opens in GSQ. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

Spaces coworking site opens in Goodyear

Spaces, an office and coworking provider, has opened at the GEN1 office building in GSQ on 150th Drive north of McDowell Road.

The three-story GEN1 building is near Goodyear's City Hall and library.

Spaces offers office and meeting spaces available for short- or long-term rental, serving businesses, remote workers, and corporate teams. Spaces at GSQ is the organization's sixth location in the state. Workspace options include private offices, shared coworking areas, dedicated desks, virtual office services, and meeting rooms.

Desk spaces are rented hourly or monthly through different plans. Amenities include high-speed Wi-Fi, telephone answering services and constant access for certain plans.

Visit spacesworks.com for information.

Goodyear hospital unveils upgraded lab

Abrazo Health West Campus has completed a \$3 million renovation of its catheterization lab, enhancing its technology to support a range of cardiac proce-

• See **Briefs** on page 12

Avila University to open Goodyear location for graduate programs

Avila University is expanding to Goodyear with a new location to open in August 2025, offering graduate programs in business and technology management.

Avila University Arizona has been approved by the Higher Learning Commission and the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. The campus will be in the GEN1 office building in Goodyear's downtown area. Founded in 1916 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Avila University is a private Catholic institution offering undergraduate and graduate programs.

"Avila University will have a positive impact on our residents and businesses, bringing more educational opportunities and economic prosperity to the community," stated Goodyear Mayor Joe Pizzillo. "As one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States, we recognize the importance of high-quality edu-



Avila University is set to open Goodyear location for graduate programs. (Submitted photo/ Avila University Arizona)

cation in preparing students for success. Avila's presence at GSQ will add a unique energy to Goodyear's new downtown."

The Goodyear location will launch with five master's degree pro-

grams:

- Master's of business administration in project management
- Master's of business administration in health care administration
- management with a concentration in artificial intelligence
- Master's of science in technology management with a concentration in business analytics
- Master's of science in technology management with a concentration in data science

"We are thrilled at this latest campus development," Jim Burkee, president of Avila University, stated. "As we bring on an additional location, we are honored to be able to provide more opportunities for students across the United States and the globe to study in our programs."

The university plans to add more programs as the Goodyear location develops.

Visit avila.edu for information.

GMC partners with women-owned businesses to support Agua Fria High School

Independent Newsmedia

Yates Buick GMC is partnering with women-owned businesses, many in the West Valley, to collect donations for The Owl Closet at Agua Fria High School, a student-run resource providing free food, clothing, and hygiene products to students in need.

As part of its "Women in the Driver's Seat" campaign for Women's History Month, Yates Buick

GMC is highlighting female leaders across industries while encouraging community support for students facing hardship.

Throughout March, the dealership is accepting donations of lightly used or new clothing and shoes, nonperishable food, and hygiene products.

"We wanted to highlight the incredible women in our community

• See **Support** on page 12



Whitney Yates Woods and Autumn Daniels partner with women-owned businesses to support Agua Fria High School's Owl Closet. (Submitted photo/Holly Morgan)

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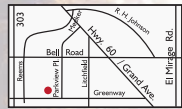
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PebbleCreek developers win three national awards

Robson Resort Communities, the developer behind Goodyear's PebbleCreek community, earned three Gold Awards at The Nationals, the New Home Sales and Marketing Awards presented by the National Association of Home Builders.

The awards were announced in Las Vegas, recognizing excellence in home building, design, and marketing.

Robson Resort Communities won Gold Awards in the following categories:

Attached Home for 55+ Buyer: PebbleCreek Luxury Golf Villas for the Loma community

55+ Integrated Marketing Strategy Campaign: Say Goodbye to the Regular 9 to 5 in Arizona and Texas

Digital Advertising for 55+ Buyer: Robson.com in Arizona and Texas

The company also received Silver Awards for its print ad campaign "Say Goodbye to the Regular 9 to 5" and for its PebbleCreek Luxury Golf Villas in



Steve Berry and Alina Hushka accept awards on behalf of Robson Resort Communities. (Submitted photo/Monica Chabot)

its Viera community.

"These awards validate our dedication to designing and building innovative and quality homes tailored to the 55+ lifestyle," said Steve Berry, senior vice president of architecture and design.

Alina Hushka, senior vice president of marketing, said the recognition underscores the company's commitment to active adult living.



Abrazo Health's West Campus unveils its new catheterization lab. (Submitted photo/Linda Nofer)

Briefs

- From page 10

dures.

The project, which began in 2023, upgrades both catheterization labs with equipment designed to improve procedural efficiency and patient care.

A catheterization lab is an examination room imaging equipment used to visualize the arteries and chambers of the heart and to treat any

abnormality found.

"We can do things faster, more efficiently, and safer with the new equipment," stated Dr. Richard Pham, director of Cardiology.

Since 2022, the number of procedures performed in the cath labs has increased by 58%.

Pham said that the new technology has contributed to quicker recovery times and improved patient outcomes.

Hans Driessnack, Abrazo West Campus, said the company is committed to investing in the hospital.

Support

- From page 10

and, at the same time, take meaningful action to support students in need," said Whitney Yates-Woods, dealer principal at Yates Buick GMC.

Located on the Agua Fria High

School campus, The Owl Closet operates as a Buffalo Exchange-style boutique, allowing students to select necessities at no cost, fostering dignity and independence.

"This initiative truly makes a difference," said Agua Fria High School Principal Autumn Daniels. "These donations help provide a sense of normalcy and dignity to

our students who need food for their families, clothes for interviews, and simple hygiene items many take for granted."

Several women-owned businesses are joining Yates Buick GMC to amplify the campaign's reach, including Dysart Dental, Osborne Jewelers, Be Bold Real Estate Team, KNOW Women, professional bas-

ketball player Sophie Cunningham, Saddle Mountain Brewing, Buffalo Chip Saloon and AZ Shooter's World. Yates Buick GMC hopes to make "Women in the Driver's Seat" an annual initiative, celebrating women's achievements while giving back to the community.

Visit yatesbuickgmc.com for more information.

 LITCHFIELD PARK/GOODYEAR
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Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities

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EDUCATION

IN BRIEF

Litchfield schools achieve A+ award

The Arizona Educational Foundation distributed A+ awards to 53 public schools in the state including the Litchfield Elementary School District's Belen Soto Elementary School and Verrado Middle School.

Having two schools coming from Litchfield Elementary School District is a point of pride for district officials stated Dr. Carter Davidson, Superintendent of Litchfield Elementary School District.

"This honor reflects the dedication of our educators, students, and families in creating an engaging and positive learning environment," stated Davidson. "Belen Soto Elementary and Verrado Middle School have demonstrated excellence in academics and community engagement which have led to incredible student success. We are proud of their achievement."

The A+ School of Excellence program recognizes schools that exemplify outstanding leadership, exceptional teaching, rigorous academics, and strong community involvement. Established 42 years ago, the program serves as a model for identifying Arizona schools worthy of national recognition, including the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Award.

Each year, hundreds of

• See **Award** on page 22

Litchfield schools approve temporary use of supplemental curriculum

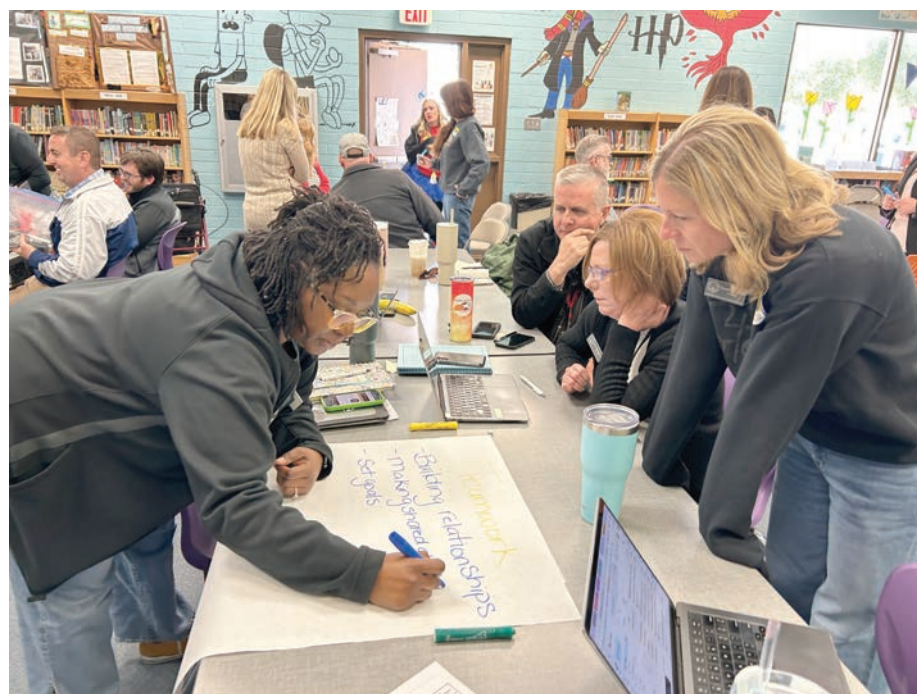
By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Litchfield Elementary School District is going to allow teachers to use a third-party supplemental curriculum through the end of the year, but won't give teachers support for the program.

The decision permits educators to use Teachers Pay Teachers resources temporarily at their discretion, though the district will not provide funding, training or oversight. The motion created a committee to review the request for future supplemental materials used after the end of the school year.

Teachers Pay Teachers is a popular online marketplace where educators buy and sell lesson plans, worksheets, decor and instructional materials. The district had previ-

• See **Approve** on page 22



The Litchfield Elementary School District allows teachers to use supplemental curriculum through the end of the school year. (Submitted photo/Litchfield Elementary School)

Agua Fria selects name of its new arts academy

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Agua Fria Union High School District has officially named its upcoming arts-focused high school The Hilltop School for the Arts, following a vote at the governing board's meeting Wednesday night.

The school, set to open in August 2026, will offer specialized arts education and feature a 700-seat theater for student and professional performances.

The name was selected from three finalists after a months-long process that gathered input from students,

staff, and community members. A motion to delay the decision and consider additional names failed, and the board approved the Hilltop name by a 4-1 vote.

Board members chose from three names with backgrounds provided by Julie Jones, the school's principal, during her presentation:

The Hilltop School for the Arts: "Evokes a sense of excellence, prestige, and ambition, where a community of artists comes together to learn, create, and support one another in their craft."

La Loma School for the Arts:

"Spanish for 'The Hill' has a poetic and artistic quality, making it a name that resonates across cultures."

Litchfield Park School for the Arts: "Carries a sense of history, elegance, and community, which gives the school a distinguished and reputable identity."

"We wanted to make sure that students have a strong identity in their school," said Jones. "The name should resonate not just with the local community but also across the nation and create a distinguished image of what the school is going to be."

• See **Name** on page 22



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SPORTS

Millennium girls, Lunan leave no doubt in title game rout

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Destiny “Ky’She” Lunan finished her high school basketball career with a full circle moment at Veterans Memorial Coliseum, living up to both her given name and nickname.

Three years ago she was the new kid, starting as a freshman on the same court for a dominant Valley Vista team that beat Perry 68-46 for the 6A title. In the March 8 Open Division final she was the senior star in the spotlight for Millennium — against Valley Vista.

Lunan seized the moment from the start, scoring 11 of her team’s 18 first quarter points. Her 37 points and Millennium’s dominant defense took the Tigers to the top in a 57-31 state title rout.

“It was a great day from the very beginning. I woke up and watched NC State play. We got our dub this morning. After that, I was locked in. When we went to the gym and had our shoot around and then on the bus I wasn’t talking to nobody. I had headphones on listening to Gospel music and watching sermons,” Lunan said. “I didn’t start talking until I stepped on the court. I was really locked in. Once I felt like my shot was hitting, right out of the gates I knew it would be good.”

She also led the Tigers with five steals. Second seeded Millennium (24-6) locked down the Monsoon by every defensive metric, with 15 steals, 24 turnovers forced and 16.3% shooting by Valley Vista.

Lunan simply was not going to allow the Tigers to lose. She was 7-15 from the field in the first half, while the rest of the players on the court shot 10-37.

Sophomore guard Daisha Rich-



Millennium senior guard Destiny ‘Ky’She’ Lunan screams in triumph during the Tigers’ 57-31 Open Division title game victory over Valley Vista March 8 in Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum. (Independent Newsmedia/Courtesy Mason Norris)

ardson grew into a secondary force for the Tigers. She scored in double figures in all five Open Division games, finishing with 16 points and five rebounds Saturday.

“She’s been like that for the last month. She’s stepped up her game and she’s done it on the defensive side. Then she’s been getting downhill and not just shooting from deep,” Millennium Coach Danny Soliman said.

Two Millennium players were in their second Open Division title

game. Senior Rianne Torres and junior Rhianna Bland were on the 2022-23 Tigers, who made a surprise run to the first Open final against a Desert Vista juggernaut that rolled 64-37.

Bland started and made a couple of steals, while Torres scored on a layup but only played a bit more than four minutes before injuring her knee.

“It means everything. We put in a lot of hard work day in and day out and we’re such a strong family. It’s that family feel and family bond that

translates onto the court. I’m glad to finish it off like this with my best friends,” Torres said.

Millennium now has four straight victories in the state’s biggest girls basketball rivalry. It also evens things 1-1 in state title games, as Valley Vista beat Millennium in the first 6A final in 2017.

Millennium won the state’s top division for the first time in three tries, to go with the Tigers’ four 5A titles from 2019-2022.

“It means a lot more. We always have such competitive games year after year,” Bland said. “They all really brought it but we brought it harder.”

Lunan ends her career three for three in title games. In addition to this one and the freshman year at Valley Vista, she led Bella Vista to the Grind Session national title as a sophomore.

Though Bella Vista is not an AIA member, her transfer to Millennium from the prep school counted as a second transfer.

Per AIA rules, she had to sit out the 2023-24 season.

“This one was very personal for me. I took it like that. I’m so happy for these girls. We didn’t let up one time. We stayed aggressive and gave it to them,” Lunan said. “They came out talking about being the best defensive team in the state. We take pride in that and know they’re not.”

Lunan led a team that starts one junior, two sophomores and one freshman, Soliman said.

“She’s just amazing. They went man-to-man and we haven’t seen man-to-man in almost two months. That’s what she does against man-to-man. So we were thankful for that,” Soliman said. “She’s literally a warrior. She deserves it.”



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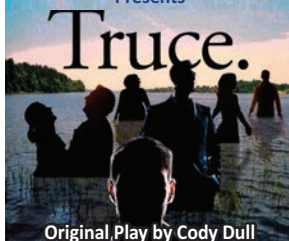
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Women

• From page 1

workforce and business ownership have steadily increased over the years, shaping local economies and redefining industries. According to the Library of Congress, the theme for Women's History Month 2025 "Moving Forward Together! Women Educating & Inspiring Generations" emphasizes the importance of mentorship, collaboration and leadership.

In the Southwest Valley, female entrepreneurs are putting this theme into action, demonstrating resilience, innovation and community-driven leadership.

Over the years, Hansen said she had done everything: waitressing, cleaning trailers, owning a photography company, even being a teacher.

"Saddle Mountain was a couple's project that turned into a woman-owned business," she said. "And it's been awesome."

For Hansen, running a business isn't just about beer, food or profit margins. She said it's about the people.

"I love owning this place because of the humans I work with. They make me laugh, they make me smile, and they make work enjoyable," she said. "It's important to surround yourself with people who make the job worthwhile."

The Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of supporting female entrepreneurs and fostering an inclusive business environment. Amapola Judd-Shimp, the chamber's vice president of partnerships, said Women's History Month is a time to celebrate the contributions of women across industries while also advocating for greater gender equality.

"Women have played a significant role in shaping the local landscape, driving economic progress and serv-



John Acosta, Anthony Worthy and Chad Phillips share the work to create and distribute Saddle Mountain Brewing Company's mission alongside Laura Hansen. (Mary Goldmeer /Independent Newsmedia)

ing as inspirational figures," Judd-Shimp said. "Women's History Month stands as a pivotal occasion to honor their accomplishments, resilience and leadership."

Independent businesses like Saddle Mountain Brewing Co. and New Penny Café play a vital role in shaping the southwest Valley's economy and culture. Small businesses foster local job growth, create unique spaces for community engagement and contribute to the overall character of a region.

"We're not just a restaurant, we're a small, independent business," Hansen said. "Small businesses make the world go round. They make coming to work fun, and they make the hard times worth tolerating. When you're able to see the impact of your work firsthand, it's incredibly rewarding."

For Hansen, community involvement has always been a priority, and she credits much of Saddle Mountain's success to strong local support. She has been a member of the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce since opening the brewery, and over the years, she has watched the chamber evolve into a key advocate for small businesses in the area.

"The Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce has stepped up its

game in recent years," Hansen said. "They've been really beneficial, not just for Saddle Mountain, but for New Penny and the community at large. They're actively involved, and you see more ribbon cuttings, more engagement and real leadership."

The chamber's Empowering Women in Business group was established to create a space where women could connect, collaborate and grow together.

"(Our commitment) lies in fostering an environment where women are empowered to excel in their professional endeavors," Judd-Shimp said. "The chamber remains committed to championing gender diversity, promoting equality, and creating opportunities for women to succeed in the business arena."

While Hansen has built a successful business, she acknowledges challenges come with the territory, especially as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

"Have I seen mildly sexist concepts? Sure, maybe more when I was married. More recognition was given to the man on stage while I was doing the work behind the scenes," she said. "At the time, I didn't really begrudge it. He was the face of the business, and I loved running the op-

erations."

Now, as the sole owner of Saddle Mountain, she sees a shift in how she is perceived.

"I don't feel like it's harder being a woman in business. I think I've just learned to own my space," she said. "But I also don't do this alone. We have nearly 60 employees, and I rely on both the men and women in this business. I wouldn't want to do anything else."

As an experienced business owner, Hansen has advice for aspiring entrepreneurs, especially women looking to make their mark.

"Do it again. Learn lessons. Take risks. Do more," she said. "You only regret the risks you didn't take. Yes, you're going to fail, but it's fun. As long as you go into it thinking, 'I'm going to do everything I can to be successful,' you'll figure it out."

She also stresses the importance of surrounding yourself with the right people.

"If you're starting a business, especially one with employees, make sure those people are the ones you want to work with," she said. "The right people make all the difference."

Women like Hansen are not only shaping the Southwest Valley's business landscape but also paving the way for future generations of female entrepreneurs.

With the support of organizations like the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce and a strong local network, women in business continue to break barriers and redefine success.

As Women's History Month reminds observers, progress is made by those who take bold steps forward. Whether it's starting a business, mentoring others or advocating for change. For Hansen, the journey of entrepreneurship is far from over.

"I've had the entrepreneurial mindset since I was a kid," she said. "And I wouldn't want to do anything else."



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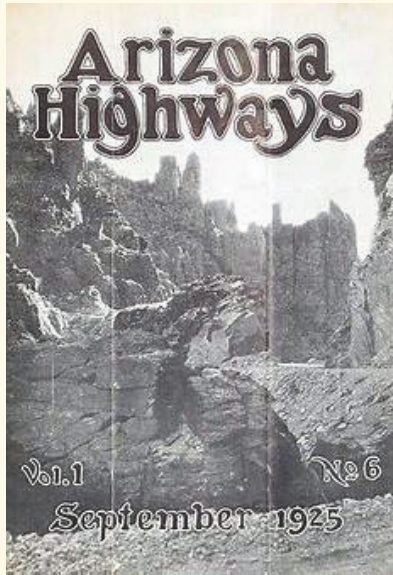
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THINGS TO DO

IN BRIEF



The P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center will host a lecture on the history of Arizona Highways magazine in Goodyear. (Submitted photo/P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center)

Lecture to explore 100-year history of Arizona Highways Magazine

The P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center will host a lecture on the history of Arizona Highways magazine as it marks its centennial.

The event, titled “100 Years Grand – The Story of Arizona Highways Magazine,” will take place Thursday, March 20, from 10 to 11 a.m. at Goodyear City Hall. Admission is free and open to the public.

Win Holden, former publisher of Arizona Highways, will present the lecture, discussing the magazine’s evolution from a state brochure to an internationally distributed publication. He will also cover its business model, economic contributions and role in highlighting Arizona’s landscapes and

• See **Things** on page 21

Aviation-themed playground opens in Litchfield Square

A new aviation-themed playground in Litchfield Square is open. The playground features replica airplanes and a rope and climbing system. A shade structure has also been added to keep children cool while they play.

The playground is part of the city’s ongoing efforts to build up Litchfield Square, a mixed-use development that will include restaurants, retail spaces, offices, and public amenities. The city’s portion of the project, including utilities, roads, and landscaping, is nearing completion, with additional roads and amenities expected to open weekly.

Litchfield Square is being developed in phases. Construction is set to begin this spring on Lots 3 and 4, which will feature a two-story, 40,000-square-foot mixed-use building with restaurants, retail spaces, and offices. Proposals for additional developments on Lots 1 and 2, as well as plans for a three-story building on Lots 13 and 14, are still under review.

The city sold Lot 3 to LP Heritage Partners LLC in 2022, which plans to develop Heritage Place at Litchfield Square. The project will consist of about 40,000 square feet of retail, office, and restaurant space. Construction plans are currently being finalized.

As the city continues to open new roads, utilities, and public spaces, the development of Litchfield Square remains on track to create a walkable, community-oriented area in the center of Litchfield Park.

Visit litchfieldpark.gov for more information.



Litchfield Square’s aviation-themed playground opens on Monday, Feb. 24. (Submitted photo/ City of Litchfield Park)



Goodyear Lakeside Music Festival is set for Saturday, March 29. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

Goodyear Lakeside Music Festival will be headlined by Jordin Sparks

The annual Goodyear Lakeside Music Festival will take place on Saturday, March 29, at the Estrella Lakeside Amphitheater, 10300 S Estrella Parkway.

The free event, running from 3:30 to 9:30 p.m., will feature live performances, food trucks, artisan vendors, and family-friendly activities.

Headlining this year's festival is Jordin Sparks, a two-time Grammy-nominated artist and winner of American Idol Season 6. Other scheduled performers include blues and jazz singer Francine Reed, rock band Jane N' The Jungle, In Color Band, Garrett James & The Wanderers, and the Tolleson Elementary Mariachi Band.

The festival will include a beer garden sponsored by Saddle Mountain Brewing Company, a kids' zone, and lawn games. Seating is first-come, first-served, and attendees may bring blankets or lawn chairs.

Outside alcohol, umbrellas, and pets outside of service animals are not permitted.

A New Home Tour will take place earlier in the day from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., featuring more than 40 model homes across eight neighborhoods in the Estrella community. Primary parking for the event will be at the Estrella Yacht Club.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information.

Things

- From page 20

culture through photography.

Founded in 1925, Arizona Highways reaches readers in all 50 states and more than 100 countries. The magazine's revenue streams include book publishing, retail products and licensing, contributing to Arizona's economy.

Holden served as publisher from 2000 until his retirement and has been recognized for his work in publishing and tourism.

The event is supported by Arizona Humanities and will include a selection of historical and contemporary photographs from the magazine's archives.

Visit pwlhc.org for more information.

Goodyear community Pump Track reopens

The Foothills Community Park Pump Track 1 on March 8 at after undergoing a major rebuild, marking the completion of the fourth major upgrade to the track.

The city-approved project was led by volunteers.

Construction began with tearing down the park and preparing the site before rebuilding it from scratch. Work continues this week with the finalization of track features. The park remains closed for construction

as volunteers and crews are working on both sides of the track.

The Foothills Community Park Pump Track first opened in 2015. It was built over five months with the help of 100 volunteers who donated about 2,500 hours of labor, in addition to 200 staff hours.

The track, located on a 100-foot by 300-foot space, features a looping system of dirt berms and rollers designed for bicycling. Riders use a pumping motion to navigate the track without pedaling. The track is used for non-motorized bicycles only.

Visit the Estrella Foothills Bike Park social media sites for more information.

Goodyear hosts public art tour

The City of Goodyear's Arts & Culture Commission is hosting a public art tour on April 3 offering participants a guided experience of the city's public art collection. The tour will take place on a charter bus, stopping at key locations such as the Goodyear Recreation Campus and Goodyear Ballpark. Attendees will learn about the history, significance, and creators of various artworks through guided discussions. The tour also includes a visit to The Tree of Oil, a local artisan shop.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information.

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.



Agua Fria Union High School District selects the new name of its arts academy, The Hilltop. (Submitted photo/ Agua Fria Union High School District)

Name

• From page 14

Board members debated the long-term significance of the name, with some expressing concern over tying it to Litchfield Park, which donated the land for the school.

“I want this to stand on its own,” said board member Kristen Acton. “We talk about it being a legacy project, and it needs to stand on its own. I’m so grateful for the city of Litchfield Park donating the land, but I don’t want to be associated with something that exists.”

Acton emphasized the importance of selecting a name that would give the school a strong reputation beyond the local community.

“I absolutely expect this name to be on the news, on the radio, winning awards, being announced,” she said. “So what do we want to be amplified to the world?”

Board member Eric Cutlum, the lone dissenting vote said he was unsatisfied with any of the name options and had pushed to delay the decision, calling it a “one-time go” and emphasizing the importance of getting the name right.

The Hilltop School for the Arts will be built on La Loma Hill in Litchfield Park, a site historically designated by the Litchfield family in the 1920s for cultural and performing arts purposes. The project is funded through a \$50 million bond approved in 2023 and will serve up to 450 students pursuing careers in visual and performing arts.

“We see this site as a cultural center

not just for Agua Fria students, but for the entire community,” said Litchfield Park City Manager Mathew Williams.

Superintendent Mark Yslas called the project a major step forward for the district.

“This academy will inspire creativity, foster community connections, and leave a lasting legacy,” Yslas said. “It embodies our mission to champion creativity, educational excellence, and strong ties with the community.”

Students at the Hilltop School for the Arts will choose from six academies focusing on filmmaking, music production, sound design, performance arts, visual arts, and theater technology. The school will feature industry-standard facilities, including a recording studio, cinematography lab, and advanced rehearsal spaces.

“This program will allow students to experience and learn across multiple disciplines, helping them build a strong portfolio,” Jones said. “With only 400 students being accepted, this program is for those who believe the arts are their life’s work.”

In addition to serving students, the school’s performing arts center will host concerts, theater productions, and community events, bringing regional, national, and international artists to the West Valley.

The approval of the name allows the district to move forward with signage, branding, and promotional materials in preparation for the school’s opening in 2026.

Visit aguafria.org for more information.

Approve

• From page 14

ously blocked the site, citing concerns over curriculum alignment, copyright risks and potential cybersecurity threats.

District officials said the approval is a temporary measure as they work to establish a formal review process for supplemental materials.

Beginning in the 2025–26 school year, all non-adopted curriculum, including Teachers Pay Teachers content, will need approval from a newly formed Educational Technology and Curriculum Approval Committee.

“One of the reasons I ran for this board, and I serve on this board, is to ensure the curriculum that is taught in our classrooms is vetted. Nobody should be pushing agendas or narratives, and that happens when you use supplemental information and curriculum,” said board member Ryan Owens. “We as an administration that any gaps in our curriculum that need to be filled by supplemental materials are identifies and we provide that to our teachers.”

Concerns over Teachers Pay Teachers’ use centered on quality control and security.

Unlike district-approved textbooks and resources, Teachers Pay Teachers materials are not reviewed for compliance with Arizona academic standards. The district’s technology department

also warned of potential security risks, including unverified downloads and external links.

“We have paid for curriculum that has been fully vetted, and we want our teachers to use that. We don’t want them to spend their own money on buying supplemental materials because if that is truly needed in the classroom then we aren’t doing our job to give them the resources that they need.” said board member Kimberly Moran. “The non-curriculum part of (Teachers Pay Teachers can) be solved.”

Despite these concerns, board members acknowledged the site’s popularity among teachers and its potential to enhance instruction.

“We say a lot that we want to allow the teachers to perform the art of teaching, and we want everyone to follow the science. To me this is an art form for a lot of teachers, it’s not the science or curriculum side,” said Melissa Zuidema, governing board president.

Zuidema encouraged a case-by-case address of teachers using Teachers Pay Teachers for curriculum content but allowing it over all for the artistic applications the website offers.

The motion allows continued use of Teachers Pay Teachers materials for the remainder of the school year while the district develops a long-term policy.

The vote was unanimous, with all board members in favor.

Visit lesd79.org for more information.

Award

• From page 14

schools apply for this designation, undergoing a selection process that includes an application, interviews, and on-site evaluations by education profes-

sionals. Schools earning the A+ distinction hold the title for four years and take on mentorship roles through AEF’s Principal’s Leadership Academy, helping to develop future school leaders.

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NEIGHBORS

Goodyear pilot reflects on career, opportunities of flying

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

When Erica Angel was growing up in San Juan Capistrano, California, she didn't expect to become a pilot.

She had considered a more traditional career path, until a conversation with her mother led her to aviation.

"It was my mom who said an office job sounded boring and that I should do something wild like fly a helicopter," stated Angel. "So, I looked into flight school, and within a few months, I was starting my flight training. I took a chance. It has led to an exciting and unique career path."

With more than 4,000 flight hours, Angel has worked across several sectors of the aviation industry.

She started as a flight instructor in California before moving to Nevada, where she flew Grand Canyon tours. In 2018, she transitioned to air medical services, flying emergency missions in Arizona, Nevada, and South Carolina.

Angel is now preparing to relocate to Goodyear, where she will continue her work as a helicopter emergency medical services pilot for Air Methods, a national air medical provider.

Women remain underrepresented in aviation. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, just over 9% of licensed pilots in the U.S. are women, with even fewer in helicopter aviation. Earlier in March was Women of Aviation Worldwide Week,

• See **Angel** on page 25



Erica Angel reflects on her career in helicopter emergency medical services. (Submitted photo/ Lindsey Emmons)

Goodyear honors 2024 citizens of the year

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Two Goodyear residents and one company were recognized recently for their contributions to the community, with awards for Citizen of the Year, Corporate Citizen of the Year, and Youth Citizen of the Year.

Bonnie Lewis was named 2024 Citizen of the Year for her lifelong commitment to the arts and her role in strengthening Goodyear's cultural landscape. A professional artist and founder of the nonprofit organization Catitude Arts, Lewis has dedicated her efforts to helping individuals of all

ages pursue careers in the arts.

She opened a sign company on Western Avenue in the 1980s, served with the Western Avenue Merchants Association, and was a key member of the Southwest Valley Chamber of Commerce. Lewis also served as one of the first arts and culture commissioners after the city's public and performing arts ordinance passed in 2006.

Lewis is known for creating the "Follow Your Art Junior" program, a free summer initiative for teens that has helped develop young artists now participating in Goodyear's public art

projects.

In her acceptance speech, Lewis thanked the city for the opportunity to make a difference.

"I want to thank the city of Goodyear, the mayor and council for giving us these opportunities," Lewis said. "These things don't happen in a vacuum."

The Friends of the Southwest Family Advocacy Center received the 2024 Corporate Citizen of the Year award for its dedication to supporting victims of abuse in the southwest Valley.

• See **Honors** on page 25



Mayor Joe Pizzillo and the city of Goodyear recognize Bonnie Lewis as Citizen of the Year. (Submitted photos/ City of Goodyear)

Honors

• From page 24

Established in 2016, the center provides a collaborative environment for professionals in law enforcement, child protection, mental health, and victim advocacy to assist individuals facing child abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, and elder abuse.

The nonprofit has been instrumental in exceeding service levels by providing additional resources to families, including clothing, transportation, security devices, and therapy. In 2024, the organization helped more than 200 families in need.

Ameera Singh, a senior at Goodyear High School, was recognized as the 2024 Youth Citizen of the Year for her dedication to community service. Singh has served as chair of the Goodyear Youth Commission for four years, ensuring the youth voice is represented in city initiatives. She also organized the West Valley Youth Council Summit, an annual event she managed with professionalism and enthusiasm.

In addition to her work with the Youth Commission, Singh has volunteered at city events, helped with neighborhood cleanups, and participated in community outreach programs. Academically, she excels while balancing a rigorous school schedule and leadership roles in clubs such as Future Farmers of America and Arizona Mock Trial.

"I'm a high school senior this year, so



Mayor Joe Pizzillo and the city of Goodyear recognize Ameera Singh as Youth Citizen of the Year. (Submitted photos/ City of Goodyear)



Mayor Joe Pizzillo and the city of Goodyear recognize The Friends of the Southwest Family Advocacy Center as the Corporate Citizen of the Year. (Submitted photos/City of Goodyear)

I've reached the pinnacle of the mountain I'm on now," Singh said in her acceptance speech. "But as I look down, there are so many people climbing up. Who are those people you're helping up the mountain?"

The Goodyear City Council expressed gratitude for the honorees' contributions and looks forward to their continued impact on the community.

Angel

• From page 24

established in 2010, which aims to highlight the role of women in the industry and promote aviation careers.

Angel said working in helicopter emergency medical services presents unique challenges, requiring quick decision-making and adaptability.

"(Helicopter emergency medical services) is a unique job, and I love

what I do," stated Angel. "I've left and returned and decided I will only do this job for Air Methods because of our focus on and commitment to always make safety the priority."

As she continues her career, Angel said staying flexible and confident has been important in navigating an evolving industry.

"Having confidence and staying nimble in an industry that continues to evolve is the key to success," stated Angel.

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INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA

Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities



The Goodyear City Council approved an agreement to facilitate brine disposal through the Palo Verde Power Generating Station Improvements Project. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

Water

- From page 1

and brackish water — water that has a higher salinity than freshwater but is not as salty as seawater — from Goodyear and Buckeye to be delivered to the Palo Verde Generating Station for use in its water reclamation system to cool its generators.

“This agreement is a partnership we developed with our neighbors,” said Barbara Chappell, Goodyear’s water services director. “Making this a regional solution is what makes this beneficial from a financial perspective.”

Goodyear’s portion of this project was budgeted for in the city’s capital improvement fund.

City officials state this project is necessary to support long-term water management strategies while maintaining the operational efficiency of Palo Verde, the largest nuclear power facility in the U.S.

“It’s a win-win for Palo Verde, creating power for us and also for the city of Goodyear to get some of our water we were spending money on to be disposed of inexpensively as well,” said Brannon Hampton, councilmember.

The agreement authorized the construction and procurement of final components needed to integrate Goodyear’s brackish water into the power plant’s system.

The project has been progressing in phases since an initial agreement was approved in 2022. Earlier amendments allowed for design and early-stage construction, with costs shared between Goodyear and Buckeye.

A future agreement regarding the ongoing operation and maintenance costs of sending Goodyear’s brine to Palo Verde Generating Station is expected to come before the council later this year.



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