

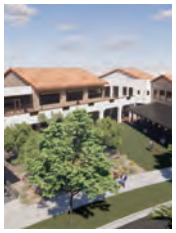
Community

Arizona Highways magazine celebrates 100 years; **4**

LITCHFIELD PARK/GOODYEAR
INDEPENDENT

Business

Litchfield Square development project moving forward; **11**



April 2025 Volume 6 Issue 4 Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net



Healing through horses: Equine therapy brings transformation and education to Arizona

Tammy Tomich educates future equine assisted learning administrators. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia) By Mary Goldmeer

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

At 906 Wellness/Equine, healing doesn't happen in a therapist's office or a hospital, it happens in the quiet presence of a horse.

"We have families come in, and they don't get along, and in one session, they can walk out arm in arm," said Frank Gandee, who co-runs the equine-assisted therapy program with his wife, Tammy Tomich. "And that's OK because we helped with that change."

Located in Buckeye, 906 Wellness/Equine provides a space where people can work through trauma, rebuild relationships and reconnect with themselves, all with the help of horses.

Through equine-assisted psychotherapy and equine-assisted learning, the facility offers a hands-on approach to emotional healing and personal growth.

"What's beautiful about it is that it happens organically," Gandee said.

The facility is home to 10 horses, all of whom have found their way to 906 Wellness/Equine through different circumstances. Some were surrendered, others were rescued through the livestock commissioner, and at least one was saved from a kill pen.

Unlike traditional therapy programs that assign clients a specific horse, Gandee and Tomich allow each person to choose the horse they feel most connected to.

"Our horses only work probably about seven hours a week when we're busy, and we don't like any of them to work back to back," Gandee said.

This balance ensures the horses are well cared for and able to fully engage in their work as therapy partners.

"They offer so much. There is a lot of wisdom in there," Tomich said.

• See **Horses** on page **18**

Goodyear aviation school offers direct path to airline careers

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

At Phoenix Goodyear Airport, United Aviate Academy is training the next generation of airline pilots. As a wholly owned subsidiary of United Airlines, the academy provides aspiring pilots with a direct path to the flight deck of a major carrier, offering an intensive training program, hands-on mentorship and a commitment to excellence.

"This is an opportunity to be a United Airlines pilot," said Michael Hales, CEO of United Aviate Academy. "We are trying to get students through as quickly and efficiently as possible, but at the same time, I want a high-quality product at the end of this that I can then hand off to the airline."

With a nationwide pilot shortage continuing to impact the aviation industry, United Aviate Academy is working to fill the gap by

• See **UAA** on page **22**



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West Valley Camps offers high school students the opportunity to explore professions including law, medicine and forensic science, all in a college environment.

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Future Lawyers Institute, June 2–5 or June 9–12
Students considering law school after college will explore foundational legal concepts and engage with seasoned legal professionals and law school students.

Future Doctors Institute, June 9–12
Students who aspire to attend medical school after college will examine disciplines including biology, chemistry and health care innovation with expert instructors.

Scholarships are available. Register at newcollege.asu.edu/west-valley-camps.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Eastbound ramp closes in Goodyear

The eastbound Interstate 10 on-ramp from Estrella Parkway will be closed through May 9 as part of an ongoing interchange improvement project.

Drivers are encouraged by city officials to use alternate routes such as Bullard Avenue and Sarival Avenue.

The closure is part of a larger project aimed at improving traffic flow and capacity at the Estrella Parkway, PebbleCreek Parkway and I-10 interchange. Additional closures are scheduled in the coming months, including a westbound I-10 off-ramp closure from May through July and a tentative eastbound I-10 off-ramp closure in September.

Nighttime lane restrictions will remain in effect through June 2025. The southbound right lane on Estrella Parkway, PebbleCreek Parkway will be closed from McDowell Road to I-10, Sunday through Friday, from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The eastbound I-10 off-ramp will be reduced to a single lane during the same hours, while the westbound off-ramp will be limited to a single left-turn lane and two right-turn lanes.

The construction project, which is scheduled to continue

• See **Ramp** on page **8**

Arizona Highways magazine celebrates 100 years with lecture in Goodyear

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Held at the Goodyear City Council chambers, the event drew a full audience, including a Goodyear councilmember, members of the historical society and groups from Sun City and Sun City West. Attendees gathered for an hour to hear from former Arizona Highways publisher Win Holden, who shared insights into the magazine's legacy and the photographers who shaped its reputation.

"We're happy to be partnering with Arizona Humanities for today's presentation. This is part of our heritage lecture series," said Lisa Hegarty, executive director of the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center. "Our program focuses on the history of the Southwest Valley."

"(We're highlighting this Arizona) publication which is recognized as one of the highest travel magazines in the world," said Hegarty.

Founded in 1925 by the Arizona Highway Department as a simple promotional brochure, Arizona Highways has grown into one of the most respected travel publications in the world. It has showcased the landscapes, culture, and history of Arizona for generations, captivating readers with striking photography and in-depth storytelling. Unlike many magazines that rely heavily on advertising revenue, Arizona Highways

• See **Highways** on page **8**



Win Holden presents a lecture for the P. W. Litchfield Heritage Center. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

West Valley charity license plate approved by Governor Hobbs

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A bill to create a specialty license plate supporting West Valley charities was passed through the Arizona Legislature.

Senate Bill 1311 establishes the West Valley Charity specialty plate, which generates funds for the West Valley Charity Specialty Fund. The proceeds will be allocated to an organization that has existed since 2013, has at least 50 active members and supports children, families and

• See **Plate** on page **6**



West Valley charity license plate approved by Governor Hobbs. (Submitted photo/West Valley Mavericks Foundation)

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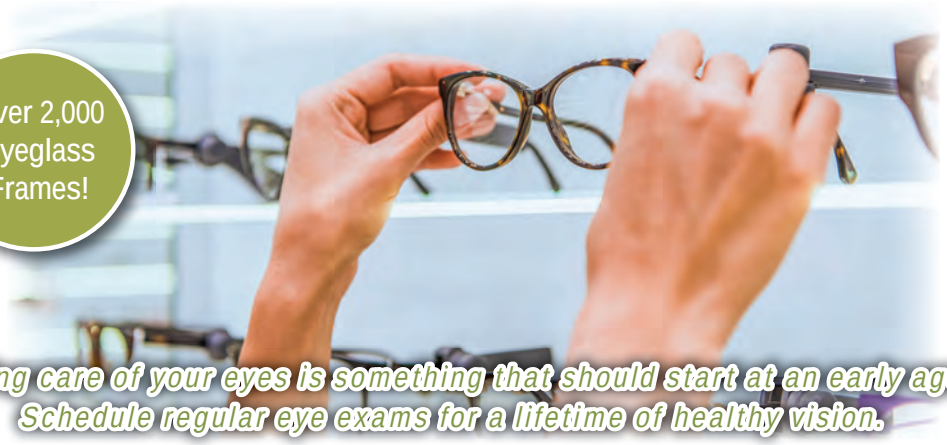
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Goodyear hosts a special election in May 2025. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

Voter registration deadline nears for Goodyear's special election

Goodyear residents have until Monday, April 21, to register to vote in the city's upcoming all-mail special election on May 20. The election includes six ballot questions: four proposed amendments to the City Charter and two franchise agreements with private utility providers.

Ballots will be mailed to registered voters beginning April 23 and must be returned by Election Day to be counted.

The proposed charter changes were recommended by the Charter Review Ad-Hoc Committee and, if approved, would permanently amend the city's foundational governing document. The two franchise questions ask voters to authorize private water companies to continue service within the city in exchange for franchise fees paid to Goodyear.

As a charter city, Goodyear operates under a locally adopted document that functions similarly to a constitution. The charter defines the city's council-manager form of government, qualifications and terms for elected officials, and the scope of local authority. Changes to the charter require voter approval.

Voters can expect six questions on the ballot:

- Question 1 would clarify that the City Council may adopt land use and development regulations, including zoning ordinances and architectural design standards, by a simple majority vote, as long as they align with the city's General Plan.
- Question 2 would update the title of Article II, Section 11 to include "Benefits," and would expand the scope of the Citizens Compensation Committee to make recommendations on both salaries and benefits for council members. The council would be limited to a simple majority vote to accept or reject the committee's recommendation.
- Question 3 would transfer authority to create, consolidate or eliminate city departments from the City Council to the city manager, as long as any changes remain within the council-approved budget and staffing levels.
- Question 4 would codify allowable categories for municipal transaction privilege tax and clarify the city's existing procedures for approving and issuing bonds.
- Question 5 asks voters to approve a franchise agreement with EPCOR Water Arizona Inc. to provide water distribution and wastewater collection services in Goodyear. The city would receive a franchise fee under the agreement.
- Question 6 seeks approval of a similar franchise agreement with Liberty Utilities (Litchfield Park Water and Sewer) Corp.

All voting will be conducted by mail. There will be no in-person voting on Election Day. Ballots may be returned by mail or dropped off at Goodyear City Hall.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information.

Plate

• From page **4**

veterans. The organization must also have an annual grant award process.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Frank Carroll, R-District 28, said the West Valley Mavericks Foundation, a nonprofit based in Litchfield Park, would be a likely recipient of the funds.

"The West Valley Mavericks have been doing some phenomenal work supporting families and veterans and everybody in the West Valley basically for a lot of great causes," Carroll said.

The foundation, a nonprofit, provides grants to programs focused on education, healthcare and community development. Mark James, director of community issues at Luke Air Force Base and a board member for the Mavericks, said the specialty plate would help broaden the group's impact.

"The Mavericks have a bold mission to enhance the communities in the West Valley and create a better future for all," James said. "The West Valley Mavericks Foundation is making a real impact: supporting families, strengthening businesses and investing in the future of our region"

Arizona has more than 100 specialty license plates, which must be approved by the Legislature. Organizations seeking a specialty plate must secure $32,000 for production costs, and most plates cost $25 annually, with $17 going to the designated nonprofit.

West Valley Charity plate will provide a new way for residents to support local initiatives.

"This license bill will help the Mavericks to continue changing lives," said James.

Visit azleg.gov for more information.

Mayor Thomas Schoaf provides an update on Litchfield Square

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

After years of planning, investment and community input, Litchfield Square is taking shape. Mayor Thomas Schoaf provided an update on the project at the State of the City meeting, outlining its progress, challenges and future plans.

"Our goal is to enhance the city of Litchfield Park by preserving the uniqueness of our community," Schoaf said. "As we look at changes and as we look at development ... we try to make sure that that change will not hurt the character of our neighborhoods."

The concept of a downtown hub for Litchfield Park dates back to 1994, when the City Council adopted the Village Center Plan. Between 1994 and 2007, the city worked to acquire the land needed for what would become Litchfield Square.

From 2018 to 2021, city officials met with residents and community groups to ensure the project aligned with community interests. From 2021 to 2025, the city focused on infrastructure, laying the groundwork for the future downtown district.

Unlike many developments that rely on major retail anchors to draw visitors, Litchfield Square's central feature is its park.

"For us, our anchor is the park," Schoaf said.

The city has invested $40 million into the project, exceeding initial budget estimates due to timing and market conditions. However, Schoaf reassured residents that the city's financial stability remains intact.


Thomas Schoaf

"We will still have a capital program, we'll still maintain our streets, we'll still have our fire and our police, so everything that's important to your normal lifestyle is not going to be impacted," he said.

Schoaf also noted that even if no further construction occurred at Litchfield Square, the city's budget and quality of life would not be compromised.

The first building, developed by Heritage Partners, is expected to break ground in early May.

The mixed-use space will include two restaurants, office space and retail.

A second building, anticipated to begin construction by October, will also be a mixed-use commercial space.

Looking ahead, a third planned building will be three stories, with retail and restaurants on the first floor and condominiums on the upper levels.

Construction is expected to begin before 2026.

"(It) is a really good start. It's about half of what will end up eventually there ... we're anticipating significant interest in the other parcels for the finishing pieces," Schoaf said.

As construction continues, Litchfield Square is expected to become a focal point of Litchfield Park, blending modern development with the city's historic character.

Visit litchfieldpark.gov for more information.

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Highways

• From page **4**

has sustained itself through subscriptions, book publishing, calendars, and retail sales, a model that has helped it outlast numerous national publications.

Holden, who served as the magazine's sixth publisher beginning in 2000, detailed how Arizona Highways evolved from a government-issued pamphlet into an internationally recognized publication. He emphasized that its lasting success was driven by the photographers who defined the magazine's visual identity.

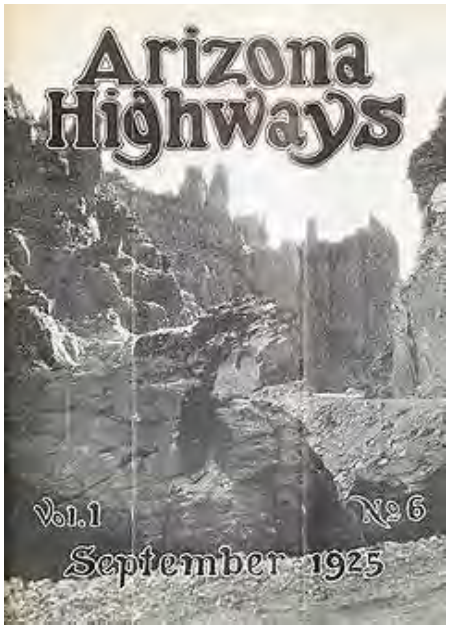
"How it became this worldwide phenomenon that is so highly respected... in short, is the photographers," said Holden.

Throughout his presentation, Holden highlighted the work of renowned photographers whose images have helped shape Arizona's image for generations. Among them were Barry Goldwater, an Arizona political icon and accomplished photographer; David Muench, known for his striking desert and canyon landscapes; Esther Henderson, one of the magazine's pioneering photographers; and Ansel Adams, whose black-and-white photography captured the grandeur of the Southwest.

"As you look at a magazine, whether it's Arizona Highways or National Geographic or whatever, I encourage you to step back and think about what that photographer might be trying to show you with their choices," said Holden.

Beyond its visual storytelling, Arizona Highways has played a significant role in promoting Arizona as a travel destination. The magazine has inspired countless road trips, supported local businesses, and contributed to the state's tourism industry by bringing global attention to Arizona's natural wonders and cultural heritage.

"It's a tough game," said Holden. "You start thinking about the magazines that you know and grew up with as a kid and if any are still around, there are not many."



Ariozna Highways began publsihing 100 years ago. (Arizona Highways)

Despite the challenges of the print industry, Arizona Highways continues to thrive, boasting subscribers in all 50 states and more than 100 countries. The magazine also has a significant economic impact, generating over $65 million annually for Arizona's tourism industry.

"We're the best ambassador for the state of Arizona of anything the state, including in the good work done in the Arizona Office of Tourism," said Holden.

The presentation featured a collection of historical and contemporary photographs, illustrating the magazine's influence and its role as a cultural and economic force.

The lecture was part of the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center's ongoing speaker series, which explores topics related to the Southwest. The next lecture, scheduled for May, will feature historian Steve Hoza discussing The Wallace and Ladmo Show.

Visit pwlhc.org for more information on upcoming lectures.

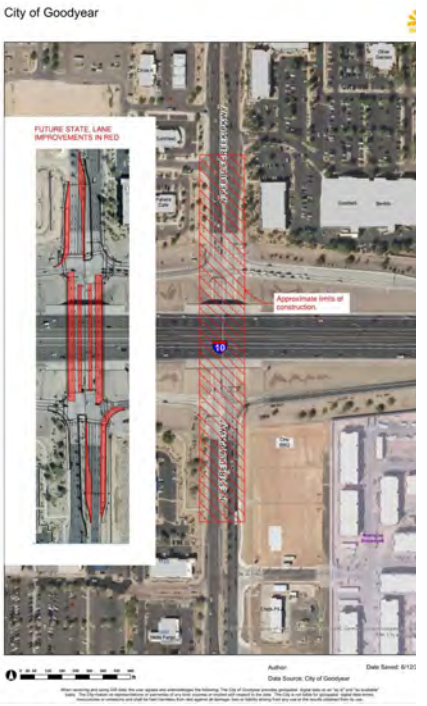
Ramp

• From page **4**

through December 2025, will add a second left-turn lane and a third through lane in both directions on Estrella Parkway and PebbleCreek Parkway. Other planned improvements include structural upgrades at the I-10 interchange, new traffic signals, lighting and drainage enhancements, and modifications to raised medians with landscaping updates.

Although no full closures are planned, delays are expected. Drivers should allow extra travel time, follow posted signage and use caution in construction zones.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for project updates and traffic impact details.



Eastbound I-10 on-ramp at Estrella Parkway closes for construction in Goodyear. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

Estrella Mountain Regional Park prepares to start annual fire ban

Maricopa County's annual fire ban will begin Thursday, May 1, and remain in effect through Sept. 30. The City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department will implement its fire ban on the same day, effecting Estrella Mountain Regional Park and all of the county's other parks.

The fire bans align with the Maricopa County Air Quality Department's regulations, which prohibit outdoor fires during the summer months across all of the county's regional parks.

"In 2024, Maricopa County received 4.54 inches of rain. That is well below our average annual rainfall of 7.36 inches," said Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Waller. "With the summer heat quickly approaching and the vegetation as dry as it is, the parks are on high alert. Our team may implement temporary fire bans due to high winds or poor air quality before the annual fire ban goes into effect to ensure public safety and protect the park's resources. When temporary fire bans are issued, we post the information on the website, and visitors are notified upon entry to the park. The parks also stop selling firewood during this time."

The ban prohibits campfires, fire pits and charcoal grills. Gas and propane grills may still be used, but only in designated areas such as semi-developed and developed campsites. Campfires along the shoreline at Lake Pleasant Regional Park are also prohibited.

Smoking is restricted to enclosed vehicles and campers, and visitors are asked to properly extinguish and dispose of cigarette waste.

Although the ban is set to end Sept. 30, park officials will monitor conditions throughout the summer and may extend it if necessary.

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BUSINESS MOVES



NOW OPEN

1 **Rosati's Pizza** has officially opened its doors in Goodyear, bringing Chicago-style pizza to the West Valley. The new location at 560 N. Estrella Parkway offers a full menu of deep-dish favorites and crispy thin-crust options. Guests can dine in or carry out.

2 **QuikTrip** is now open at 17260 W. Yuma Road in Goodyear. The convenience store and fuel station features a QT Kitchen offering hot meals and snacks, along with a wide selection of drinks and grab-and-go items.

3 **The Yard Milkshake Bar** is now open at 2015 N. Globe Drive in Goodyear. Known for its extravagant milkshakes, ice cream creations, and edible cookie dough, the dessert shop celebrated its ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 14. A full grand opening weekend followed through March 16.

COMING SOON

4 5 **Ono Hawaiian BBQ** is expanding in Goodyear with two locations currently under construction. The restaurants will be located at 1205 N. Estrella Parkway and 16960 W. Yuma Road. The fast-casual chain is known for its grilled Hawaiian barbecue plates and island-inspired sides. Opening dates have not yet been announced.



Rosati's Pizza opens its doors. (Submitted photo/Goodyear Economic Development)



QuikTrip opens its newest Goodyear location. (Submitted photo/Goodyear Economic Development)



The Yard Milkshake Bar opens. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

BUSINESS

Litchfield Park to move forward with Litchfield Square development project

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Litchfield Park City Council will consider key amendments to its Litchfield Square development agreement with LP Heritage Partners LLC

The amendments, to be considered at 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 2, at at 101 W Wigwam Blvd., in the Litchfield Park Branch Library Community Room, are intended to keep the developer on track for construction for the project in the city's long-planned downtown district.

Heritage Partners purchased Parcel 3 in Litchfield Square in 2022 and acquired Parcel 4, a parking area, in 2024 through an amended agreement. Under that agreement, construction was required to begin by April 15, 2025.



Litchfield Park prepares to move forward with Heritage Partners project in Litchfield Square. (Submitted photo\City of Litchfield Park)

The proposed second amendment would push that deadline slightly, requiring all permits to be paid by April 15 and groundbreaking to begin by May 1.

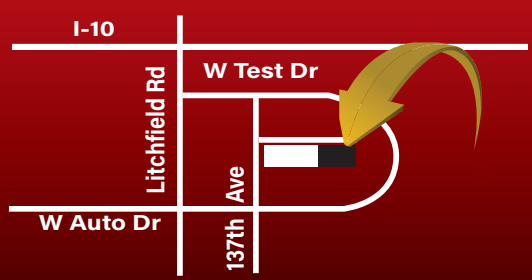
If construction does not start on time, the developer will face a $500 daily late fee.

Once work begins, the project must be completed within 18 months unless an extension is granted. The city would also provide reimbursement for asphalt construction at the Litchfield Square entry, in addition to curb and gutter costs previously covered.

To support Heritage Partners in securing financing, the city also will consider a subordination agreement that grants UMB Bank priority interest in the property as collateral for the developer's construction loan. The city would retain the right to reclaim the property if construction is not completed on schedule, though any reconveyance would be subject to satisfying the bank's deed of trust.

City staff have recommended approval of both agreements, emphasizing their importance in keeping the project on track.

Heritage Partners' project will be among the first major development in Litchfield Square, a downtown hub that has been in the works for decades. The city first envisioned the district in 1994, acquiring land over the years and working with residents to ensure the development aligns with the community's character.

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BUSINESS

Goodyear facility celebrates window production milestone

Employees at Andersen Windows' Goodyear facility recently joined in a nationwide celebration as the company marked the production of its 10 millionth 100 Series window.

Founded in 1903, Andersen Corporation is headquartered in Bayport, Minnesota, and employs more than 12,000 people across North America.

The company manufactures windows and doors under several brands, including Andersen Windows & Doors and Renewal by Andersen, serving the new residential, home improvement and light commercial building sectors.

The Goodyear plant, which assembles products in the 100 Series line, held an event recognizing employees' contributions to the milestone. Staff gathered for remarks, refreshments and the opportunity to sign a commemorative window.

"This milestone is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our team at Andersen," said Brandon Berg, senior vice president of research, development and innovation at Andersen Corporation and a board member of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. "We are proud to see the impact our 100 Series windows have had on homes across America, and we are excited to continue to support the work of Habitat for Humanity to make stable, affordable homeownership a reality for more families."



Andersen Windows' Goodyear celebrates the production of its 10 millionth window. (Submitted photo/ Aliki Vrohidis)

The windows are made from a composite material that includes 40 percent reclaimed wood fiber by weight. According to the company, the line was developed to offer energy efficiency and durability.

The Goodyear facility is one of three in the U.S. assembling the 100 Series, alongside sites in Bayport, Minn., and Garland, Texas. Products built at the Arizona site are distributed nationwide.

To mark the production milestone, Andersen is donating 100 Series windows to a Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity home in St. Paul, Minnesota. The home is part of "The Heights," a 147-unit affordable housing development that Twin Cities Habitat says is its largest project to date. The Heights is being designed as one of Minnesota's most energy-efficient neighborhoods, aligning with the material and performance qualities of the donated products.

"Andersen has been an integral partner in Twin Cities Habitat's mission since 1989, contributing millions in sponsorship and product, and invaluable volunteerism and board service," said Chris Coleman, president and CEO of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. "Hundreds of Twin Cities Habitat homeowners have improved home efficiency and lower utility bills thanks to Andersen windows."

Visit renewalbyandersen.com for more information.

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Circulation Manager: Terri Rodgers ..... *trodgers@iniusa.org*
Digital Sales Manager: Austin Moose ..... *amoose@iniusa.org*
Editor-in-Chief: Patrick O'Grady ..... *pogrady@iniusa.org*
Business Operations Manager: Kathleen Kotzbauer ..... *kkotzbauer@iniusa.org*
V.P. of Sales & Marketing: Barbara Wandling ..... *bwandling@iniusa.org*
President & CEO: Charlene Bisson ..... *cbisson@iniusa.org*

To Reach Us

Newsroom: aznews@iniusa.org
Advertising: azads@iniusa.org
Obituaries: azobits@iniusa.org
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Your Local Team


Richard Smith
Reporter
rsmith@iniusa.org


Steve Chernek
News Page Designer
schernek@iniusa.org


Mary Goldmeer
Reporter
MGoldmeer@iniusa.org


Chris Williams
Graphic Designer
cwilliams@iniusa.org


Ann Kampmeyer
Multimedia Advertising Consultant
akampmeyer@iniusa.org

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SPORTS

WEST VALLEY PREPS

Millennium moves up to 6A baseball, into contention

Close-knit Tigers surprise state

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA



Millennium baseball players celebrate a ealk-off win March 18 against Mountain Ridge on their home field in Goodyear. (Courtesy James McDonald)

Millennium baseball's senior class and third-year coach James McDonald were determined to make this season differMillennium baseball's senior class and third-year coach James McDonald were determined to make this season different, from the day they first got together in the fall.

The result is stunning to those outside the Southwest Valley. The Tigers were 14-14 in the 5A Conference in 2024 and it was a rough season, other than a play-in upset of Scottsdale Desert Mountain.

As of April 15, Millennium was 16-8 and ranked No. 9 the 6A Conference despite moving up into one of the toughest regions in the conference, which is deeper now than at any point this decade.

McDonald said he believed this team could compete in 6A from day one.

"The thing I saw that excited me was they care for one another. And I understand that as a player. When someone cares, you're going to get the most out of that person," McDonald said. "They can go out there and play beyond what they think they're capable of in baseball when they have that type of support system."

This team also is not piling up wins against the bottom half of 6A, splitting its Central Region showdowns with fellow top 10 teams Tempe Corona del Sol, Phoenix Brophy Prep and Phoenix Desert Vista.

Senior pitcher David Sheppard said a 2-1 loss to Brophy in fall proved this team was not scared.

• See **Tigers** on page **15**

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Tigers

• From page **14**

Upsets over Sunrise Mountain and Centennial in the preseason tournament reinforced that belief.

"Last year it was kind of an older group and kind of this animosity among each other. As a group we didn't really click," Sheppard said. "This year, being a senior and having that experience, I and Josue Malave were able to take the team under our wing."

Malave credited the second tournament game, the 9-8 win over Sunrise Mountain in eight innings, with setting the tone.

"For me it was the game against Sunrise Mountain," Malave said. "We were down in the last inning by three runs. We were able to come together and come through in the final inning. That's when I really saw what we truly had inside."

He and McDonald also credited every member of this team for their ability to let go.

The key, Malave said, was to stop worrying about results and to not force players into a certain template.

"We let everybody be who they are and we adjust to each other's strengths and weaknesses. That's what's really helping us," Malave said.

The coach also curbed his natural inclinations, sitting back and enjoying the ride.

"I also think I've let go and trusted in them. Let them play their game and be who they are. That's a bigger growth moment for me as a coach, taking a step back and letting those boys be themselves," McDonald said.

Two sophomores and two freshman regularly start in the batting order.

Freshmen Chase Fillman and Peyton Burgess shuttle in and out of the lineup and are the team's top two in on-base percentage. Sophomore Matthew Nevarez has a team high three home runs and leads in slugging percentage, and sophomore Cy Buchberger tops the Tigers in stolen bases and runs scored.

"I feel like we're swinging it better and we're a lot more athletic this year. We've got a lot of young, athletic kids that can make plays. We can make plays with our legs, our speed and also with our hitting approach — our two-strike approach is a big difference this year. When we get two strikes, our boys are touching their helmets and looking at the dugout, to let them know this at bat is for the team," McDonald said.

Seniors made a point to mentor the younger players.

Other senior leaders include outfielder/pitchers Sullivan Causey and Gabriel Mendoza. Malave credited senior pitchers Mason Rescina, Christian Moreno and Ryan Daniels with providing the team with energy in the dugout.

"Yes, the talent is there. We've got some good young talent. But the biggest thing for me is the senior leadership of that young talent is having is the special thing. They're teaching them the right way," McDonald said.

Sheppard, the No. 1 starting pitcher, said he is not worried about who the Tigers play.

No matter the circumstances, the ace believes the team can get the job done.

A 4-0 win at Corona del Sol April 1, and a 4-0 win at Brophy April 7 add credibility to that view.

"This being my last year, and with everything this team has been through, it would mean everything to me. Knowing that there's other great teams in the state and playing great competition is really rewarding, especially when you come out on top. When we beat Corona del Sol, that was a great feeling and we knew we had something special," Sheppard said.

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EDUCATION

IN BRIEF

Goodyear school receives family experience award

The Goddard School of Goodyear has been honored with The Goddard Outstanding Family Experience Award for the second consecutive year. This award recognizes franchisees who consistently deliver exceptional experiences to families.

JoEllen Johnson and Kimberly Camarillo, owners of The Goddard School of Goodyear, were named The Goddard Outstanding Family Experience Award winners at the 2025 Goddard School Franchisee Convention in Las Vegas.

"Johnson and Camarillo cultivate family loyalty by fostering a culture within their school that ensures the highest level of service and care is provided to both current and prospective families," stated Joseph Markle, the Public Relations Specialist for The Goddard School. "Their unwavering commitment to consistent excellence—a key component of this award's criteria—has earned them this recognition for the second consecutive year."

Established in 2009, The Goddard School of Goodyear offers early childhood education programs for infants through pre-kindergarten.

The school operates Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. It is nationally Cognia accredited, Cognia STEM certified, and recognized as a 5-Star Quality First School.

The Goodyear location celebrated alongside other award recipients from across the country.

Visit goddardschool.com for more information.

Litchfield Elementary board approves $1.2 million lease for classroom tech

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Litchfield Elementary School District Governing Board approved a lease agreement to bring more than $1.2 million in classroom technology to 11 district campuses over the next three years.

Under the plan, the district would enter into a master lease agreement with TEQlease Education Finance to acquire 420 Promethean ActivPanel 9 Premium interactive displays, along with mobile stands, software licenses and extended warranties. The equipment would support a districtwide refresh of classroom technology that will last up to 15 years.

The Promethean ActivPanel is a 75-inch interactive display designed for education. It functions as a digital whiteboard, touch-screen monitor and instructional hub, allowing teachers and students to interact directly with lessons. Teachers can cast content from their laptops, launch educational apps and annotate documents in real time. The devices also come with classroom management software that allows IT staff to monitor and update the equipment remotely.



Litchfield Elementary's school board is set to vote on a $1.2 million lease for digital whiteboards. (Submitted photo/Litchfield Elementary School District)

According to board documents, the panels will be installed at the following schools: Wigwam Creek Middle School, Palm Valley Elementary, Western Sky Middle School, Mabel Padgett Elementary, Litchfield Elementary, Corte Sierra Elementary, Verrado Heritage Elementary, L. Thomas Heck Middle School, Belen Soto Elementary, Scott Libby Elementary and White Tanks Learning Center.

Todd appointed to Liberty Elementary School Board amid budget concerns

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Michael Todd was appointed to the Liberty Elementary School District governing board, filling a months-long vacancy on the five-member board.

Maricopa County School Superintendent Shelli Boggs announced the decision in a press release, citing the district's fluctuating budget as a key factor in her selection.

Boggs' office stated she attended a candidate forum hosted by the district, met with applicants and community members, and ultimately chose Todd because of his prior experience on the board and familiarity with budget issues.

"Mr. Todd brings a strong financial and business background coupled with deep community ties and existing knowledge of the district," Boggs said in a press release.


Michael Todd

Todd previously served as board president until his resignation in September 2024 over concerns regarding the district's response to an assault and a school shooting threat.

His appointment comes just ahead of a special board meeting on Thursday, April 3, where members will select new board leadership. Currently, Kellie Zimmerman serves as vice president. When she was voted into the role, she had also sought the board presidency following the resignation of former board president Bryan Parks, whose empty seat Todd will fill.

Tood and Liberty leadership did not respond to request for comment.

Following the appointment, 4 Liberty Kids, a political action committee made up of district parents and community members, issued a statement expressing concerns.

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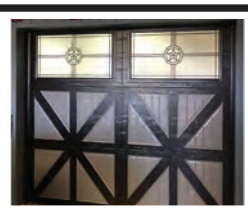
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FROM THE COVER

Horses

• From page **1**





Equine professionals learn techniques on equine assisted learning administrators. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

For Tomich, working with horses isn't just a career, it's a calling that goes back to her earliest memories. As she grew older, her passion for horses remained strong, but she wanted to do more than just work in the industry, she wanted to create a space where horses and people could connect in a meaningful way.

"When my grandfather passed, I realized that I wanted to continue with horses in a way that would be community regulated," she said. "Not so much just being a horse trainer, but creating a sense of community."

Before founding 906 Wellness/Equine, Tomich worked in various equine disciplines but felt there had to be a different approach, one that focused on relationships rather than competition.

Her father, a Vietnam veteran, was one of her biggest supporters. After he and her mother passed, she used her inheritance to invest in the property she and Gandee now run, building a healing space for others.

"The timing of it — God's hand was in it," she said. "We just happened to have money at the time, and we thought, 'Well, this would be a good stewardship of the money they had worked really hard for.'"

For Gandee, the journey into equine therapy was unexpected. He had never been around horses before meeting Tomich, but after sitting in on one of her seminars, something changed.

"I don't want to work for corporate," he told her. "I want to do this because I can see how much joy it brings."

Beyond working with individual clients, Gandee and Tomich are passionate about expanding equine-assisted therapy through education.

Recently, they hosted a professional training seminar led by the O.K. Corral Series, an organization founded by Greg Kersten, the pioneer of equine-assisted psychotherapy. The event drew professionals from across Arizona, as well as from Colorado, Alabama and Tennessee.

Scott and Kim Warner, founders of Hope thru Hooves, led the training. Scott, a farrier with nearly 30 years of experience, and Kim, a licensed special education teacher with a master's degree in organizational management, guided participants through the fundamentals of equine-assisted therapy.

"If the horses don't address the thing that causes them pressure, it will become pain. Humans are the same way," Kim Warner said.

Attendees learned how to use equine-assisted exercises to help clients recognize their own behaviors and emotional patterns.

"We're prompting our clients to ask questions about themselves, questions that they can answer through reflection and through the experiences mirrored with the horses," Warner said.

One of the core principles emphasized was that horses naturally reflect human emotions without judgment, allowing clients to process their feelings in a nonverbal, deeply personal way.

"When I'm with them, I feel the presence of the Lord next to me," Tomich said. "They don't have any ego. They don't care what you look like. They don't care what they look like. They behave because that's how they are. They respond to what you've got going on, and they give you the space — or hold the space — for you to figure it out."

The seminar, titled "Giddy Up and Get Over It!," covered key equine-assisted therapy techniques, including:

- Catch and Halter: Teaching individuals about trust and relationship-building.
- Lunging: A metaphor for control and communication.
- The Lie Detector: Helping clients recognize personal authenticity.
- Life's Little Obstacles: A guided exercise that mirrors real-world challenges.

These exercises were developed by Kersten in the 1990s and continue to be foundational in equine-assisted therapy today.

As equine-assisted therapy grows in popularity, competition within the industry has sometimes created barriers to collaboration.

"Too often, people see it as being competitive," Tomich said. "But the thing is, there are enough horses. There are enough people who can benefit. And the more that we raise each other, the better it gets."

Gandee and Tomich are working to change that by educating others and making equine therapy more accessible. Their ultimate goal is to become an accredited educational facility, ensuring more professionals are trained in these transformative techniques.

The philosophy behind equine-assisted therapy is simple: Horses teach people about themselves. Because horses are highly sensitive to human emotions, they mirror behaviors and help individuals understand their own emotional responses.

"Your horses do your pulling for you, encouraging them forward," Warner said.

For Gandee and Tomich, the work is deeply personal. They have seen firsthand how equine therapy can help people overcome trauma, build confidence and strengthen relationships. They believe that, by sharing their knowledge, they can make a

• See **Equine** on page **27**

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NEIGHBORS

IN BRIEF

New Life Center begins renovations on suites for domestic violence survivors

New Life Center, one of Arizona's largest domestic violence shelters, has begun construction on new single suites designed to provide customized support for survivors.

Previously, individuals arriving alone stayed in casitas intended for families. The new suites will optimize shelter capacity while ensuring that each survivor receives personalized care and space.

Visit newlifectr.org for more information.

Wildlife World Zoo announces newborn giraffe

Wildlife World Zoo, Aquarium & Safari Park is welcoming a new addition to its family, Bailey, a newborn reticulated giraffe. Born on March 15, Bailey stands six feet tall.



Wildlife World Zoo welcomes a newborn reticulated giraffe.(Submitted photo/Wildlife World Zoo)

Goodyear priest to depart for role in national vocations ministry

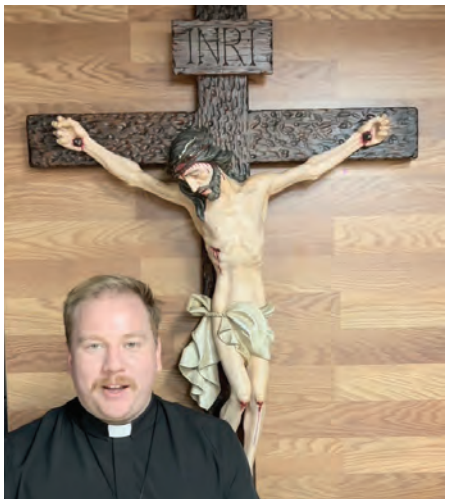
By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Rev. Andrew Fritz will leave Goodyear's St. John Vianney Catholic Church and School this summer to begin a new assignment as associate director of vocations for the U.S. Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

The Congregation of Holy Cross, which provides priests and brothers to serve at St. John Vianney, periodically reassigns clergy members to various roles.

In his new position, Fritz will assist with retreats, pilgrimages and vocational events. He will also help people interested in dedicating themselves to Catholisism by connecting them with the church and guiding them through their educational and pastoral development.

Fritz arrived at St. John Vianney as a seminarian in 2021 and was ordained as a priest in August 2022. In a statement released in the church's bulletin on Sunday, March 2, Fritz thanked the parish community for its support.



The Rev. Andrew Fritz will leave Goodyear church to begin a new assignment with the U.S. Holy Cross. (Submitted photo/St. John Vianney Catholic Church)

"Since I showed up here in Goodyear as a seminarian... I have been keenly aware of exactly how all of you have been given to me as a gift from God. Now that awareness is even more profound." Fritz stated. "Please pray for me during these months of transition into this role and know that your names are in mine every day."

Fritz, a Maryland native, began his formation with the Congregation of Holy Cross in 2012 while studying anthropology and philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.

He later earned a Master of Divinity from Notre Dame in 2021. His ministry has included roles in education, service to people experiencing homelessness, and pastoral care in the United States and abroad.

St. John Vianney community members will have an opportunity to recognize Fritz's contributions before his departure in July.

Visit sjvaz.net for more information.

Goodyear native honored as Junior Sailor of the Quarter

Petty Officer 3rd Class Roberto Valdez, a Goodyear native and 2017 graduate of Estrella Foothills High School, has been named Junior Sailor of the Quarter while serving with U.S. Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command Sigonella in Italy.

The award recognizes enlisted sailors in the E-4 pay grade who demonstrate superior performance, leadership, and professionalism.

"Valdez is an outstanding sailor rewarded for the work and sacrifices he has made and for his potential to be a future Navy leader," said Lt. Fremmy Cuadra, Emergency Department division officer. "Selflessness and camaraderie are distinguished attributes that... Valdez brings to our... team."

Valdez credits his upbringing in Goodyear for shaping his character and career.

"I was taught how to be disciplined, humble and caring by my parents, and that has made me the person I am today," Valdez said.

He joined the Navy nearly seven years ago after initially considering the Marine Corps.

"I wanted to join the Marines at first because I wanted to do grunt (or) infantry stuff," Valdez said. "Then, one of my friends from high school recommended that I become a hospital corpsman so I could do grunt (or) infantry stuff and save lives."



Roberto Valdez is named Junior Sailor of the Quarter. (Submitted photo/Megan Lemly)

THINGS TO DO

IN BRIEF

APRIL 22

Star Party

A free event put on by the West Valley Astronomy Club. Live jazz and education opertunities for the family with high powered telecopes.
Georgia T Lord Library
1900 N. Civic Square,
Goodyear
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MAY 2

Mayor Select Art Awards

An event celebrating Goodyear's youth artists. A cerimony will take place to distribute scholarships and ribbons to the artists.
Goodyear Civic Square
1900 N. Civic Square,
Goodyear
6:30 p.m

MAY 15

P.W. Litchfield Heritage Lecture

The P.W. Litchfield Heritge Center presents a lecture on the history of the Wallace and Ladmo Show. Steve Hoza will speak on the history of the program and distribute show memorabilia, including Ladmo bags.
Goodyear City Hall
1900 N. Civic Square,
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10-11 a.m.

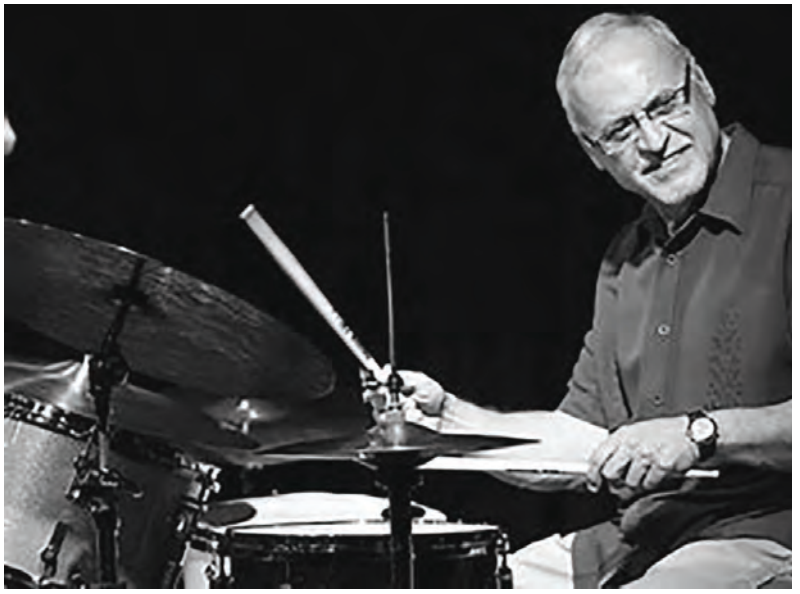
Jazz drummer Dominick Moio to lead Goodyear's April Hot Coffee Art Lecture

Renowned jazz percussionist and educator Dominick "Dom" Moio will headline this month's Hot Coffee Art Lecture series in Goodyear with an exploration of Brazilian music, its cultural roots, and its vibrant rhythms.

The free event takes place Tuesday, April 29, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Goodyear City Hall in the Canyon Trails Training Room, located at 1900 N. Civic Square.

Moio, who retired from Arizona State University in 2023 after 33 years as the Jazz Drum Set Professor and Director of the ASU Latin Jazz Ensemble, continues to perform across the Phoenix area. Known for his deep knowledge of Latin and Brazilian music, Moio will guide attendees through the diverse regional styles of Brazilian music and demonstrate traditional percussion instruments in an interactive, hands-on format.

Moio's lecture, titled "Brazil and Its Music," draws on decades of experience. In 2011, he spent two weeks in Brazil performing and teaching, immersing himself in the country's rich musical traditions. That journey built upon a career shaped by jazz legends and international stages.



Dom Moio leads Goodyear's April lecture series teaching about Brazil and its music. (Submitted photo/ Dom Moio)

Moio began playing drums in the fifth grade under the mentorship of Dick Demers, eventually studying with celebrated drummers Bernard Purdie in New York and Alan Dawson in Boston, dedicating his first book "Be Bop Phrasing for Drums" to the latter.

Before settling in Arizona, Moio spent a decade working the show circuit in Reno, Nevada, including a four-year stint as house drummer for the MGM Grand and the "Hello Hollywood Hello" show. There, he performed alongside entertainment icons like Don Rickles, Joan Rivers, Tony Orlando, Shirley Jones, and Debbie Reynolds. During this time, he also played with jazz greats such as Ahmad Jamal, Don Menza, Herb Ellis, and Red Holloway.

The Hot Coffee Art Lecture series is hosted monthly and is open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early for the best seating.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information.

Civility Checklist

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

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA
Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities

☐ **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.

FROM THE COVER

UAA

• From page **1**

training high-quality pilots while also creating opportunities for individuals who may not have previously considered aviation as a career.

United Aviate Academy is designed for students with little to no prior flight experience, preparing them to become fully certified pilots in about a year. The training begins with earning a private pilot license in as little as four months, followed by additional certifications needed for commercial aviation.

The program is rigorous, with students training in single-engine and multi-engine aircraft, as well as advanced simulators. The student-instructor ratio is 2-to-1, allowing for highly personalized instruction.

"It's very fast-paced learning here. Within the first week, I was up in the air," said Steven Lochhead, a student from Las Vegas. "It's a little like drinking from the firehose, but there's a lot to get done."

That rapid pace means students must be highly disciplined and committed to their training.

"You really have to be passionate about aviation to succeed here," Lochhead said. "I'm learning how to fly safely and at a professional standard, I want to get to that commercial level."

United Aviate Academy offers a structured career path that guides students from their first flight lesson to a job with United Airlines. Many graduates stay on as instructors, helping train future students while accumulating flight hours required to advance in their careers.

Alex Doña, a certified flight instructor from Washington, D.C., took that path after completing the program.

"I joined the program with the idea of eventually flying for United," Doña said. "Aviation has always been in my family—my dad was a navigator—so it kind of runs in the blood. When I had the opportunity here, I jumped on it and haven't looked back."



Steven Lochhead learns to fly at United Aviate Academy. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)



Michael Hales said he prioritizes student success at the United Aviate Acadamy. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

As an instructor, Doña is now responsible for training the next wave of pilots.

"We have to put the work in," he said. "At the end of the day, it's not just learning how to fly a plane. It's learning how to fly a plane safely."

Hales, who previously led aviation education programs at Delaware State University, said his experience in higher education has helped him anticipate and address challenges at the academy.

"A lot of the things that were successful for me at Delaware State University are applicable here," he said. "This is purely flight training, but it's also an educational institution, and many of the leadership concepts that apply in aviation education are needed here as well."

According to Hales, United Aviate Academy stands apart from traditional flight schools by offering a clear career path with United Airlines. The program is highly competitive, with fewer than 10% of applicants accepted.

"This is a very highly selective program to get into," Hales said. "We want the best and brightest, and we are setting them up for long-term success."

Through United's Aviate program, graduates can transition to flying for an Aviate United Express carrier or a Part 135 operator before eventually moving up to United Airlines. The academy also provides mentorship, coaching and early exposure to United's culture.

With a training cost of approximately $89,000, United Aviate Academy offers financial assistance through scholarships and loan options. The academy partners with organizations such as the Latino Pilots Association, National Gay Pilots Association, Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals and Women in Aviation International to distribute scholarship funds.

But the academy's investment extends beyond its students. Hales said the organization is also committed to supporting the local community.

"We realize we've got to fly friendly. That's true regardless of whether there were complaints about us or not," he said. "We are part of this community, we embrace this community. We're providing jobs and revenue in this community, and we're a huge revenue generator for Goodyear Airport as well as the greater Phoenix area."

The academy operates the majority of flights at Goodyear Airport, though it is not the only flight school there. Hales said the academy has reviewed noise complaints and identified affected communities as part of its efforts to be a good neighbor.

"It's an investment in the individual as well as the community, and then we become part of that success story for the student who ultimately perhaps catches the vision and de-

• See **Aviation** on page **27**

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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 to thrive. It celebrates the great local 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

Aesthetician	Optimal Weight and Wellness MedSpa
Aesthetician	Taylor O'Hara of Trinity Aesthetics
Aesthetician	Angel Garcia-E3 Cryo & Wellness

Professional Services

Window Cleaning	Legacy Window Cleaning
Veterinary Hospital	Apollo Aminal Hospital
Veterinary Hospital	Sunburst Animal Hospital
Veterinary Hospital	Blue Pearl Peoria Ave
Veterinarian	Apollo Animal Hospital
Veterinarian	Sunburst Animal Hospital
Veterinarian	Peoria Animal Hospital
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Travel Agent	Bon Voyage Travel
Travel Agent	Michael Giorgetti
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Title Company	Renee Cazzell Landmark Title
Title Company	Magnus Title
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Tax Preparer	Kendal T. Mueldener CPA
Tax Preparer	Erin Berry Simply Taxes
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Senior Living	The Grand
Senior Living	Solstice Senior Living
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Real Estate Team	Tami & Christopher Williams
Real Estate Team	501 C. Realty Group
Real Estate Agency	Award Realty
Real Estate Agency	Rapaport Team @West USA Reality
Real Estate Agency	501 C. Realty Group
Real Estate Agent	Connie Byrne
Real Estate Agent	Karrie Blum
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PPrinter	Precision Printing
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Photographer	Packer Family Photography
Photographer	Sarah Hoag
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Pet Boarding	Pet Hotel on Bell
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Personal Injury Attorney Law	Lerner and Rowe
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Mortgage Lender	Chris Busse with APEX Mortgage
Mortgage Lender	Flagstar Bank
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Maintenance/Janitorial	Big and Small Property Solutions
Maintenance/Janitorial	Clean 4 Less
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Internet Service Provider	Cox
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Insurance Agent	Raymond Grim
Insurance Agent	Julie Griffith
Insurance Agency	Olson Insurance
Insurance Agency	Raymond E. Grim Agency
Insurance Agency	Ideal Insurance Agency
Funeral Home	Surprise Funeral Care
Funeral Home	Regency Mortuary
Financial Advisor	Michael Murphy with Ironbridge Wealth Counsel
Financial Advisor	Stephen Lomsdalan
Financial Advisor	Oxford Retirement & Estate Planning
Estate/Trust Attorney	Ancora Law Group
Estate/Trust Attorney	HP Law Group
Estate/Trust Attorney	Civitas Law Group
Electrical Contractor	Belmont Electric
Electrical Contractor	A&M Electrical
Electrical Contractor	Perfection Electric LLC
Customer Service	Award Realty
Customer Service	Lerner & Rowe
Customer Service	Johnson & Associates, P.L.L.C.
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Credit Union	Desert Financial
Computer Consulting Firm	Micro One Technologies
Computer Consulting Firm	Happy Geeks
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Commercial Real Estate Agent/Agency	Andrew Monoghan of the Monoghan Group
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Childcare/Daycare Facility	Guidepost Montessori
Childcare/Daycare Facility	Word of Life
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Cellular Phone Provider	T mobile
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Check out next month's Peoria edition for the remaining list of winners.
If you can't wait, go to YourValley.net and click on Favorites.

Congratulations to the 2024 West Valley Favorites!

★2024★

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FROM THE COVER



Alex Doña teaches Steven Lochhead how to safely pilot a single engine aircraft. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

Aviation

• From page **22**

cides, 'Hey, I want to be a United pilot,'" he said.

United Aviate Academy is open to U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents who are at least 18 years old and hold a high school diploma or GED. Applicants must be able to train in provided aircraft with a height limit of 6 feet, 3 inches and a maximum weight of 250 pounds.

Applications are open several times each year. The selection process includes assessments, a virtual behavioral interview and conditional acceptance before training begins.

For students who are accepted, the program requires a full-time commitment. Training takes place at the academy's 340,000-square-foot facility at Phoenix Goodyear Airport, where students have access to state-of-the-art simulators, computer-based instruction and hands-on flight experience.

Visit apply.aviateacademy.com for more information.

Equine

• From page **18**

lasting impact on the field.

"We love our space, and people feel safe here," Gandee said. "What's beautiful about it is that it happens organically."

As 906 Wellness/Equine continues to grow, Gandee and Tomich remain committed to their mission: providing a safe, welcoming space where both people and horses can heal

Through their work with clients, their educational programs and their commitment to community, they are proving that equine-assisted therapy is more than just an alternative healing method, it's a powerful tool for transformation.

The 906 Wellness/Equine partners with veterans and families through the Southwest Family Advocacy Center, collaborating with law enforcement from the City of Goodyear, City of Avondale, the City of Buckeye, and Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

"There must be a different way," Tomich said. "A different way that we could bring the horses to community."

And through 906 Wellness/Equine, they are doing exactly that.

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