



Education

DVUSD teachers will not get raises in 2025-26; **10**



INDEPENDENT



Sports

Deer Valley's softball battery charges rise; **14**

May 1, 2025

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Glendale plans more adaptive, inclusive playgrounds

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The funding sources and order of improvements will need to be identified, but Glendale is starting down the path to more accessible and inclusive playgrounds at its city parks.

Glendale has 103 playground structures at 59 of its parks. Typically, a park will have one playground for ages 2-5 and another for 5-12.

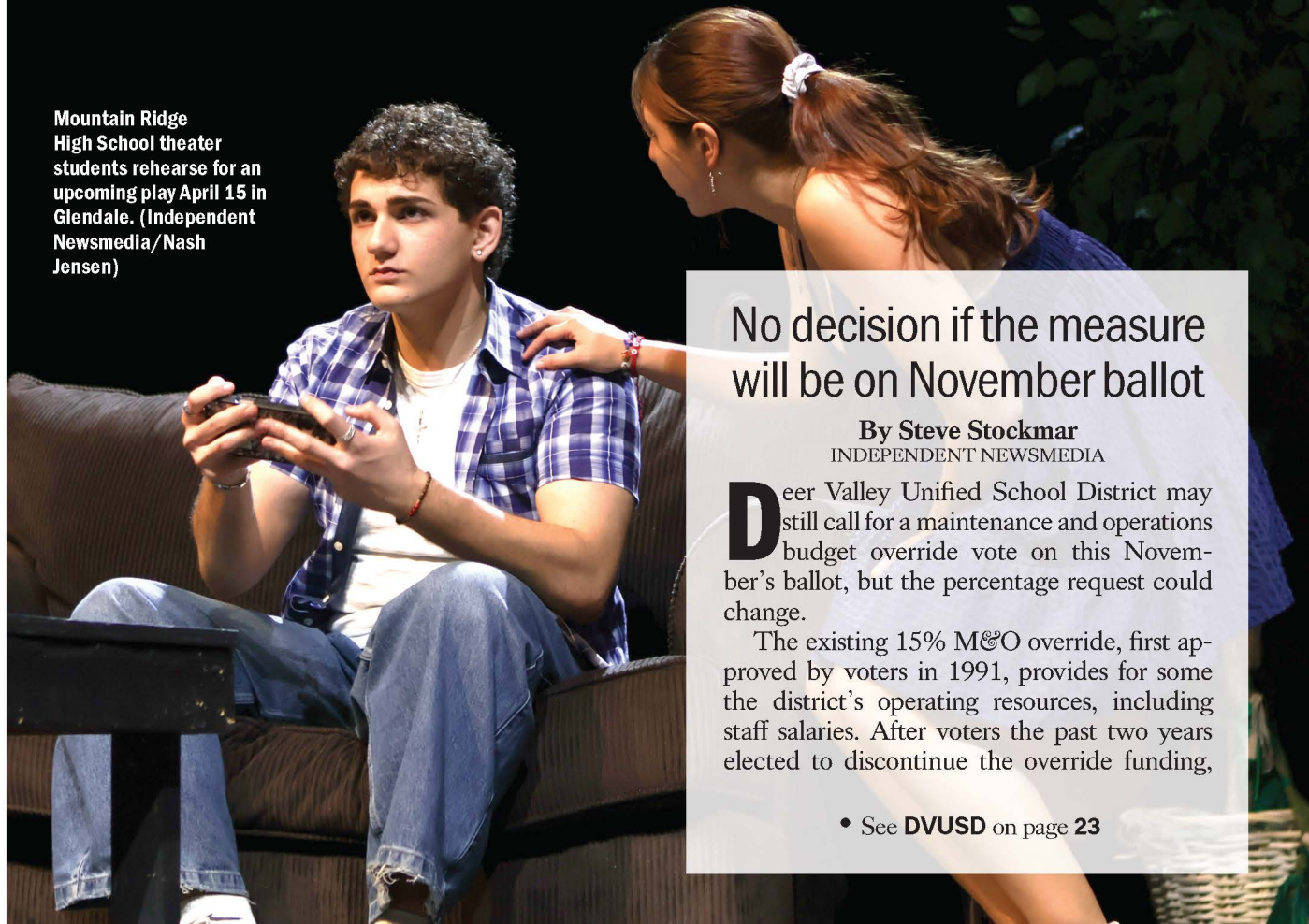
Following City Council discussions at its April 8, workshop, the first priority is to replace the 21 parks with sand surfacing with poured in place rubber. Engineered wood fiber chips also meet the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act for playground accessibility, but the council unanimously prefers to spend more money to put down the rubber surfacing.

"I know several times when I have

• See **Playgrounds** on page 22

Deer Valley voters may get shot at smaller override in fall

Mountain Ridge High School theater students rehearse for an upcoming play April 15 in Glendale. (Independent Newsmedia/Nash Jensen)



No decision if the measure will be on November ballot

By Steve Stockmar

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Deer Valley Unified School District may still call for a maintenance and operations budget override vote on this November's ballot, but the percentage request could change.

The existing 15% M&O override, first approved by voters in 1991, provides for some the district's operating resources, including staff salaries. After voters the past two years elected to discontinue the override funding,

• See **DVUSD** on page 23

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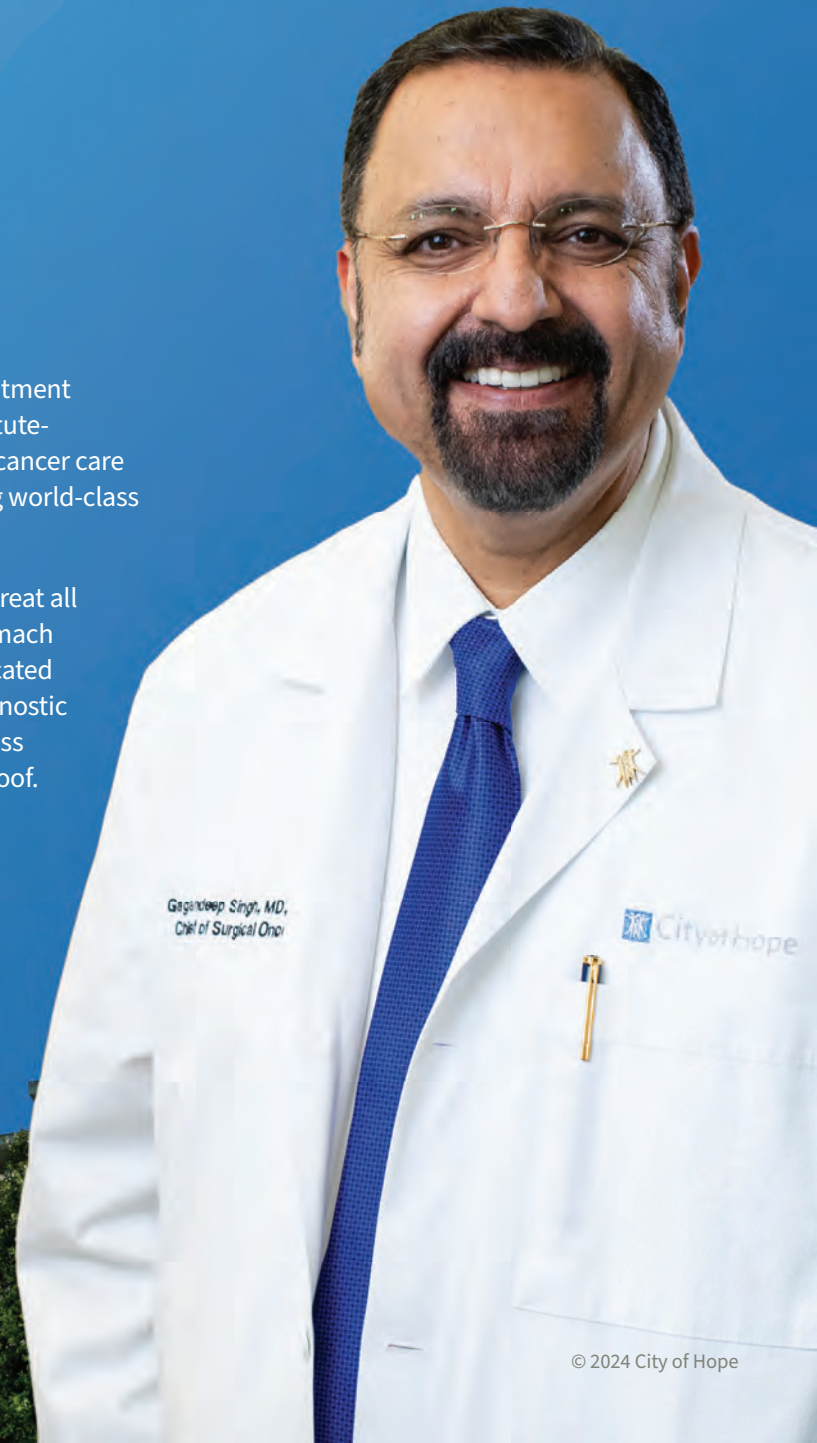
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COMMUNITY NEWS

IN BRIEF

ELECTION

Props 401, 402 give voters chance to decide on VAI Resort

Glendale voters are in the midst of an election cycle.

On Dec. 20, 2024, the Worker Power PAC filed two referendum petitions with the Glendale City Clerk's Office to refer the adoption of Resolution No. R24-131 and Ordinance No. O24-46 to Glendale voters.

That led to a special mail ballot with election day on May 20. Two propositions related to the VAI Resort under construction are on the ballot.

Proposition 401 allows voters to approve or deny Amendment GPA23-03 of the General Plan Map of the city, as set forth in Resolution No. R24-131, which changes the property land use designation from "Parks and Open Space" to "Corporate Commerce Center."

Proposition 402 allows voters to approve or deny Ordinance No. O24-46, amending the VAI Resort, Centerpoint Planned Area Development (PAD) to conditionally rezone a parcel of land in the city at the southeast corner of Cardinals Way and the Loop 101.

Ballots were mailed to each registered voter April 23. The postage-paid return affidavit envelope containing the ballot must be received by Maricopa County by 7 p.m. on Election Day. Sample ballots are available at the City Clerk's Office, 5752 W. Glenn Drive.

MULTIFAMILY

Apartment project south of Eagle Heights nears council approval

Townhouses part of Alliance project voted on by council

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

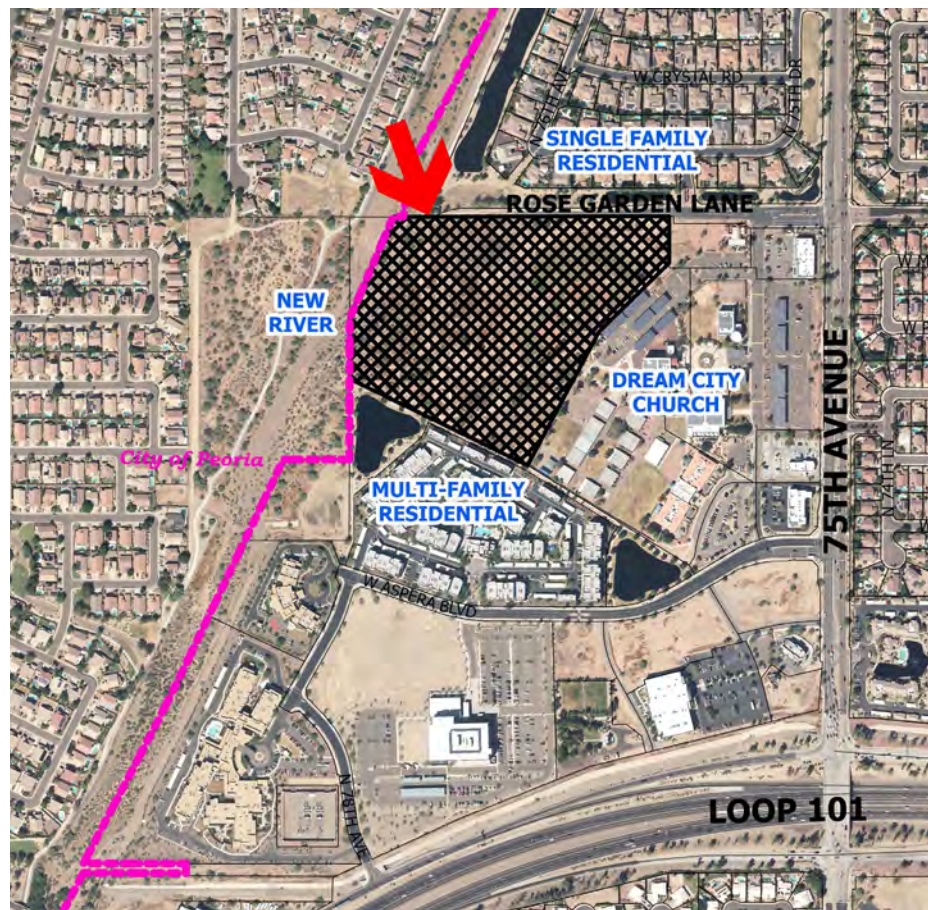
While residents of the Eagle Heights development in Glendale's northwest corner are not overjoyed by the likelihood of town homes and apartments coming in across the street at Broadstone Arrowhead, they are amenable to the development if a couple conditions are met.

Their primary concern was a stipulation included by city staff in a motion to rezone the 19-acre parcel from agricultural to planned area development.

If approved, the stipulation would require developer Alliance Residential Co. to continue a trail system along the east side of the New River and connect this trail to Eagle Heights' private trail.

After the Glendale Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of Broadstone Arrowhead during its March 27 and the Eagle Heights HOA approved of the amended plans, the way appeared to be paved for city council approval. The council voted on Broadstone Arrowhead at its April 22 meeting, but results were not available at press time.

Four of the six Eagle Heights residents to speak at the March planning commission meeting said they supported the development but linking to their community's private trail would be a deal breaker. Brian Greathouse of Burch & Cracchiolo, representing Al-



The proposed Broadstone Arrowhead town house and apartment development is shown in the shaded area of North Glendale, south of Eagle Heights and west of Dream City Church. On April 22, the Glendale City Council was expected to decide whether it will approve the development. (City of Glendale)

liance, said the developer supports the trail stipulation being removed in honor of its agreement with the residents to the north.

"Our trail — or our sidewalk on the back of our property — is on private property. It's not on city land. It's not part of the trail system. And it

doesn't connect to anything," said Arnold Doyschen, president of the Eagle Heights HOA.

That stipulation was dropped by a unanimous vote of the planning commission March 27. The commission recommended the rezoning, its other



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BUSINESS

IN BRIEF

RECOVERY

Cornerstone Healing opens substance abuse rehab, mental health sites

Cornerstone Healing Center, an Arizona-wide mental health and substance abuse treatment center, announced the opening of two supportive housing facilities in Glendale in late February.

The newly renovated facilities provide supportive housing to patients participating in an intensive outpatient program, at no additional cost, to improve the likelihood of completing treatment successfully.

“Our new housing facilities will provide a safe space for patients to heal, at no extra cost. By removing housing as a barrier to treatment, we hope to give our patients the best chance at recovery and build a strong foundation for lasting change,” stated Estil Wallace, founder and CEO of Cornerstone Healing Center, in a press release.

The women’s housing facility will feature nine beds and the men’s housing facility will feature 12 beds.

They have rooms for group therapy, peer connection and other wellness activities.

Flexible, intensive outpatient programs meet four or five days a week.

For information, visit cornerstonehealingcenter.com.

GUN RANGE

Planning committee approves indoor shooting range

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

An indoor shooting range is coming to northern Glendale.

During its March 27 meeting, the Glendale Planning Commission unanimously recommended a conditional-use permit allowing for an indoor shooting range at Ammo AZ, 5350 W. Bell Road, Suite A115.

The firearms and accessories retailer will add a 22-lane shooting range taking up about 9,000 square feet of the suite. The range will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

“I have moved my business from the city of Phoenix, where we were 12 years, and I’m very excited to be in Glendale. We plan on being good stewards of the area and property,” owner Veerachart Murphy said March 27.

Existing retail takes up 27,555 square feet of Ammo AZ. Shooting lanes would be behind the sales floor currently taking a large amount of space inside the front entrance.

Residents of nearby communities raised concerns about safety, noise and air pollution from the range during the notification process. But most feedback supported adding the shooting range.

“During this process, 56 comments were received, with 47 received as comment cards. At the in-person meeting that was held, all of these comment cards were in support of the request,” Glendale Planner Joeseline Castaneda said. “The other



Ammo AZ moved into its location at 5350 W. Bell Road, Suite A115, in Glendale in August 2024. On March 27, the Glendale Planning Commission unanimously approved an indoor shooting range at the site. (Courtesy Ammo AZ Facebook)

nine comments received were emails. They were a mix of support, opposition and inquiry about the request.”

Ammo AZ recently moved from its former location at 2005 W. Deer Valley Road, Suite 103, in Phoenix.

When the business was in Phoenix in October 2022, it was one of five Arizona gun shops and distributors sued by the Mexican government, which alleged the stores sell guns to “straw” purchasers who pass them on to smugglers, who take the weapons into Mexico.

That was not mentioned during the public notification process, nor at the planning commission meeting. All the public speakers March 27 were in favor of the shooting range.

“Working with Mr. Murphy these past few years, I can tell you with full confidence that his intentions are genuine,” Mike Zschunke, an associate broker/realtor with Berkshire Hathaway Home Services.

Glendale resident Mason Perry is gun manufacturer that does business

• See **Shooting** on page 13

Scholarships

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



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BUSINESS MOVES



NOW OPEN

1 On March 31, **Dutch Bros** opened its newest store at 12101 N. 67th Ave. in Glendale. Unlike most of the coffee and energy drink chain's locations, this one near Cactus Road does not have any walk-up lines. It is drive-thru only.

2 Moving into Arizona and recently opening a store in Glendale is hair-stylist Karissa Nitsche's **One Eleven Hair Co.**, which debuted its new location on March 3 at 6760 W. Deer Valley Road, M100 Suite 10.

3 **Super Star Car Wash** recently

opened its newest location at 5131 W. Olive Ave., Glendale.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

4 On April 15, Diversified Partners played host to the official ground-breaking for **Shops at the Cardinal**, a new 9-acre retail and restaurant development near State Farm Stadium in Glendale's sports and entertainment district at the southeast corner of 91st Avenue and Cardinals Way. The \$20 million project is already nearly fully leased with nationally recognized brands and local favorites. Confirmed tenants include Swig, Señor Taco, Starbucks, Mc-

Donald's, Bonchon, Nautical Bowls and more.



DUTCH BROS

Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith

5 Another **Circle K** store is under construction at the corner of 75th and Glendale avenues.

6 **Aligned Data Centers**, a technology infrastructure company that aims to devise innovative, sustainable and adaptive scale data centers and build-to-scale solutions, broke ground on its PHX-13 facility in Glendale on April 15. The Glendale campus at 8805 N. Reems Road spans 100 acres and represents an expansion of Aligned's data center footprint.

OPENING SOON

7 **Bull King Steak House** has put up a banner for its store that is soon to open at 5795 W. Bell Road, Suite 3 in Glendale. The company registered its name on Feb. 25.



SHOPS AT THE CARDINAL

Courtesy Diversified Partners



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EDUCATION

SCHOOL NOTES

VOTE

PUSD board unanimously approves 15% override

The Peoria Unified governing board unanimously approved a maintenance and operation override resolution of 15% to be on the Nov. 4 general election ballot for district voters.

An override funds positions and programs that might not be possible through annual funding that is received each year from the state of Arizona.

If approved by voters, the override would be funded through secondary property taxes from residential and commercial properties within the district.

The board had the option to continue the 13% override or go for 15%, and they chose the latter.

If approved by voters, the cost to residents in fiscal year 2025 for a 15% override would be \$143 annually on a home with a valuation of \$100,000, according to the district.

CLARK ACADEMY

Sonic sends teacher at Glendale school to Atlanta

SONIC Drive-In sent 400 teachers from 149 public school districts to Atlanta for the Ron Clark Academy Experience, including two from West Valley elementary schools.

One is Corinn Klues from Sunset Elementary School in Glendale.

DVUSD teachers will not get raises next year

SCHOOLS

Budget reflects first M&O cuts, district also facing enrollment decline

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Facing budget cuts and the prospect of declining enrollment, Deer Valley Unified School District employees won't be getting raises in the 2025-26 school year.

District employees have received an annual salary increase in each of the past six years. Since Fiscal Year 2019, teachers and certified staff have received a cumulative 48.4% total salary increase; classified employees a 36.8% bump; and administrative staffers a 31.7% increase over that period, Deputy Superintendent Jim Migliorino reported at a recent governing board meeting this week.

Different this fiscal cycle is the district facing the first of three \$11 million budget cuts after voters this past November rejected a continuation of the maintenance and operations override.

The existing 15% M&O override, first approved by voters in 1991, provides for some the district's operating resources, including staff salaries. Voters can authorize the district to exceed the amount of the budget otherwise allowed by the state by 15%.

It would not add a new tax or increase current taxes.

The average teacher salary in Deer Valley Unified is \$62,950, which is both less than comparable districts (\$63,362) and the state average (\$65,113).

Also impacting the upcoming bottom line is an anticipated enrollment



The Deer Valley Unified School District office is in Phoenix. (File)

decline of 900 students next year, as reported by the negotiation solutions team's findings.

The first \$11 million budget cut this year could have amounted to a potential salary cut, Migliorino noted. Going without a salary increase plus including one furlough day with no pay for all employees avoided that option.

"We are trying to minimize the impact to our staff," he told the governing board. "But 85% of our budget is in salaries and benefits."

The district's 2024-25 budget is \$293.6 million.

The fiscal and business services department shared other current financials with impending budget talks for the 2025-26 academic year. The first new budget proposal will be in June.

With the auditor general defining Deer Valley Unified's peer groups as those districts considered to be very large unified and union high school districts in cities and suburbs, DVUSD spends the highest of its peer group (59.5%) on instructional spending. The state average for districts commit-

ting money to instructional spending is 52.6%.

Also, Deer Valley Unified in the past five years has reduced M&O spending in administration costs, plant operations, food service and transportation. Only instructional support and student support costs have received increased spending during that time.

In 2024, Deer Valley Unified received \$684 less than the state average per pupil.

"That may not sound like a lot but if you multiply that times over 30,000 kids that's more than \$20 million difference annually that we receive less than the state average," Migliorino said.

Arizona annually ranks at or near the bottom in per-pupil spending on average, so the district receives less than even that.

The spending report did show, according to the negotiation solutions team's findings, opportunities to cut the budget without looking at salaries or instructional spending could exist within the district's transportation operations.



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COMMUNITY NEWS

Apartments

• From page 4

stipulation and a minor general plan amendment shifting the property from parks and open space and low-density residential to high-density residential.

Deputy Planning Director Tabitha Perry confirmed with commission member Tom Cole that the council will see the report including the stipulation not recommended by the planning commission recommendation. And, Perry said, the council will still have the option to discuss the second stipulation and approve it if it sees fit.

Broadstone Arrowhead would go in what has been recreation area for the Community Church of Joy and Joy Christian School — which was bought by Dream City Church and renamed Dream City Christian School.

It is the latest parcel that was not developed in the planned megachurch campus to be spun off.

“Over the last 25 years until today, this has become more of a mixed-use development, starting more than a decade ago when Aspera developed,” Greathouse said.

Primary road access would off Rose Garden Lane west of 75th Avenue. Broadstone Arrowhead would be built on the south side of Rose Garden, and Eagle Heights is on the north.

To accommodate Eagle Heights, the new development would have

two-story town homes across the street, gradually transitioning to three-story apartments. Volare at Aspera apartments to south also three stories.

“We’ve intentionally placed all two-story units on the north side. Part of that was a compromise with the neighbors to the north. We felt like it was the right thing to do. We feel like we’ve designed a plan with a great land use transition,” Greathouse said.

If approved, Alliance plans to include a fence at Rose Garden and will shorten Rose Garden into a cul de sac before the current road turns to gravel.

Traffic volume is the other major resident concern.

“We are the only residential space with low organic traffic through the neighborhood, and a community who walk through the neighborhood more than anywhere I’ve ever lived and protect the safety of our kids by driving safely so my 8-year-old daughter can play outside just as I did,” Eagle Heights resident Jeff Vietri said. “This is going to forever change the dynamic of this beautiful area. It will no longer be safe to walk there.”

Traffic mitigation plans are being worked on with the developer, Doy-schen said.

Resident Jeremy Goad went to Apollo High School and works in Glendale as a lawyer. He said cut through traffic is already an issue in

Eagle Heights.

“There is a huge problem now with people entering our property, trespassing and stealing fish from our lake,” Goad said.

Broadstone Arrowhead changed its design to have more trees on the north side within the view of Eagle Heights residents. The community plans to include a courtyard, tot lot, resort-style pool and clubhouse.

Commissioner John Geurs asked it there a was secondary access road to the apartments, besides Rose Garden. Greathouse said it is through the Dream City parking lot on Joy Boulevard, which heads south down to Aspera Boulevard. Aspera also has a signal on 75th Avenue.

Resident Ron Newhouse said Eagle Heights is a beautiful community of 84 homes. Being in commercial development, he said he was aware of the property to the south and checked the zoning.

Newhouse originally hoped the development would be low density single-family homes, similar to Eagle Heights.

“I know I sound very negative right now. I am in support of this project, from this perspective. Alliance, I checked their developments around the Valley and they are a very good developer. They can be trusted in the things they say. So when they promise things, I believe they will do them,”

Newhouse said. “Traffic is going to be a major issue ... My biggest concern is the cut-through traffic.”

So far, he said he likes the ideas for traffic mitigation.

Vietri was one of two Eagle Heights residents to directly ask the committee not to approve the development.

He said he’s spent whole life in Glendale, but never would have bought if the apartments were in the plans then.

“I dreamt of living here when I was three years removed from high school. I made a choice when I bought our home to keep our family in Glendale and not go to North Peoria, where many are going,” Vietri said.

Resident Eyal Dayan also is against the multi-family community.

Dust, environmental issues and noise are his primary worries. Most traffic in the area is funneled along Rose Garden and speeding is an issue too, Dayan said.

“I would be less than 150 feet from this development,” Dayan said. “I understand the profit that the church will benefit from selling the property. I understand the profit the developer will have running this rental property. But I do think it will come on the back of the residents that live around there.”

Please send your comments to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines. Richard Smith can be reached at rsmith@iniusa.org.



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Shooting

• From page 6

out of Glendale. He said based on that, a new gun range would seem like competition but he does not see it that way.

Perry works often with Bureau of Land Management gun ranges. He said the Ammo AZ range will be boon for community.

Carlos Roman, a firearms instructor from Buckeye, said the state is losing BLM land left and right. Another indoor range available for full use in the summer will help educate gun owners and promote safety and responsibility.

The Ammo AZ range is 52 yards away from the fence that separates the commercial park from the residences of the West Glen community. The store's walls and roof will be modified to mitigate sound and a new HVAC system will ensure pollutants generated will be mitigated.

"The applicant intends to work with an experienced company that has already developed many of these ranges, so they're very well aware of the requirements related to these uses," Castaneda said.

Conroe, Texas-based Rushing Ranges is building the range, and has put together more than 100 fa-

cilities worldwide. Jay Reis is the company's founder and CEO.

All 22 lanes will allow for rifles and pistols shot at targets approximately 75 feet away. Rushing Ranges typically see between 300,000 and 1.5 million shots yearly.

The decibel outdoors level will be similar to traffic on the outside, 20-25 decibels from 90 feet or more away. It is 156 feet back to wall at end of property.

Commissioner Bryan Hooper worked at a shooting range before and asked Reis some specific questions about the targets and safety engineering.

"The industry standard — yes, you are correct — is a (rating of) 50 caliber or a 338 Lupua, despite how loud it is, you still have people that might want to come in and shoot it. When you're using quarter-inch, surface-treated AR 500 (steel targets), you do have the risk of a round penetrating. Our engineering on the steel is very simple. We use 3/8 inch through hardener AR500 (steel plate targets). When you're tempering steel, you're typically doing surface level treatment. With though hardened, you're going to up to 10% of the core," Reis said. "It's over engineered for the ammo being used in the facility. It will be rated up to 50 caliber."



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SPORTS

WEST VALLEY PREPS

Battery powers Skyhawks softball's steady improvement

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Pitcher Adyson Ordway and catcher Kyla Decker had not played together before they were freshmen on the Deer Valley softball varsity team, but they developed a quick rapport.

In addition to forming the Skyhawks battery from the beginning of their high school careers, they were fixtures in the batting order as freshmen.

Decker said the duo worked together seamlessly from the start.

"As soon as we played our first game together and we started, it was natural. It brought us together more, and the closer we got, the better we got," Ordway said.

Deer Valley won its first region title in 11 years in 2022, their freshman season. Another 4A West Valley Region crown followed in 2023.

Both years, the team hosted a play-in game in Glendale but could not reach the main 4A playoff draw.

"Not in a negative way, but we have some of the hardest positions on the field. So we feel the losses harder than other people because we're



Deer Valley senior pitcher Adyson Ordway cuts off a throw in front of the plate and in front of senior catcher Kyla Decker as Cactus freshman Rhyen Enos slides. (For Independent Newsmedia/Courtesy Ed Russell Photography)

in every single play of every single game. We had to learn how to work together through it," Decker said.

Following a third region title in 2024, the team was ready to battle through the play-in barrier.

Ordway came up aces in another home play-in game, this one against San Tan Poston Butte. She threw a one-hit complete game, tossing 15 strikeouts in a 1-0 win where every aspect of her dominance was necessary.

It also is the highlight of the Ordway-Decker partnership.

"They have a great chemistry together, even when they're disagreeing on the call or what the pitch should be. They work really well with each other figuring it out," Deer Valley Coach Michael Hagele said. "Some of it, they've gotten to the point where it's unspoken. It's a good battery."

That win set up Deer Valley's first playoff appearance since 2015. Now the Skyhawks seek their first playoff win since the 2011 state 5A-II title game.

• See **Skyhawks** on page 15

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SPORTS

Skyhawks

• From page 14

Seven seniors lead that quest.

"I think they picked up where they left off last year. We got that tougher schedule with tougher freedom games, which I asked for. I got it and can't complain. We've had a couple we let get away from us," Hagele said.

He said Ordway is more of a silent leader and Decker is more vocal.

Deer Valley quickly learned its 2025 team was a bit different, beating Centennial and Mountain Ridge as part of a 5-1-1 start.

The tie was an even bigger deal, as it was a scoreless draw with defending 6A champion Phoenix Xavier Prep.

"This year the big tell for us was in our preseason tournament. Tying Xavier and beating Mountain Ridge really showed us we could compete with higher level teams," Decker said.

A 16-3 regular season loss to Greenway, now ranked No. 1 in 4A, brought the team down to Earth a bit.

Until early April the Skyhawks were ranked in the top four of the conference.

"The playoff game last year helped us realize we are that good and we can make it far in the playoffs and even make it to state," Ordway said.

Cactus upset the Skyhawks 3-2 in eight innings on April 8.

Flagstaff visited April 14 with both team near the same ranking. The Eagles pulled off a 5-4 win in eight innings, and jumped to No. 4 in 4A while Deer Valley slumped to No. 12.

"We know what we did today. We know what needs to be fixed and what

needs to be better. I think everybody knows that and we can come back and change it," Decker said after the Flagstaff game.

Still, both coach and players said they are better prepared for the playoffs than the past three years.

The No. 12 ranking is the program's highest since rejoining 4A. Decker said she wants the team to get back in top eight and earn a bye and first round home game.

"I think it helps that we've been through it all in four years," Ordway said. "I think it helps them see what they're going to go through."

The tougher schedule led to several close games and come-from-behind wins.

This team is now 18-5-1. Decker is the power source, with a .492 average and a team-high four homers and 31 RBI. Hagele said she is being more selective.

Ordway recently moved up in the lineup and is now second with 24 RBI.

"She has definitely moved up. She's swinging the bat pretty well. Batting her in front of Ky has let her see better pitches and she's taken advantage of it," Hagele said.

Decker signed to play at South Mountain Community College next year. She wants to study to be a radiologist tech. Ordway committed to play at Galveston College and wants to study nursing.

Before all that, this battery and the seven seniors are trying to return to big time playoff softball.

"There's more fight in them. These seniors want this and will push this and go as far as them can," Hagele said.



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ZILLOW'S 24-HOUR RULE

Home search website Zillow just imposed a controversial new rule:

If your home is publicly marketed by your agent in any way—even a simple social media post or a "coming soon" mention—and it isn't posted to the MLS and Zillow within 24 hours, that listing will be permanently banned from Zillow's site.

Not temporarily. Permanently.

Zillow's PR team framed it with a feel-good slogan:

"A home marketed to any buyer should be marketed to every buyer."

But that's not the true intent.

This is a rule designed to fuel Zillow's profits.

Zillow uses home listings to capture buyer leads, which it then sells to agents. That's the company's primary source of revenue. This new rule isn't about fairness, it's about maximizing listings on Zillow's site to generate more buyer traffic and convert that traffic into revenue. Period.

Zillow's Every Buyer "Standard" Isn't a Standard

There is no law or business rule that says a product marketed to any buyer must be made available to every buyer.

If that were the case, it would place an unreasonable burden on businesses across the country and completely dismantle the global strategies of companies that rely on exclusivity and scarcity to drive demand—think Ferrari, Hermès, Rolex, Louis Vuitton, Cartier, and Prada.



In fact, instant mass exposure can depress sale prices by creating a sense of sameness, a lack of perceived uniqueness, instead of the feeling of exclusivity that motivates buyers to act quickly and pay more.

Zillow's True Goal: More Listings = More Profit

Zillow claims its 24-hour rule protects buyers.

That's clever marketing.

The real reason? Zillow wants more homes listed on its site. The more listings they have, the more buyer traffic they generate and the more buyer leads they can sell to agents.

That's why, when you click "Contact Agent" next to a Zillow listing, you're often connected to an agent who paid Zillow for the lead, not the actual listing agent who knows the home.

In many cases, the agent you reach knows no more than what's posted online.

Zillow Kills the Power of Exclusivity

Luxury brands understand the power of exclusivity. They know that when buyers feel like insiders—like they're getting early access—they're more likely to make strong offers, fast.

This strategy works in real estate too.

But once a home is on Zillow, every buyer knows it's exposed to everyone. That destroys your agent's ability to leverage the ESU Effect—Exclusivity, Scarcity, Urgency—to generate faster, stronger offers.

And after a few days of mass exposure, buyers start to ask:

"Why hasn't it sold yet?"

That question weakens perception of value and puts the seller at a disadvantage.

Zillow Feels the Pressure

So why did Zillow implement this rule now?

Because more agents and firms are successfully embracing off-MLS, off-Zillow marketing—and it's working.

Compass, a publicly traded brokerage, reported that homes first marketed privately through its platform—outside Zillow and MLS—sold for 2.9% higher average prices.



A POWER GRAB THAT HARMS CONSUMERS

A 2025 independent MLS study of more than 11,000 home sellers who used my firm's 72SOLD process—starting with off-Zillow and off-MLS marketing—showed a 5.8% higher median sale price compared to other MLS sales.

National brands like Sotheby's, Douglas Elliman, Corcoran, and Luxury Presence have introduced exclusive marketing portals to give sellers the privacy, positioning, and leverage that Zillow strips away.

Zillow recognized this shift. It saw the threat and struck back.

Zillow's Website Can Harm Your Sale

Here's why sellers should be concerned about listing their homes on Zillow too early, if at all:

You lose the opportunity to assess buyer demand without leaving an online footprint that makes it look like you tried to sell and failed.

Buyers are often directed away from your listing agent to another agent who pays Zillow for leads, an agent who may know nothing about your home and might even steer the buyer toward their own listing (yes, it happens often).

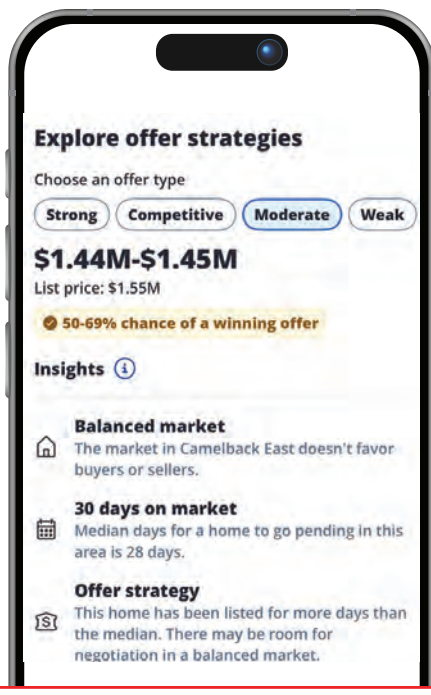
You forfeit the chance to make buyers feel special with early access, eliminating the sense of exclusivity that drives higher offers.

Zillow tracks and displays days on market, leading buyers to assume your home is overpriced.

Price reductions are visible too, signaling desperation and encouraging lower offers.

Zillow to Buyers: Lowball the Seller

On some listings, Zillow even publishes buyer "guides" that suggest what to pay for a home, recommending below asking price offers based on time on market and surrounding listings.



This isn't just a disservice to sellers, it's misleading to buyers.

Zillow has no idea if your price is firm or flexible. Yet it's actively encouraging buyers to undercut you.

Is Zillow Purposely Slowing Sales?

Think about Zillow's business model.

It profits from buyer leads.

To maximize those profits, Zillow needs homes to stay actively listed and unsold on its website. The longer a home remains unsold, the more buyer leads Zillow can generate and sell to agents.

Could that be why the platform highlights days on the market, price cuts, and even suggests lowball offers?

It's a fair question.

Some Real Estate Firms Are Pushing Back—Others Are Supportive

Some real estate firms, like eXp, have supported Zillow's new policy, likely because their business model depends on the very leads Zillow sells.

Others, like Compass, have taken a firm stand against the rule, calling it anti-competitive and harmful to consumers.

I predict those who align with Zillow will come to regret it.

Informed sellers will choose to work with agents who maintain marketing independence and aren't handcuffed by Zillow's profit-first policies.

Why I'm Speaking Out

I've been in real estate over 40 years and personally sold thousands of homes. I was ranked by Realtor Magazine among the "Top 25 Realtors in America."

I'm the founder and CEO of an Inc. 5000 Top 250 company, the #1 fastest-growing real estate firm in the Western U.S. I'm also an attorney who scored #1 on the bar exam.

I have a legal, business, and industry perspective unlike anyone else in the real estate space.

Take it from me:

Zillow's 24-hour rule isn't about fairness.

It's about control... and profit.

THINGS TO DO

MAY 3

Free Comic Book Day

It will be a day of interactive fun at the comic book day at the downtown library. Enjoy free comics, vendors, comic book artists, cosplay, crafts, and games at this all-ages annual event. Activities will occur inside the Velma Teague Library and at the Drawn to Comics Store across the street at 5801 W. Glendale Ave. Drawn to Comics is offering 25% off all comic books and graphic novels on May 3.

Velma Teague Library Branch
7010 N. 58th Ave.
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

MAY 8-10

Homeschool Theatre

Stage Left Productions' homeschool troupe will present "The Almost Totally True Story of Hansel & Gretel." It should be a piece of cake for a fairy godmother to tell the story of Snow White but her wand is bent and things aren't going as they should. To make things worse, she's interrupted by a couple of English policemen who are hot on the trail of two very deviant and dangerous criminals — children who are causing no end of trouble in the forest. Their names? Hansel and Gretel! Streptococcus doesn't believe a word of it and neither do a well-behaved pair of kiddies in the audience who volunteer to help her tell Hansel and Gretel's familiar tale.

Stage Left Productions
5930 W. Greenway Road, Suite 1A
7 p.m. May 8-10, 2 p.m. May 10

MAY 27

Kendrick Lamar/SZA

Tickets are still available for this stop on the Grand National Tour: Kendrick Lamar and SZA. For tickets and information, visit www.statefarmstadium.com/events/detail/kendrick-lamar

State Farm Stadium
1 Cardinals Drive
7 p.m.

CALL TO ARTISTS

\$4K in performing arts grants available in city

Artists, organizations, schools invited to apply through May 31

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For the fifth consecutive year, the city of Glendale's Arts and Culture Division will open its Performing Arts Grant Program to performing artists, schools, colleges, and other performing arts organizations.

Funding of up to \$4,000 per applicant is available for projects in the fields of theatre, dance, music, and interdisciplinary performing arts. Applicants must be from within the Glendale city limits.

Previous funding has been awarded to more than 70 organizations since the program's inception in 2021 to organizations varying from nonprofit theaters to live music. The program brings arts and culture to individuals and communities who might not otherwise have these opportunities.

"By giving children, students, and arts organizations a mechanism to have their voices heard while lessening the financial handicaps, this program is another step towards engendering listening and empathy amongst our city and its great citizens," Glendale Arts and Culture Administrator Chris Taylor shared in a press release.

The application window is open through Saturday, May 31. Applications will be considered for projects that plan to take place between Sept. 1, 2025, and Aug. 30, 2026.

The Office of Arts and Culture offered 15 awards for the 2025 Fiscal Year and will look to offer the same funding in the 2026 Fiscal Year.



Applications for the city of Glendale's Arts and Culture Division's Performing Arts Grant Program will be open through May 31. (Courtesy city of Glendale)



African music and arts are part of the city of Glendale's Arts and Culture Division's Performing Arts Grant Program. Applications for the program will be open through May 31. (Courtesy city of Glendale)

APPLY NOW

What: Glendale Arts and Culture Division's Performing Arts Grant Program

When: Applications considered for projects that take place Sept. 1, 2025-Aug. 30, 2026

Application Deadline: Saturday, May 31

More Information: Email publicart@glendaleaz.com or call 623-930-3557

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Chandler • February 24, 2026 • Sun Lakes Country Club

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OPINION

Take the Civility Pledge

Yes, I will do my part to help my community become a safe place for people to engage in civil discourse about public issues. Visit iniusa.org/civility-pledge/ to take the pledge.

Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our opinions, and we insist on civility. Please include your name and phone number, so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We welcome your photo. All opinions must be no more than 300 words.

Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month. Two submissions in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

Speak Up

We support the use of pen names. Too many people don't speak up because they fear intimidation or even danger to their families and/or careers. Pen names are an important part of our nation's history.

Corrections

We will promptly correct all factual errors. We offer a "right of reply" to the people about whom we write. Readers who disagree with a news story are welcome to respond with a letter.

Glendale Mayor salutes military recruits in May

This month, if you know someone who has recently made a commitment to the United States Armed Forces, I want to be the first to say how much I appreciate their decision to serve our country.



Weiers

I am also extending an invitation to you, your family, and friends to attend the 2025 Military Induction Ceremony at 6 p.m. Thursday, May 8 in Desert Diamond

Arena, 9400 W. Maryland Ave.

During this ceremony, recruits will be honored for making the decision to serve. Each recruit will receive a certificate of appreciation, along with a stole and a specially minted challenge coin from me.

They will all then raise their right hands and collectively take the oath during a ceremonial swearing-in.

As recruits are photographed crossing the stage, they will be wearing a stole representing their respective branch of service. The stole is a gift to the recruits; many of which are current students, and I encourage them to wear the stole at their high school graduation.

I have run across many veterans who have expressed to me that no one ever thanked them when they decided to serve. Therefore, my office in coordination with community organizations and local military recruiting offices has come together to do what's right – thank these young men and women who have signed their name on the dotted line to defend our great nation.

I hope that you can join us for this

LETTERS TO THE NEWSROOM

Please send your comments to Az0pinions@iniusa.org.

We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

memorable event to pay tribute to their future service, sacrifice, dedication, and commitment. This event will also be live streamed on the city of Glendale's YouTube channel.

I look forward to seeing you there. This is a free event and is open to the public.

It warms my heart to see the eagerness in the eyes of these brave men and women. Even before I became Mayor, I have been committed in Glendale to letting them know that we have their back here at home. God bless you.

Jerry P. Weiers
MAYOR OF GLENDALE

Glendale Fraternal Order of Police leader supports Prop 401, 402 on VAI Resort

I back Propositions 401 and 402 in the May special election, not the California-based labor union that is attempting to block the zoning of a key phase of the VAI Resort.

Why is a California union trying to tell us what's best for Glendale? We need good jobs to produce the revenues the city uses to fund core services like law enforcement. But a bunch of out-of-state activists would rather put their narrow political agenda ahead of the safety of our residents.

The Glendale City Council on two occasions unanimously approved zoning for the VAI Resort, which will be the state's largest resort and

will create more than 2,000 jobs and more than \$2 billion in new tax revenues for essential city services like police and fire.

Worker Power, the political arm of the Los Angeles-based UniteHere Local 11 labor union, however, has used the referendum process to force a May public vote on the council's decisions, requiring Glendale residents to vote 'YES' to affirm the zoning of a critical phase of the project.

Cities can't print money. Police departments like ours depend on a healthy economy and new jobs to generate the revenues necessary to ensure we have the staffing levels and equipment to keep the community safe.

The out-of-state opponents of the VAI Resort and of Glendale's economic development efforts don't have to live with the consequences of their meddling in our city, but we do. I'm urging everyone to vote yes on Propositions 401 and 402 and stand up for Glendale.

David Goitia
GLENDALE FOP

Dave Goitia, president of the Glendale Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 12.

Distracted driving is a deadly habit in Arizona

April is Distracted Driving



Wojtczak

Awareness Month, and it's a message we can't afford to ignore. With smartphones now acting as our calendars, entertainment and connection to the world, the temptation to check a message or glance at a

♦ See **Letters** on page 21

OPINION

Letters

• From page 20

notification while driving is constant. But those few seconds of distraction can lead to tragedy.

Arizona's Hands-Off Law, which went into effect in January 2021, prohibits the use of handheld electronic devices while driving. It's an important step, but unfortunately, laws alone aren't enough to change behavior. I still see drivers every day with phones in their hands, glancing down while moving through intersections or drifting across lanes. Unfortunately, too many people still don't take the risk seriously.

I work every day with new and inexperienced drivers. Distracted driving is one of the most dangerous habits we see, and one of the hardest to break. For teens in particular, distractions are everywhere, and it's not just from phones. Peer pressure, music, conversations and even anxiety or stress all contribute to distractions behind the wheel. When you combine that with inexperience, the risk increases drastically.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens aged 16 to 19. Drivers in this age group are nearly three times more likely than drivers 20 and older to be involved in a fatal crash. And

many of these crashes are preventable. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reports that between 2013 and 2022, 543 Arizona teen drivers were involved in fatal crashes, with distraction often playing a role.

We can't expect young drivers to build safe habits without education, which is why the right course is so important. Schools shouldn't just teach students how to steer, merge and signal at the right time; it's critical to teach them how to think and stay focused on driving, getting from point A to point B without incident.

One of the most important skills every driver should master is something we call "priority of focus." Where should your attention be while driving? Strategic driving is also critical. What are your observations of other drivers? Are they distracted or not paying attention? If so, how can you position yourself to avoid them?

We require students to place their phones in a box when they arrive for their course, and they don't get them back until they leave. Even during breaks, they must figure out a way

to occupy themselves without their phones.

Simulation is an important tool that allows both novice and experienced drivers to learn how to navigate "real-world" distractions on the road, in a safe and controlled environment. Teaching drivers to not always reach for their device is critical.

Here are a few practical tips to help reduce distracted driving, for both teens and adults:

- Put your phone away before you start the car. Out of sight, out of mind.
- Use "Do Not Disturb" or driving mode apps to block notifications.
- Talk to your teens about the dangers of distraction. Make it part of your regular conversations.
- Model good behavior. Kids no-

tice when adults check their phones or respond to a text at red lights.

• Stay mentally present. If you're feeling distracted, stressed or emotional, take a moment to clear your head.

Distracted driving isn't just about technology, it's about awareness. We must choose to stay focused every time we get behind the wheel. We owe that to ourselves, our families and everyone else on the road.

Maria Wojtczak

Editor's note: Maria Wojtczak is the founder and owner of DrivingMBA, a driver training school with locations in Scottsdale and Glendale. Please send your comments to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.



Lest We Forget Celebrate • Honor • Remember

On Memorial Day, we pay tribute to those who fought and made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Their courage and service will never be forgotten, and we owe them and their loved ones a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. Let us always remember that freedom is not free.

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.

FROM THE COVER

Playgrounds

• From page 22

taken my granddaughter over (to Heroes Park), we always come back with wood chips in the shoes. It is gross. You do find stuff inside there. It's a lot safer, the poured in place, I believe. It's softer," council member Diana Guzman said.

Vice Mayor Lauren Tolmachoff originally brought this council item of special interest for staff to study and present at the workshop. She said parents in her Cholla District point out wood fiber is not really safe for parents or kids with mobility issues to be walking on.

To convert all 22 sand playgrounds to poured in place rubber, Glendale would need to spend about \$2.7 million and the work would take between three and five years. Conversely, converting all the sand playgrounds to engineered wood fiber costs closer to \$700,000 and the work would take two to three years.

Glendale has time to go about replacing the sand surfaces, since they were grandfathered into the ADA.

"The ADA has a safe harbor provision, and this is a rule that applies to existing elements that were originally compliant with ADA's 1991 standards for accessibility. If these elements undergo significant renovations or alterations, that must be brought up to the current ADA standards," Glendale Parks and Recreation Director John Kennedy said.

He said wood chips require regular maintenance. Poured in place rubber structures have higher installation costs but need less maintenance.

Since fiscal year 2022, the city replaced 41 playground structures in 25 parks. The other 62 playgrounds are scheduled to be replaced in the city's Capital Improvement Plan but most will need funding sources.

Inclusive playgrounds meet the needs of people with a wide range of disabilities — including visual and cognitive



This is an early playground concept from the Sahuaro Ranch Park master plan presented to the Glendale City Council Dec. 12, 2023. The large leaf-shaped designs are shade structures and a splash pad is included. This is planned to be an inclusive playground. (City of Glendale)



Glendale plans to replace all 21 of its sand playground surfaces, like this one at Dos Lagos Park, 6252 W. Utopia Road, with ADA-approved poured in place rubber surfaces. This project will cost approximately \$2.7 million and funding sources still need to be identified. (Independent Newsmedia/Nash Jensen)

disabilities and sensory sensitivities.

Glendale has picked four parks at locations in different parts of the city. These are also larger parks that can draw people from further away.

The first park was an easy choice.

"Heroes Regional Park — this playground is in progress and was designed to be all inclusive," Kennedy said.

Inclusive renovations cost \$750,000 to \$850,000 per park.

Inclusive playgrounds are included in the master plan for Sahuaro Ranch Park. Foothills Park South — the portion of the park and playground along Union Hills Drive — is considered a future inclusive playground location, as is Rose Lane Park.

One factor makes inclusive additions at these two parks a longer term probability.

"Both the Foothills Park and Rose Lane Park equipment has been replaced within the last two or three years, so it's more than likely they would meet current standards," Kennedy said. "We could wait until their useful life is up, or we could make amendments to make them all inclusive in an earlier time frame, if that was the direction."

There are 12-15 year left in playground equipment at Rose Lane and Foothills Park. Council member Lupe Conchas asked about the viability and cost of retrofitting existing playground items.

He also had one concern about Rose Lane Park in his Cactus District.

"Getting from the parking lot to the ramadas, there used to be the courts that were removed. Now there is not a solid surface or a sidewalk to get from the parking lot to the ramadas," Conchas said.

• See **Foothills** on page 23

FROM THE COVER

Foothills

• From page 22

Including new, inclusive minded equipment at these playgrounds would cost between \$3.5 and \$4.2 million total, Kennedy said.

Tolmachoff said she thinks these adaptive and inclusive upgrades are something the community would get behind. If the upgrades are spread out, \$8 million over five years is a bit more than \$1.5 million a year.

“To fit another ... let’s just say it ends up being \$8 million in the CIP to bring all of the parks eventually up to these standards. Considering the amount of our budget, it’s not a lot of money. It wouldn’t have to be done all at once, and couldn’t be done all at once,” Tolmachoff said.

Kennedy said that is correct. Tolmachoff said she would like to see an inclusive playground in the Sahuaro district, which is south of Bell from 51st to 59th avenues and south of Union Hills from 59th to 79th avenues and north of Cactus from 55th to 67th avenues and north of Peoria from 43rd to 55th avenues.

She said she hopes a park in this district is picked for an inclusive upgrade in the next CIP cycle.

Guzman asked if newer equipment at Foothills and Rose Lane can be re-located. Kennedy said moving playground equipment can be difficult and items often get damaged through a removal process.

Retrofitting existing equipment for an inclusive playground is really on a case by case basis, he said.

“What we would do is bring these forward during the CIP planning each year. As far as retrofitting and those kind of things go, we would be doing that research and then bringing it back and you’d see that as future capital projects,” Assistant City Manager Vicki Rios said.

DVUSD

• From page 1

IF YOU GO

What: DVUSD governing board meeting

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 13

Where: DVUSD Governing Board Room, 20402 N. 15th Ave., or streamed online at youtube.com/@dvusdboard/streams

that money will be phased out in three \$11 million budget cuts to the district over the next three fiscal years, starting with the first for the 2025-26 academic year.

Voters can authorize the district to exceed the amount of the budget otherwise allowed by the state by 15%.

Talk at the governing board’s most recent meeting turned to a potential pitch to the community to ask for less than the 15% – and instead a figure in the 12% or 13% range.

“I prefer to call it ‘local support,’” Deputy Superintendent Jim Migliorino said. “How much local support does the community want to add for our operating budget.”

Each percentage of the override would cost the average homeowner about \$28 a year, Migliorino explained. But each percentage provides almost \$2.2 million to the district in return.

“The actual collection from the taxpayer would be small but the impact on Deer Valley would be great,” Deer Valley Unified Superintendent Dr. Curtis Finch said.

M&O money supports major district expenditures, including staff salaries and full-day kindergarten, plus district efforts to keep class sizes small. The board voted to not include staff salary raises in 2025-26 due to budget



Mountain Ridge High School band members practice April 15 in Glendale. (Independent Newsmedia/Nash Jensen)

cuts.

When voters initially approved the M&O override 34 years ago it was for 10%. The initiative at the time even featured a 5% option.

Board president Paul Carver suggested – after seeing the district lose two 15% ballot initiatives in the past two years – that proposing a smaller percentage this November would be “a good gesture” to voters.

“Maybe we could come back with 15 a few years later if it’s still necessary if the legislature hasn’t found a way to alleviate the burden on the local taxing authority,” Carver added.

Should the governing board elect to not put the override vote on this year’s ballot at all and instead wait perhaps for November 2026, the district would lose a second round of the \$11 million phase-out, or a total of \$22 million by that point.

Nearby Peoria Unified School District earlier this month saw its governing board unanimously approve an M&O override for the Nov. 4 general election ballot. That measure will call for the Peoria district’s current 13% M&O percentage to renew with an increase to 15%.

Good for seven years, the district asked voters at the ballot box in 2023 and 2024 to continue the override to support operating resources. This past November, out of 144,000 ballots cast, the measure failed 53% to 47%.

District voters in 2023 also turned away the same M&O override continuation measure, at that time by a 55% to 45% margin.

The initial 2019 approval faces full funding expiration on June 30 of this year, and a final expiration date in June of 2027.

The district has 42 schools serving the communities of north Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Cave Creek, and New River.

Should the board eventually call for a special election later this year the district could inform the county of its intent as early as May 8.

Sixteen school districts had M&O overrides on their respective community election ballots this past November, according to the office of the Maricopa County School Superintendent. Of those, 12 passed and four failed (Deer Valley Unified, Buckeye Elementary, Higley Unified, Saddle Mountain Unified).

NEIGHBORS

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Cactus High seniors leave legacy on campus

Banner Health, Arizona Game & Fish help students renovate pond

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Cactus High School student body officers wanted to leave a legacy by renovating a pond at the atrium on the Glendale campus.

The student council's available budget was not matching its dreams, as the senior class discussed the idea in August or September.

"We wanted to do something to renovate this drain area, so we started brainstorming what we could do to make this area better. That's kind of the first iteration of this," Student body president Bryson Stewart said March 28.

"Before we had a pond with some fish. We had turtles in there. We still have bunnies."

Then the school received a grant from Arizona Game & Fish which provides funding to help teachers across Arizona implement wildlife education in their classrooms.

And Banner Health brought in a team to help the community project.

Senior class president Emma Frankel coordinated the pond renovation and watched it come to fruition March 28.

"We didn't have the right funding at the time because we only have a certain amount in our senior account. So when we got the grant from the game and fish department for, I think, \$5,000, we decided it



Cactus High School Assistant Principal David Serafin, white shirt, celebrates with a crew of seniors helping refurbish the Glendale school's pond in its atrium March 28. (Courtesy Erin Dunsey/Peoria Unified School District)

could be doable, to really redo the pond. It could be a place for students to come in, sit, eat lunch and be with the animals," Frankel said.

Banner Thunderbird Medical Center in Glendale is rebuilding its women and infant services tower.

Pradeep Dugar is an executive with Banner Health leading the hospital renovation.

"The project team — one of our charters is to give back to the community. There is an economic impact, but we want to give back to the community. I think we came together in November through School Connect (AZ). They connected us to this opportunity and we jumped on it," Dugar said.

The Peoria Unified School Dis-

trict mentioned the project to Banner. These community service projects are something the health care company does quarterly.

Okland Construction, MJB Engineering, Cannon and Wendt Electric, W.D. Manor Mechanical Contractors and WSP Engineering pitched in on the project. Up to 14 professionals helped eight students work on the pond.

MBJ took the lead to help with coordinating the logistics, Dugar said, and Okland took the lead in terms of the tools, in addition to the manpower.

"Us getting hands on and actually being able to do the work in the pond really makes it special, as our senior gift. It's cool to bring the



Workers from Okland Construction and Banner Health help renovated a pond on the Cactus High School campus in Glendale March 28. (Courtesy Erin Dunsey/Peoria Unified School District)

community together and our council as well," Frankel said.

When finished, the pond will provide a learning resource for students as they study ecosystems.

The students' dedication impressed Dugar.

"When we got here they had already started. They started at 7 and we were told to come at 9. I love the energy, enthusiasm and curiosity," Dugar said.

Even as the student council seniors move on to the next phase of life, this pond and the role they had refurbishing it figures to keep them coming back.

"It will be incredible to come back and see this pond fully renovated and what it looks like years later and how people use it," Stewart said.

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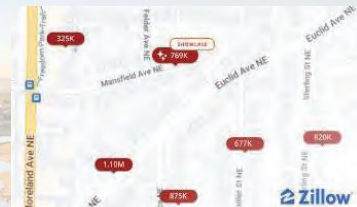
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West Valley readers pick their favorite businesses

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.



In reverse alpha order this year by heading and category.

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Mortgage Lender	Ed Knowles of Flagstar
Mortgage Lender	Chris Busse with APEX Mortgage
Mortgage Lender	Flagstar Bank
Medical Services	Cardiac Solutions
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Maintenance/Janitorial	Clean 4 Less
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Insurance Agency	Olson Insurance
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Insurance Agency	Ideal Insurance Agency
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Funeral Home	Regency Mortuary
Financial Advisor	Michael Murphy with Ironbridge
	Wealth Counsel
Financial Advisor	Stephen Lomsdalen
Financial Advisor	Oxford Retirement & Estate
Planning	
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Estate/Trust Attorney	HP Law Group
Estate/Trust Attorney	Civitas Law Group
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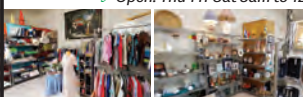
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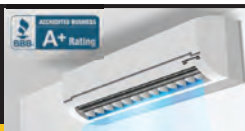
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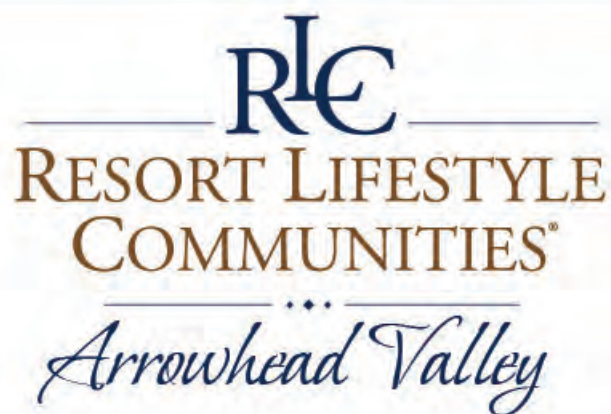
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- ◆ Live-In Managers!
- ◆ Month-to-Month Rent
- ◆ Signature **Freedom Dining** Program
- ◆ Prime Rib Sunday Brunch
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- ◆ Weekly Housekeeping
- ◆ Robust Social Calendar
- ◆ And Many More!



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