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Mosquito surveillance and prevention efforts increase ahead of monsoon season

Across Maricopa County, communities prepare for mosquito season. (Submitted photo/ Metro Creative Connection)

By Mary Goldmeer
 INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As summer heats up and monsoon season approaches, mosquito activity is expected to rise across Maricopa County.

But thanks to year-round monitoring and collaborative response efforts, local officials are well-prepared to manage seasonal surges — and they're encouraging residents to take small, proactive steps to keep their neighborhoods bite-

free.

"We clean our parks a minimum of three times a week, all the way up to seven," said Jeremy Figueroa, parks superintendent for the city of Goodyear. "Staff are always looking for anything out of the norm, whether a bench needs attention, there's a sidewalk issue, or standing water that could become a concern."

With more than 255 acres of city parks under his oversight, Figueroa and

his team play a hands-on role in identifying and mitigating potential mosquito breeding sites. After rainstorms, they conduct inspections and revisit problem areas the next day. If standing water is still present after 24 hours, they treat it to prevent mosquito larvae from developing.

"It's a daily effort, especially this time of year," Figueroa said. "We in-

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Camp F.I.R.E.S. provides learning opportunities for Goodyear teens. (Mary Goldmeer/ Independent Newsmedia)

Goodyear Fire Department hosts camp to empower young women in emergency services

By Mary Goldmeer
 INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Thirty high school girls suited up with the Goodyear Fire Department as part of its annual Camp F.I.R.E.S., a five-day experience designed to introduce young women to careers in emergency services while building confidence, resilience and leadership skills.

Camp F.I.R.E.S., short for Females in Responding Emergen-

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COMMUNITY NEWS

IN BRIEF



The City of Goodyear launches its service request platform, Goodyear 311. (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

Goodyear launches online service request platform, Goodyear311

The city of Goodyear has launched Goodyear311, a new digital platform designed to allow residents to report issues and request city services at any time, replacing the city's previous "Report a Problem" system.

The tool is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Users can report concerns such as graffiti, broken streetlights, or road debris, as well as submit requests for services including trash container replacements, ADA accommodations, or pool drain authorizations.

"Goodyear311 is all about making it easier for our residents to stay connected and help keep our city running efficiently," said Mayor Joe Pizzillo. "This tool gives everyone a fast, simple way to report an issue or request a service — right when they see it."

According to the city, the new system offers an improved user ex-

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'A Miracle': Goodyear fire captain shares daughter's recovery journey after rescue

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Nearly three weeks after a fiery crash nearly claimed the life of his daughter, Goodyear Fire Capt. Simeon Cheatham stood before reporters to reflect on the rescue that saved her, and the community that continues to carry her through recovery.

"What (Officer Dakota Berry) did was nothing short of a miracle," Cheatham said. "The fact that he happened to be traveling back to Goodyear at that exact moment gives me chills. He wasn't supposed to be there, but he was."

The early-morning crash on May

• See **Miracle** on page 6



Goodyear Fire Capt. Simeon Cheatham thanks Officer Dakota Berry for saving his daughter from a car fire. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

Goodyear and Litchfield Park libraries serve as cooling center in countywide heat relief effort

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As summer temperatures rise, libraries in Goodyear and Litchfield Park are participating in the 2025 Heat Relief Network, a countywide initiative to protect residents from extreme heat.

Operated by Maricopa County, the Litchfield Park Library at 101 W. Wigwam Blvd and Georgia T. Lord Library at 1900 N. Civic Square, are two of more than 200 designated

• See **Cooling** on page 7



Goodyear and Litchfield Park libraries serve as cooling center in countywide heat relief effort. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)



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Miracle

• From page 4

25 involved multiple vehicles on Interstate 10 near 91st Avenue. As flames engulfed one of the vehicles, Berry, who was returning from transporting a prisoner, acted without hesitation. He broke the driver's side window, pulled the woman from the burning car, and sustained injuries to his own hand in the process.

"I ended up hearing the car horn honking and ran over to the driver's side," Berry said. "At that time, I realized someone was still alive in the vehicle. No matter what, I was going to do whatever I could to get them out."

It wasn't until later that Berry learned the woman he had rescued was the daughter of a fellow first responder.

He had saved Asharie Cheatham, a 19-year-old Arizona State University student and the eldest of Capt. Cheatham's three daughters.

"I know in my heart that Officer Berry would've done the same for anyone, because that's who he is," Cheatham said. "But it just so happened that day, it was my daughter. And for that, our family will be forever grateful."

Asharie, who had just finished her freshman year studying to go into physical therapy, suffered burns to approximately a third of her body. She was taken to the Arizona Burn Center at Valleywise Health, where she underwent multiple surgeries, including skin grafts, and is now beginning intensive rehabilitation.

"Right now, she is doing as well as anybody could do under these circumstances," said Dr. Kevin Foster, director of the Diane & Bruce Halle Arizona Burn Center. "A burn of this magnitude is really a lifelong injury."

Foster said Asharie will likely undergo reconstructive and laser surgeries in the future and will work extensively with physical therapists to

regain full use of her limbs.

Cheatham described his daughter as a fighter with a personality that draws people in instantly.

"She's strong. She's resilient. She's a fighter. She has a beautiful smile ... she's a very good and beautiful person."

Despite both he and Asharie's mother working in medicine, Cheatham said they initially felt helpless.

"You feel like, 'I should be able to do something,' but you can't," he said. "What gave me peace was knowing she was in the best hands."

Cheatham expressed profound appreciation for the coordination between city departments and the love shown by his fire service family.

"Your response was fast, seamless and filled with compassion," he said. "One of the great things that we have here in the city of Goodyear is an amazing relationship between the police department and the fire department."

Goodyear Police Chief Brian Issitt visited Berry in the hospital after he sustained injuries to his hands while pulling Asharie from the vehicle.

"When I thanked him for his courage, he just said, 'I was doing my job, sir.' What a remarkable statement from a true hero," Issitt said.

Cheatham said he's focused now on his daughter's daily progress. The community has come together to support him and his family by raising more than \$50,000 toward their \$60,000 goal on a GoFundMe page to help cover Asharie's medical expenses, rehabilitation and basic living needs.

"You've already overcome so much, and we know the road ahead will be long. But with all this love behind you and your unstoppable spirit within you, you'll get through this, and you'll come out stronger, wiser and even more radiant than before," Cheatham said, directly addressing his daughter.

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Briefs

• From page 4

perience with enhanced features and a more intuitive design.

To use the service, residents can visit the website, click “Request for Service,” enter the location, fill in the form, upload photos if available, and submit the request online.

Visit goodyearaz.gov/311 for more information.

Cooling

• From page 4

cooling centers, hydration stations, and donation drop-off sites across the region. Both locations offer air-conditioned spaces to the public free of charge. The Heat Relief Network runs from May 1 through September 30.

Organized by the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the network is a collaborative effort among local governments, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and businesses to reduce heat-related illnesses and deaths.

Nominations start for Independent's Valley Favorites 2025

Independent Newsmedia Inc. USA is launching Valley Favorites 2025, an annual readers' choice campaign that recognizes the best businesses, services and experiences across the Phoenix area.

This year, the campaign will span four months, culminating in the ultimate guide to the Valley's top picks.



Nominations for the Valley Favorites begin July 1. (Independent Newsmedia)

Valley Favorites allows readers to nominate and vote for their favorite businesses and services in various

categories. Each ballot encompasses eight categories:

- Arts & Entertainment
- Community
- Food & Drink
- Health, Fitness & Wellness
- Home & Garden
- Professional Services
- Shopping & Beauty
- Vehicles & Services

Nominations run through July 30. Visit wvf-2025.yourvalley.net for more information.

DPH) and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the network is a collaborative effort among local governments, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and businesses to reduce heat-related illnesses and deaths.

“The Heat Relief Map is a vital tool that connects people to life-saving resources in real time. By leveraging technology and regional partnerships, we’re making it easier for residents to find the help they need to stay safe,” said Amy St. Peter, MAG Communi-

ty Initiatives Director.

Residents can use the MAG’s interactive Heat Relief Map to find the nearest cooling center or hydration site. Live operators with 211 Arizona are also available to assist callers in English or Spanish from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

“Heat deaths are preventable,” said Dr. Nick Staab, Chief Medical Officer for MCDPH. “Last year’s decline in heat-related deaths shows that coordinated, community-based efforts

work. But the danger of extreme heat remains very real, particularly for people without stable housing, older adults, and people who use substances.”

In 2025, MCDPH will continue working with cities including Phoenix, Glendale, Chandler, Mesa, and Tempe to support and expand heat relief services. These include extended hours for cooling centers and partnerships with community-based organizations.

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FROM THE COVER

Mosquitoes

• From page 1

spect water features, stormwater scuppers, splash pads, and landscaping to make sure nothing is collecting or pooling in ways it shouldn't."

While many people think of mosquito control as a public health issue handled behind the scenes, both Figueroa and county officials say it's a shared responsibility that involves neighborhoods, backyards, and local parks just as much as labs and fogging trucks.

Across Maricopa County, the Vector Control Division within Environmental Services runs one of the largest mosquito surveillance programs in the Southwest. With more than 850 mosquito traps deployed each week, the team is able to monitor both historically problematic areas and locations where new complaints arise.

"It always starts to pick up about this time of year, because you have people that have flood irrigation, and they have areas in different parts of the county with more standing water, even without storms," said John Townsend, Vector Control Division manager.

"Mosquitoes need to have standing water to go through their life cycle," Townsend said. "If you have a good rain and lots of standing water, mosquito activity tends to pick up. If it's not as wet, especially in the summer, you don't get the mosquito activity that you normally do."

So far this year, 16 mosquito samples in Maricopa County have tested positive for West Nile virus and 10 for St. Louis encephalitis. While those numbers are relatively low compared with more severe seasons, Townsend said they serve as an important early warning. The county conducts year-round surveillance and mitigation and uses its lab to test for viruses in *Culex* and *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. The former are more active at night and linked to West Nile and St. Louis encephalitis. The



Maricopa County Vector Control puts up 850 traps each week to collect data on mosquitoes. (Submitted photo/ Maricopa County Vector Control)

latter, recognizable by their daytime activity and low-to-the-ground biting, can potentially carry diseases like dengue, Zika, and chikungunya, though such viruses remain rare in Arizona.

When mosquito samples test positive for virus activity, the county uses data to schedule nighttime fogging in specific neighborhoods. Traps also help the county decide where to increase monitoring or where to inspect for hidden sources of standing water.

"Depending on where we start to see positive (test results), it kind of lets us know we've got pockets (of active viruses) in certain areas of the county where we've got mosquito activity," Townsend said. "Whenever we get positives, then we'll set those areas up for a treatment."

In Goodyear, Figueroa's team not only keeps parks clean and attractive,

they also work behind the scenes to prevent public spaces from becoming mosquito-friendly environments. That includes daily inspections of splash pads, twice-daily water testing, and regular upkeep of landscaping and irrigation systems so pooling water does not attract mosquitoes.

"We use a web-based irrigation program that helps us monitor for leaks and adjust watering based on weather," Figueroa said. "If it's rained, or if the air is cooler, it reduces run times automatically. And if something malfunctions, it alerts staff so they can shut it down before it causes water to pool."

Even small details, like children's toys left in shaded grass or clogged scuppers after a storm, can create opportunities for mosquitoes to breed. That's why Goodyear crews are trained to look for subtle changes and respond quickly.

"Mosquito season is something we all talk about going into monsoon season," Figueroa said. "And we make sure it stays on everyone's mind."

Maricopa County vector control states mosquito safety control can start at home. Many of the common mosquito breeding sites are found in backyards: bird baths, decorative ponds, flower pots, trash can lids, and even forgotten pet bowls.

"Most of the time when you're getting bit, the mosquitoes are actually coming from your backyard or very close," Townsend said.

To help reduce mosquito activity, the county promotes the "4 Rs":

- Repel: Use EPA-registered insect repellent when outdoors, especially at dawn or dusk.
- Remove: Eliminate any standing water.
- Repair: Fix broken screens, irrigation leaks, and drainage issues.
- Remind: Share prevention tips with the community.

"We never know how many people we actually help," Townsend said. "We

don't have a meter that says, 'Today, 50 people didn't get sick from West Nile.' We just know that the work we do helps protect the citizens of Maricopa County."

While most mosquito bites are harmless and cause only mild skin irritation, they are still the primary way diseases like West Nile virus spread. According to the Center for Disease Control, not everyone infected will show symptoms, but those who do may experience fatigue, fever, or in rare cases, neurological complications.

Fortunately, serious outcomes remain uncommon. In 2024, Maricopa County recorded 21 human cases of West Nile virus. Experts say the risk is manageable, especially when surveillance and community prevention efforts work together.

Symptoms of infected bites can include warmth, redness, and swelling. Infections can happen if a bite is scratched excessively and becomes open to bacteria. The CDC advises washing bites with soap and water, applying anti-itch cream, and avoiding scratching to reduce the risk of infection.

As monsoon rains begin to arrive in July and August, both city and county staff will stay active in the field clearing drainage, testing water, and tracking mosquito population trends. City park crews work seven days a week, from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m., maintaining facilities and responding to issues quickly. Monthly park audits help ensure conditions remain safe and clean, and water systems are closely tracked for anomalies.

"Public health has to be factored into just about everything we do," Figueroa said. "Parks are there for the general use and pleasure of our community, so that's always at the forefront: whether it's clean restrooms, safe playgrounds, level sports fields or mosquito free splash pads."

Visit maricopa.gov for information on mosquito prevention, trap locations, or to report mosquito activity.

Goodyear survey shows resident satisfaction

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A recent community survey shows strong satisfaction among Goodyear residents in areas such as quality of life, governance and economic vitality.

The results also identify areas where residents would like to see additional focus, particularly in mobility, education and community design.

The 2025 Community Survey was conducted by the National Research Center at Polco using the National Community Survey, a tool designed for local governments that allows Goodyear to compare results with more than 500 communities across the country.

This year's survey was administered to a random sample of households and generated 415 responses. Online open participation responses were also collected and weighted to reflect the city's demographics, though those responses are reported separately.



Goodyear citizens give their opinions on the livability of the city. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

When asked about the importance of focus areas for the next two years, respondents most frequently identified safety and utilities (both at 93%), followed by the economy (91%), the natural environment (88%) and community design (87%).

Positive ratings for quality of life

About 90% of residents rated Goodyear as a good or excellent place to live and expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of life. Nearly as many

said they would recommend the city to others (89%) and expected to remain in Goodyear for the next five years (88%).

Confidence in city governance rose from 60% in 2023 to 70% in 2025. The percentage of respondents who said the city acts in the best interest of the community increased from 58% to 71%. Ratings for treating residents with respect (79%) and treating all residents fairly (78%) also exceeded national averages.

"The resident confidence in the

quality of life and leadership are significant marks," said Councilmember Laura Kaino. "I think this is really telling, (there was a comment made) about cities with growing pains (being) in development, and I think that that is where we are."

Economic ratings trend upward

Respondents gave improved ratings for several aspects of the local economy:

- Quality of business and service establishments increased from 65% to 71%.
- Goodyear as a place to visit rose from 59% to 65%.
- Variety of business and service establishments went from 50% to 60%.
- Vibrancy of the downtown and commercial area increased from 40% to 58%.

Goodyear was also rated favorably as a place to retire (86%) and raise children (87%).

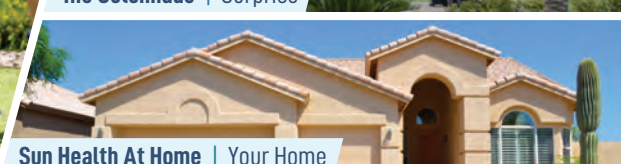
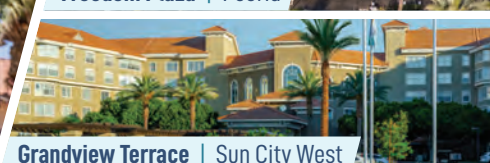
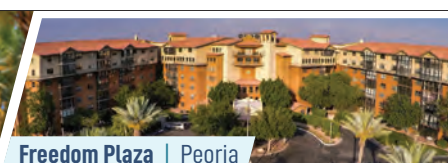


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BUSINESS



\$128.2M sale of Litchfield Park industrial building reflects growth in Southwest Valley. (Submitted photo/Joshua Deal)

Sale of Litchfield Park industrial building reflects growth in Southwest Valley

A newly built industrial facility in Litchfield Park has sold for \$128.2 million, part of ongoing industrial growth in the Southwest Valley.

The Sarival Logistics Center, located at 6390 North Sarival Avenue, spans 1,156,860 square feet and is fully leased to Logistics Plus, Inc., a global provider of transportation and supply chain services.

The buyer, EQT Real Estate, is a global investment manager. The seller, a real estate investment firm focused on industrial development, completed construction on the building in 2022 after acquiring the site in 2020.

Cushman & Wakefield arranged the sale and represented the seller. The site is part of a 75-acre property previously brokered by the firm.

“Sarival Logistics Center is a top-tier industrial asset in one of the most active logistics corridors in the Southwest, right along Loop 303,” stated Andy Markham, executive vice chair at Cushman & Wakefield. “It pairs high-end design with excellent freeway access, making it a great fit for regional and national distribution. EQT Real Estate is picking up a strong, stabilized facility that’s set up for long-term success.”

Located near the intersection of Loop 303 and West Bethany Home Road, the building is south of Luke Air Force Base and about 25 miles west of downtown Phoenix. It has direct access to Loop 303 and is close to Interstate 10 and regional freight routes.

“This transaction is a clear example of the seamless collaboration and deep expertise between Cushman & Wakefield’s Capital Markets and Leasing teams,” stated Molly Hunt, director at Cushman & Wakefield. “Our integrated approach consistently drives successful outcomes for clients at every stage of the property lifecycle—from acquisition and development to lease-up and final disposition.”

The Southwest Valley continues to see increased demand for industrial space. According to Cushman & Wakefield’s first-quarter 2025 report, the submarket recorded 1.9 million square feet of leasing activity and more than 930,000 square feet of positive net absorption, leading all Phoenix-area submarkets in both categories. In 2024, the region accounted for over 12.8 million square feet of industrial occupancy growth, or 58% of the metro area’s total.

Lincoln completes first phase of Goodyear AirPark

Lincoln Property Co. and Harvard Investments have completed the first phase of Goodyear AirPark, a 1.6 million-square-foot industrial complex in the southwest Valley.

The six-building development is part of a larger 565-acre master plan expected to include approximately 7 million square feet of industrial space at full build-out.

Located near Estrella Parkway and MC 85, Phase I includes buildings ranging from 81,000 to 775,000 square feet. Each building is designed for mid- to large-scale industrial use, with up to 40-foot clear heights, a total of 327 dock-high and 28 drive-in doors, and secured parking for cars and trailers.

The site includes full utilities infrastructure and is zoned for industrial and commercial use.

The development is between Estrella Mountain Ranch, Phoe-



Lincoln completes first phase of Goodyear AirPark and begins its development on a retail expansion. (Submitted photo/Stacey Hershauer)

nix-Goodyear Airport, and the Goodyear Civic Square, with proximity to the future Tres Rios Freeway/State Route 30.

The companies also announced the launch of Estrella Gateway, the retail component of the Goodyear AirPark campus. The retail section

will span 63 acres and is expected to include up to 15 pads for commercial tenants. Construction will begin with a QuikTrip Travel Center on 5 acres at the southwest corner of Estrella Parkway and MC 85. Construction is expected to start in fourth-quarter 2025.

Developers say Estrella Gateway is intended to serve both employees at the AirPark and the approximately 440,000 residents living within a 10-mile radius. Access to the site is provided via MC 85 and, eventually, State Route 30.

“Goodyear AirPark adds critical industrial inventory to one of the Valley’s fastest-growing submarkets,” said Lincoln Executive Vice President John Orsak in a statement.

Lincoln describes the project as suitable for a range of industries, including logistics, manufacturing, and data centers.

The buildings offer flexible space, with some divisible to as small as 20,000 square feet.

Goodyear AirPark is located three miles south of Interstate 10 and near industrial facilities operated by companies including Microsoft, Amazon, Boeing, Walmart, UPS and others.

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Reopened after a remodel featuring facility upgrades, new amenities, and a new community mural. 14200 W. Indian School Road, Goodyear, AZ
- 2 Transplant Beer Company**
After nearly seven years in Litchfield Park, TCBC is closing its doors as its lease will not be renewed. 103 W. Honeysuckle Street, Litchfield Park, AZ
- 3 Origin Apartments**
A newly opened upscale apartment community offering amenities like resort-style pools, coworking spaces, and a large dog park. 17445 W. Lower Buckeye Road, Goodyear, AZ 85338
- 4 BoSa Donuts**
Now open in Goodyear, BoSa Donuts celebrated their new location with free donuts. 15633 W. Roosevelt Street, Goodyear, AZ
- 5 The Breakaway Bar and Grill**
A community-centered bar and grill with a full menu, weekly live music, and sports on TV, designed as a gathering space for all. 633 Estrella Parkway, Goodyear, AZ 85338
- 6 Slim Chickens**
Fast-casual restaurant chain Slim Chickens opened June 16 in Goodyear, continuing the brand's expansion in Arizona. 14765 W. McDowell Road, Goodyear, AZ 85395

 LITCHFIELD PARK/GOODYEAR
INDEPENDENT
Celebrating & Connecting Our Communities

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IN BRIEF

Mission BBQ plans for new Goodyear location

Mission BBQ, a national restaurant chain known for its patriotic theme and support for military and first responders, will open a new location in Goodyear, city officials announced.

Founded in 2011, on the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Mission BBQ describes its mission as honoring those who serve in the armed forces, law enforcement and emergency services. The company currently has Arizona locations in Paradise Valley and Surprise.

The Goodyear Economic Development team shared news of the restaurant's expansion to the city, noting it as part of Goodyear's growing dining landscape.

Mission BBQ was founded by two friends who say they were in-



The Goodyear Economic Development team announced MISSION BBQ will be coming to Goodyear. (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

spired by a shared passion for barbecue and a desire to run a business centered on purpose. The restaurant's dining rooms are decorated with memorabilia and tributes to veterans and first responders, many of which have been donated by ser-

vice members and their families.

Mission BBQ hosts a daily lunchtime salute to the American flag at each of its locations.

An opening date for the Goodyear restaurant has not yet been announced.

Goodyear Walmart reopens after remodel

The Walmart Neighborhood Market at 14200 W. Indian School Road will reopen Friday, June 6, following a remodel that includes facility upgrades, new features and a community mural.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony is scheduled for 8 a.m., with a community event to follow.

As part of the reopening, Walmart will present \$4,000 in grants to four local nonprofit organizations: All Cancers Matter Strong Together, Gervonni Cares Inc., Benevilla and

Sounds of Autism. Each organization will receive \$1,000.

Store upgrades include a new pharmacy with a consultation room, double drive-thru pharmacy lanes, a new grocery pickup area with expanded parking, updated restrooms, expanded refrigerated pet food options, new LED lighting, signage and display fixtures, exterior landscaping improvements and zero-emission refrigeration units.

The remodel also includes the installation of a community-themed mural.

Store Manager Christopher Corbin said the updates are intended to improve services and support ongoing partnerships with local organizations.

The Goodyear location first opened in 2013 and is one of several Walmart Neighborhood Markets in the West Valley.

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THINGS TO DO

IN BRIEF

JULY 17

Zelda Game Bus

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Georgia T. Lord Library, Programming Room, 1900 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

10 a.m. – Noon

JULY 17

P.W. Litchfield Heritage Lecture: The History and Mystery of the Gila River

Christine Reid will explore the Gila River's geological and human history, from dinosaurs to desert pioneers.

Goodyear Council Chambers, City Hall at GSQ, 1900 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

10 –11 a.m.

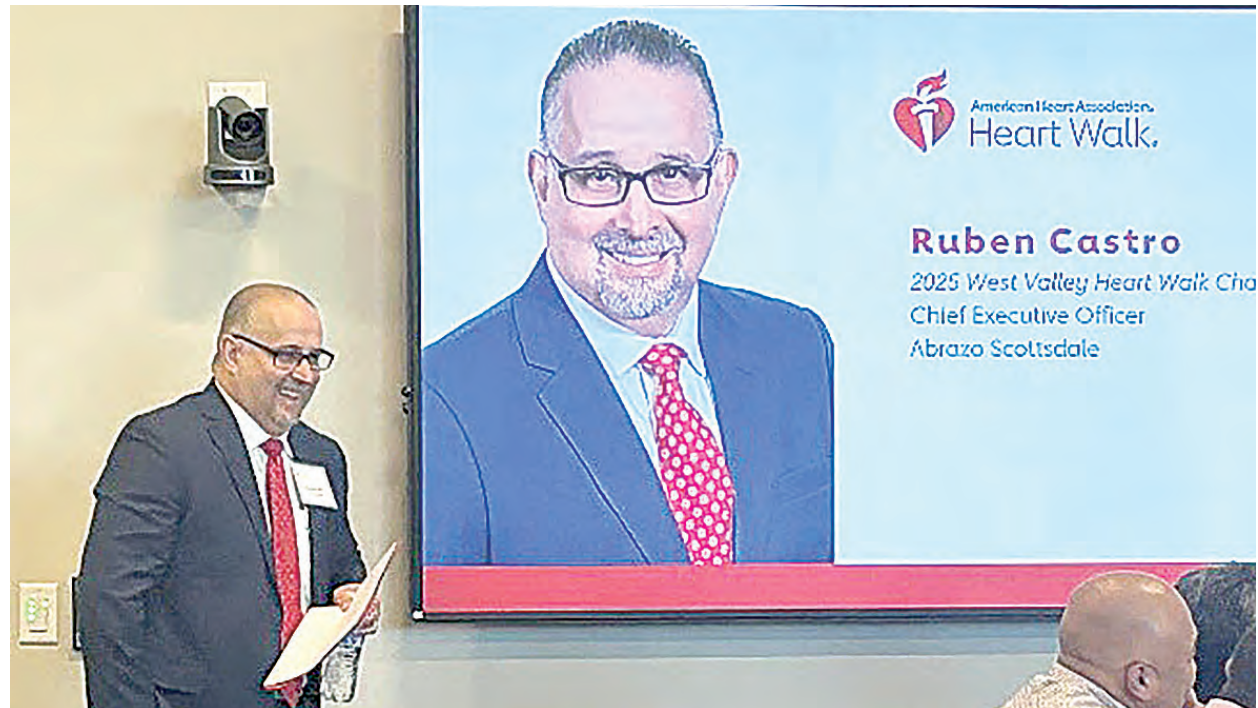
JULY 21

STEAM Labs: Lunar Calendars

Participants will learn about moon phases and create their own lunar calendars in a hands-on science lab.

Georgia T. Lord Library, Programming Room, 1900 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

4–5:30 p.m.



Ruben Castro leads the 2025 Heart Walk in Goodyear. (Submitted photo/ Abrazo Health)

Goodyear to host 2025 West Valley Heart Walk

The American Heart Association announced it's annual West Valley Heart Walk will return to Goodyear this fall, with a new chair at the helm and a renewed focus on CPR education.

Ruben Castro, CEO of Abrazo Scottsdale Campus, will lead the 2025 campaign as chair, working with business and community leaders across the West Valley to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease and promote lifesaving skills.

The walk, scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 15, at Goodyear Civic Square, is expected to draw nearly 8,000 participants. It is part of the American Heart Association's year-round fundraising and education initiative and is locally presented by Abrazo Health, with Sun Health as

the Live Fierce Take Action sponsor.

"What motivates me most is the opportunity to bring people together around a cause that matters to every single one of us — our heart health," said Castro. "As chair, I'm excited to help expand our reach, engage more organizations, and amplify the importance of prevention. By emphasizing CPR education through this year's campaign, we're empowering people to make a difference and step up if a cardiac emergency occurs."

Organizers say CPR training is a central component of this year's Heart Walk effort. According to the American Heart Association, nine out of 10 people who suffer cardiac arrest outside of a hospital die, but immediate CPR can double or even

triple survival chances.

"The West Valley Heart Walk gives us an opportunity to address a critical issue in our community," said Trista Loops, chair of the American Heart Association Greater Phoenix Board of Directors and chief financial officer of Arizona Complete Health. "Cardiac arrest can strike anyone, anywhere. Through the Heart Walk, we are raising awareness and enhancing CPR training."

Companies participating in the Goodyear event will contribute to the American Heart Association's national "Nation of Lifesavers" initiative, which aims to double cardiac arrest survival rates by 2030.

For more information or to register, visit www.westvalleyheartwalk.org.

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WVAC exhibit showcases heat-driven creativity as summer starts

The West Valley Arts Council, a nonprofit headquartered in Surprise and serving communities across the West Valley, including Goodyear, is turning up the temperature with its latest Arts HQ Gallery exhibit, “Art Under Fire.”

The show features 90 works by more than 30 Arizona artists, all created using heat-based processes.

Curated by Gallery Director Daisy Brady, the exhibit highlights a variety of mediums, including ceramics, fused glass, encaustic wax, Lichtenberg fractal burns, and welded sculptures.

“Appropriately timed for the Arizona summer, ‘Art Under Fire’ is an ironic, clever exhibit for those seeking to escape the heat,” said Brady. “The exhibit will feature artwork baked in a kiln, melted, welded, torched or electrified.”

One featured artist is Bill Battaglia of Sun City, whose work includes sculptures formed by pouring molten glass and copper into sand.

The exhibit includes both the finished pieces and a video demonstrating his process.

The front of the gallery will host an exposition of ceramic work by Dr. Robert Benson, a local potter and retired educator with a 25-year career in Arizona public schools. His contributions include ceramic vessels and sculptural forms created using traditional techniques and alternative firing methods such as raku, sager and pit firing.

“As an artist and former teacher, I strive to make our exhibits unique,

fun and educational,” Brady said. “I wanted to introduce examples of art techniques visitors may have never seen and present artists who had the courage to experiment with these interesting artforms.”

An opening reception will be held Friday, June 27, from 5 to 7 p.m. Admission is free, and attendees will have the opportunity to meet featured artists.

“We have featured ceramicists and glass artists in this exhibit with decades of experience,” Brady said. “Our receptions not only celebrate the artwork, but also provide opportunities for emerging artists, patrons and students to meet professional artists from their own community.”

“Art Under Fire” runs through July 31 at the Arts HQ Gallery, located at 16126 N. Civic Center Plaza, Suite 102, in Surprise. The gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free, with donations encouraged.

Most of the artwork is available for purchase, and the gallery’s gift shop offers jewelry, pottery, prints and other keepsakes.

The Arts HQ Gallery is operated by the West Valley Arts Council, which has supported arts programming in cities like Goodyear, Peoria and Avondale since 1969.

The council offers youth arts initiatives, public art installations and exhibition opportunities for both emerging and professional artists.

Visit WestValleyArts.org for more information.

Calligrapher to present at Goodyear's July Hot Coffee Art Lecture

The city of Goodyear's Arts and Culture Commission will host professional calligrapher Renee McAdam for its upcoming Hot Coffee Art Lecture, scheduled for Tuesday, July 29, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Goodyear City Hall, 1900 N. Civic Square.

McAdam will present "More Than Words: Traditional Calligraphy in Modern Times," a talk exploring how traditional calligraphy continues to find relevance in the digital age. Her presentation will include photographs of recent commissioned projects and insight into her process, preferred scripts and client trends.

She will also address common misconceptions about the art form, highlighting the differences between handwriting and calligraphy and discussing why lettering arts remain in practice today.



Renee McAdam presents on traditional calligraphy in modern times at a Hot Coffee Art Lecture (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

McAdam has studied calligraphy for nearly 30 years, beginning with her first class as a child. In adulthood, she sought instruction from experienced calligraphers across

the country and developed skills in broad edge calligraphy, pointed pen work, brush lettering, glass engraving and hand-drawn lettering. She joined the Calligraphic Society

of Arizona in 2017 and currently serves as the guild's web chair.

In addition to client work, McAdam offers in-person workshops and calligraphy classes throughout the year. Her instruction covers topics such as Copperplate script, Italianic lettering, hand-drawn typography and historic writing styles like Spencerian script.

The Hot Coffee Art Lecture Series is a free, monthly program organized by the city's Arts and Culture Commission. Each lecture features a guest speaker from the visual or performing arts, and aims to provide residents with informal learning opportunities tied to creative practice and cultural expression.

Admission is free and open to the public. The July 29 lecture will be held in the Canyon Trails Training Room inside City Hall at Goodyear Civic Square.

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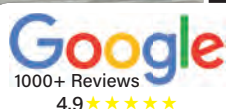
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SPORTS



Goodyear High School football players and coaches pose in team polo shirts June 15 during their first visit to the new campus on the southwest corner of the intersection of Interstate 10 and Loop 303. (Courtesy Pat Parnell)

Goodyear High football builds program with details in mind

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Everything is falling into place for Goodyear High School and its signature football program.

The initial phases of the nearly \$98 million campus on 55 acres on the southwest corner of the intersection of Cotton Lane and Van Buren Street are coming into focus.

Freshmen will start class at the school Aug. 5 and learn about its academy model of a college-like course focus.

Administration even had a little luck on their side during the early months of construction on the former site of Phoenix Trotting Park.

"This used to be the old horse track. Where we are (the football stadium) is the practice facility. It was always a really bad location for them. It's funny how things come full circle," Principal Jason Linn said. "They found an old horseshoe. So we're going to put a plaque on the wall and we're going to mount that shoe on it. We found out that the first horse to win a race on this track was called Burrsville. We're going to call it Burrsville's shoe. It's kind of

like Howard's Rock at Clemson."

Agua Fria Union High School District hired Linn as Goodyear High principal in April 2023. At the time he was the Desert Edge athletic director, and he will reprise that role for the first year of two at the new school.

He was an assistant football coach for a decade at Desert Edge, including on the school's first state title team in 2015. Linn served as the Scorpions' strength and conditioning coach, and can get in the weeds about building a program in the marquee sport.

He hired Pat Parnell as the school's founding football coach in early December. It is Parnell's first head coaching job, though he served as interim head coach at Eastlake High School in Sammamish, Wash. in 2012.

"I think it's kind of a once in a lifetime deal," Parnell said. "I told my staff and players to soak this up."

That special feeling includes the Goodyear High School football stadium, which features a second, smaller artificial turf field just on the other side of the fence. It will be a place for young-

• See **Football** on page 19

Football

• From page 18

er kids to throw the ball around during the games and for athletes to warm up before competition.

While the Mavericks start play this fall with only a freshman team, 11 coaches are already on staff.

The program set up a feeder youth team in the Junior Mavs. Parnell is making connections to local sponsors to support the program.

“There’s no reason why we can’t, in a short period of time, be one of the premier programs in the state,” Parnell said.

A place to call home

Parnell arrived in the Valley with his wife, Kim, and children and without a coaching job. He and his family were tired of the instability of life as a college assistant coach — which lured Parnell out of coaching at high schools in Washington to Jacksonville and then

Davis, Calif.

Rather than moving back to Washington, the Parnell family picked a state that emphasizes high school football. He landed at Canyon View High School in the Agua Fria district last fall, coaching the defensive line.

“The energy is the big piece. His passion for kids to strive for greatness in everything they do — failure is not an option for him. We’re going to have him be our student support specialist. He’s going to be a champion for all kids,” Linn said.

He said Parnell cares about kids beyond their play and thinks outside the box, importing some ideas for the program building from his college experience.

Program building gets down to details like a four-year plan for what jerseys the Mavericks will wear each step of the way.

Goodyear has 38-40 incoming freshmen who have been part of the program since February. The Mavericks met for Friday night camps in February and

March and spring ball in April. A summer of 7-on-7 and big man competitions just wrapped.

“The biggest thing is they are high effort players and extremely coachable,” Parnell said.

Wednesday, Aug. 27 is not only the football team’s first game and first home game — against the Canyon View freshmen. As of now it is the first time any Goodyear Mavericks team will wear the green and blue.

“A football program that’s going well is pretty indicative of how the school’s going,” Linn said. “It generates the funds to be able to pay the referees for the rest of the year. I think it’s a great opportunity for the football kids. Whether they like it or not, they’re going to be viewed as leaders on this campus.”

Teaming up on a staff

Kawika Henderson is the school’s strength and conditioning coach and has worked closely with incoming football freshmen

Running backs coach Dan Poffin-

barger coached with Parnell at Canyon View. Parnell coached new inside linebackers coach David Hernandez at Eastlake in 2011.

Defensive line coach Lionell Wiggins played for the Jacksonville Sharks of the Indoor Football League in 2024.

“The people that are supposed to be there are showing up,” Parnell said.

Parnell believes in analytics and hired two coaches for analytics and quality control.

Linn’s ties helped bring in offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Trevor Chaco, the line coach at Desert Edge and defensive coordinator at St. Mary’s Catholic. Wide receivers coach Colin Poe worked alongside Linn on the Desert Edge staff.

“It’s a lot harder than people think to hire a football staff with only freshman. I don’t know if some people think it’s a downgrade. You look for the right person to start the program,” Linn said.

Parnell and Linn never worked together until December but have found a unity of purpose.

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EDUCATION



The Liberty Elementary School District Governing Board seeks to fill the vacant superintendent position. (Submitted photo/Liberty Elementary School District)

Liberty launches search for interim superintendent

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Liberty Elementary School District Governing Board announced it is seeking an interim superintendent, launching a search process with support from the Arizona School Administrators organization as the district continues efforts to find long-term leadership.

The board plans to announce the appointment by July 14. The selected candidate will serve until June 30, 2026, or earlier, based on the negotiated contract.

The announcement comes after Superintendent Cort Monroe was placed on administrative leave. The board held a special meeting to discuss next steps and the hiring timeline.

During the meeting, ASA consultant Dr. Mark Joraanstad outlined a proposed four-week process for appointing an interim leader. According to Joraanstad, while a permanent superintendent search could take several months, the interim process can move quickly.

"If we're going to do an interim, we need to get moving," Joraanstad said.

Board President Michael Todd said the estimated cost for a permanent superintendent search is about \$8,000, but the exact cost for the interim hiring process is still being finalized. The board did not vote on a final agreement

but indicated it would move forward with ASA once an updated plan is reviewed.

Board members discussed keeping the process open for the interim superintendent to apply for the permanent role.

"I think it would be unfortunate if we hired an interim and we all agreed that person was a great fit but didn't allow them to apply for the permanent position," said board member Kellie Zimmerman. "I think it's important to leave that open-ended."

Board member Kris Kenyon raised concerns about temporary hires.

"I've seen situations where short-term hires become disconnected because they know their role is temporary," Kenyon said.

Joraanstad noted some retired superintendents have already expressed interest in serving in interim roles lasting six to nine months.

The board is seeking "an experienced leader with lofty standards, personal integrity, and good moral character," according to the official posting. Ideal candidates should be energetic education professionals with backgrounds in teaching and leadership, a commitment to academic excellence, and a focus on improving student outcomes and op-

• See **Search** on page 21

Search

• From page 20

portunities.

Required qualifications include successful experience as a superintendent, at least five years of public school teaching, and three years as a principal or building-level administrator. Candidates must also hold a master's degree and either possess or be able to obtain an Arizona superintendent certificate. A doctorate is preferred.

The salary range is \$160,000 to \$185,000, depending on experience, credentials, and contract length. The district also offers a competitive benefits package.

Finalists will be invited to the district for in-person interviews at their own expense. The names of interviewees will be made public at the screening meeting.

Visit liberty25.org for information.

West-MEC seeks students for high-demand career programs

Western Maricopa Education Center (West-MEC), a public school district focused on career and technical education, is accepting new students for its high-opportunity programs for the 2025-26 school year.

Openings are available at all four of West-MEC's central campuses in Glendale, Phoenix, Surprise and Buckeye, as well as the Career Academy at the Agua Fria Campus in Avondale. The programs are designed to train students in industries with high employer demand but limited skilled labor supply.

Among the offerings is the Electrical Trade Specialty program, which introduces students to key elements

IN BRIEF

of electrical systems, including interpreting construction drawings, maintaining circuits, and installing lighting and motor systems. Students also receive job-readiness training through mock interviews and résumé workshops. Upon completing the one-year program, students may earn certifications such as OSHA-10 General and pursue entry-level roles like electrician apprentice or journeyman electrician.

The Career Academy at the Agua Fria Campus, located at 920 N. Dysart Road in Avondale, also offers:

- Air Conditioning Technology, which covers heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems;

- Medium and Heavy Diesel Technology, focused on maintaining and repairing diesel engines

used in commercial and industrial equipment.

- Welding, a two-year program that teaches fundamental skills in metalworking and industrial fabrication.

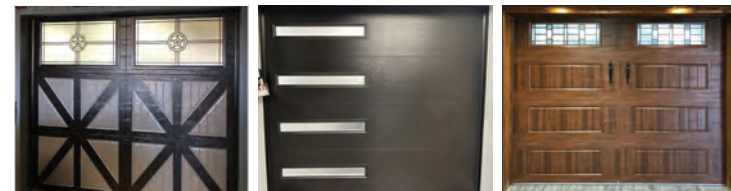
All West-MEC programs provide accommodations for high school students with IEPs or 504 plans and include access to industry credential exams at no additional cost.

West-MEC serves more than 45,000 students from 49 high schools across 3,800 square miles of northern and western Maricopa County. The district also offers adult education programs and hands-on career training intended to foster workforce readiness and economic independence.

For more information about program availability, visit west-mec.edu.

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The Agua Fria Food & Clothing Bank hosts its annual Backpacks & More program. (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

Agua Fria Food Bank's backpack drive is set to serve record number of students

The Agua Fria Food & Clothing Bank is preparing to serve a record 868 students through its annual Backpacks & More program, which provides free school uniforms, sneakers, backpacks, and supplies to children in need.

The event, set for Saturday, July 26 at Palm Valley Church at 431 N Litchfield Road in Goodyear, supports families across Goodyear, Avondale, Litchfield Park, Tolleson, and Cashion. It is hosted in partnership with the Salvation Army, AZ Community Impact, Avondale Family Resource Center, and local volunteers.

Each pre-registered student in preschool through eighth grade will receive two new uniforms, khaki shorts and polo shirts, a pair of sneakers and socks, and a backpack filled with school supplies all at no cost to their families.

Organizers stated the goal is to

help students start the school year with confidence and the tools they need to succeed.

The cost to provide for one student is \$50, and the food bank is seeking donations and sponsorships to help meet the increased demand.

The program also relies on volunteer support. More than 100 volunteers are needed to help distribute supplies and food boxes, guide families, and manage logistics.

Founded as a faith-based nonprofit, Agua Fria Food & Clothing Bank serves approximately 50,000 people annually, providing emergency food, clothing, and support services. The organization notes that nearly 2 million Arizonans experience food insecurity each year, and one in three children in the state live in poverty.

For more information about donating, volunteering, or getting involved, visit afcb.org.

NEIGHBORS

IN BRIEF



Goodyear veteran is given a payment vehicle by valley Dodge dealership. (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

Veteran to receive payment-free vehicle in honor of U.S. Army's 250th Birthday

Former U.S. Army Specialist and Goodyear resident Andrew Coughlan will be presented with a payment-free vehicle as part of a veteran support program recognizing

• See **Veteran** on page 24

CD7 hosts a special primary election

Tuesday, July 15 is the final day for Arizonans to vote in the upcoming special primary election for Congressional District 7.

The election will fill the seat vacated by Rep. Raúl Grijalva, the long-time Democratic congressman who died in March from complications related to cancer treatment. Voters in southern and western Arizona, including parts of Tucson, Yuma, Nogales, Goodyear, Avondale, and areas near Litchfield Park, will choose candidates to advance to the Sept. 23 general election.

A general election debate is scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 26.

Primary debates were held, offering voters a first look at the full slate of candidates. The debates covered



CD7 hosts a special primary election held on July 15. (Submitted photo/Metro Creative Connection)

topics of immigration, border security, social issues like medicaid and affordability, water and foreign and economic policy.

The Republican Primary Debate took place Sunday, June 9, and included Daniel Francis Butierrez Sr.,

Jorge Rivas and Jimmy Rodriguez

The Democratic Primary Debate was held Monday, June 10, featuring Deja Foxx, Adelita Grijalva, Patrick Harris Sr., Daniel Hernandez and Jose Malvido Jr.

The winners of each party's primary will appear on the Sept. 23 general election ballot.

Voters can confirm registration status, locate voting sites, and access personalized voter information at BeBallotReady.Vote. To register, individuals must be U.S. citizens, Arizona residents, at least 18 years old by Election Day, and provide proof of residency.

Visit elections.maricopa.gov for more information and yourvalley.net for ongoing election coverage.

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Black entrepreneurs receive up to \$10,000 in grants at We Rise Demo Day

Six Black entrepreneurs from across Arizona pitched their business ideas to a panel of judges during Local First Arizona's annual We Rise Demo Day, held June 18 at 850 PBC in downtown Phoenix.

The top award, a \$10,000 Arizona Financial Kelvin Smith Small Business Grant, was given to Agnes Adams of Yond Institute of Learning in Goodyear. The grant is named in honor of Kelvin Smith, a longtime small business advocate who served on Arizona Financial's board since 1997.

The event followed a Shark Tank-style format, featuring presentations from We Rise Business Accelerator graduates. First, second, and third-place winners received grant funding to support the next phase of their growth:

- First Place: Agnes Adams of Yond Institute of Learning, based in Goodyear.
- Second Place: Michelle Fort of Holy Hands Painters, based in Glendale.
- Third Place: Darlene Little of Small World Trade and Travel, based in Phoenix.

The Yond Institute of Learning is a vocational school with a mission to provide students with high-quality training programs in the healthcare field. The school offers flexible sched-



Goodyear business owner receives \$10,000 grant. (Submitted photo/ Brian O'Malley)

uling options, affordable tuition and a supportive learning environment.

"Demo Day is one of our most anticipated events each year — it's a chance for our graduates to shine and take their businesses to the next level," said Carmen Attikossie, senior small business development manager at Local First Arizona. "We're so grateful for the continued support of Arizona Financial and Growth Partners who not only show up on Demo Day but guide our participants throughout the program."

The We Rise Business Accelerator, launched by Local First Arizona in 2021, is a six-month program aimed at equipping Black entrepreneurs in Arizona with practical business skills. Participants receive classroom instruction and mentorship from experienced Black business owners.

Since the program's inception, Arizona Financial Credit Union has supported We Rise through financial sponsorship and by offering training on managing business finances.

"Our team is honored to support the We Rise program," said Amy Hysell, president and CEO of Arizona Financial. "Small businesses are the backbone of our community. Seeing the energy, passion, and thoughtfulness these entrepreneurs bring to Demo Day is inspiring and while we name a winner, they're all deserving of recognition."

For more information about the We Rise Business Accelerator, visit localfirstaz.com/we-rise. To learn more about Arizona Financial's community partnerships and grant opportunities, visit arizonafinancial.org/community.

Veteran

• From page 23

ing his military service.

The ceremony will take place June 30 at Bill Luke Chrysler Jeep Dodge RAM in Phoenix, in celebration of the U.S. Army's 250th birthday.

The vehicle is being awarded through the Military Warriors Support Foundation's Transportation4Heroes program in partnership with Wells Fargo and the Phoenix-based dealership. The event also marks the 10-year anniversary of the foundation's collaboration with Wells Fargo Auto.

Coughlan enlisted in the Army in 2002 during his senior year of high school following the events of Sept. 11. He served with the 10th Mountain Division and deployed to Iraq from 2003 to 2004, where he sustained injuries that led to his medical retirement in 2006. His commendations include the Army Commendation Medal with Valor Device and the Combat Infantry Badge.

MWSF reports it has awarded more than 200 vehicles to veterans across the country since the Transportation4Heroes program began. Recipients also take part in a financial mentoring program that has helped participants eliminate more than \$29 million in pre-existing debt, according to the nonprofit.

The presentation is scheduled for 11 a.m. at the dealership, located at 2425 W. Camelback Road.



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FROM THE COVER

Camp

• From page 1

cy Services, includes hands-on fire and emergency medical activities, team-building exercises and mentorship from public safety professionals.

Now in its ninth year, the camp continues to grow in both size and impact since its 2015 launch. Participants work side by side with firefighters and paramedics, both men and women, to complete physically and mentally demanding tasks.

Participants climb 100-foot ladders, crawl through dark, enclosed spaces, perform search and rescues, and learn to work around firefighting gear. Daily workouts and skill-building exercises are structured to push students out of their comfort zones and reinforce the value of mental toughness.

Career-focused camps like this one



Camp F.I.R.E.S. provides learning opportunities for Goodyear teens. (Mary Goldmeier/Independent Newsmedia)

play a critical role in helping teens explore professional pathways in a real-world environment. Officials said by providing early exposure to fields like

emergency services, Camp F.I.R.E.S. gives participants a head start in considering future careers, whether or not they ultimately pursue firefighting.

The hands-on structure of the camp demystifies what first responders actually do, giving students the chance to try out high-stakes tasks in a supportive setting.

“We do skills courses in the morning. We put our gear on and exercise to do things that mimic things we do every day at work,” said Meghan Golbach, captain paramedic with the Goodyear Fire Department.

“We want to show them that they’re capable of doing hard things, whether or not they want to be a firefighter in the future.”

According to Golbach, campers often show dramatic personal growth in just a few days.

“We see a difference in them from the first day that they’re here. As the week goes on, we put them through tests, both physical and mental, and they work together as a team and they continue to grow,” she said.

Announcement

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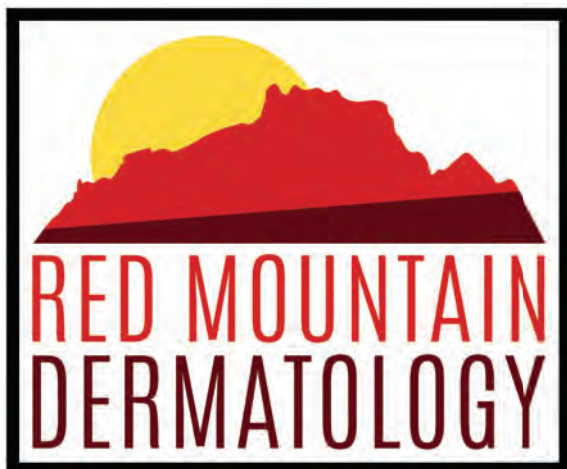


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