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LITCHFIELD PARK/GOODYEAR

INDEPENDENT

Business

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The Phoenix Goodyear Airport and Luke Air Force Base shape West Valley skies. (Submitted photo/Eric Everts)

Litchfield Park issues golf cart safety reminder

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Litchfield Park is reminding residents about golf cart safety as the city continues refining how the popular vehicles fit into its transportation network.

Golf carts are a common sight in the 3.3-square-mile city, where four golf courses sit within city limits and others border nearby neighborhoods. Many residents use carts for errands, school drop-offs and community events.

"We're a golf cart community," said Councilmember Justin James.

Under city rules, carts are allowed on residential streets with posted speed limits under 35 mph. They may use pathways and sidewalks only to connect to these routes or cross higher-speed roads at designated crosswalks or underpasses.

Drivers must have a valid license, yield to pedestrians and cyclists, keep speeds on pathways below 25 miles per hour, remain seated and

By Mary Goldmeier

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For more than eight decades, the West Valley has helped shape the nation's skies. Two landmarks, Phoenix Goodyear Airport and Luke Air Force Base, have carried the region from World War II's heavy steel warbirds to today's cutting-edge fighter

jets, a testament to the enduring role the area has played in both civilian and military flight.

A civilian airport with military roots

Long before Phoenix Goodyear Airport, GYR, began logging hundreds of thousands of takeoffs and

landings each year, it was a hub of naval aviation.

In 1941, as war raged in Europe, the Goodyear Aerospace Corporation offered land to the U.S. Defense Plant Corporation. The U.S. Navy used the site to build aircraft flight

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COMMUNITY NEWS

IN BRIEF

Voting begins for CD7 special election

Early voting is underway for the Tuesday, Sept. 23, special election to fill Arizona's 7th Congressional District seat, left vacant after the death of longtime Rep. Raúl Grijalva. Democrat Adelita Grijalva, a Pima County supervisor and daughter of the late congressman, and Republican Daniel Butierez, a construction business owner, are running to represent the district. The outcome will determine whether Democrats keep a seat they have held for decades or whether Republicans can flip the long-blue district. Ballots should be mailed back by Sept. 16 to ensure they are counted. Election Day is Sept. 23, with polling places open across the district, including Litchfield Park First Baptist Church, 901 E. Plaza Circle, along with sites in Avondale, Tolleson and throughout Legislative District 7.

Check Independent Newsmedia at yourvalley.net for background on debates and continuing elections coverage. More information is available at elections.maricopa.gov.

Goodyear prison hosts workforce program with federal grant

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A \$4 million federal grant will bring a new in-prison workforce development center to Perryville Women's Prison in Goodyear, expanding services for incarcerated women preparing to reenter the community.

Dress for Success Phoenix received the U.S. Department of Labor's Pathway Home 6 Grant to

• See **Grant** on page 7

Gallego discusses economy, housing and energy at West Valley event

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sen. Ruben Gallego addressed the West Valley Regional Chamber expressing concern over a slow-down in the country's economy.

The Democratic senator attributed the issue to federal policies and high interest rates, warning the nation's long-term prosperity is at risk without a shift in strategy.

Speaking at Estrella Mountain Community College, Gallego offered his perspective on several key challenges facing Arizona, including trade, housing, child care, and energy.

• See **Gallego** on page 6



Jodi Tas interviews Sen. Ruben Gallego for an audience of the West Valley Regional Chamber. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

Local officials join statewide leadership program

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Litchfield Park Councilmember Suzanne Allen and Goodyear Vice Mayor Wally Campbell and Councilmember Laura Kaino have been chosen to participate in the inaugural Civic Craft Leadership Program, a new initiative launched by the Arizona League of Cities and Towns.

The year-long, nonpartisan program is designed for elected officials in Arizona municipalities who have already completed the league's Newly Elected Officials Training and are currently in office. The program selects 50 leaders

statewide for each cohort.

"I'm thrilled to be a part of this inaugural cohort and excited to grow and collaborate alongside other leaders across the state," said Councilmember Allen. "I want to lean in on key areas of local governance and use this opportunity to approach public service by doing the work, learning continuously, and showing our community that I'm invested in serving them well."

Participants will engage in monthly

virtual and in-person workshops featuring interactive sessions, expert speakers, and real-world case studies. The program's goal is to help elected officials improve their leadership skills, exchange ideas, and develop solutions to enhance their communities.

"This program will provide valuable insights and resources that will help us continue building a vibrant, forward-thinking community," said Campbell.

• See **Civic** on page 7



Suzanne Allen



Wally Campbell



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Gallego

• From page 4

The forum was brought together local business owners and community leaders to hear the senator's take on issues affecting the state's growth and his steps to change them.

A 'self-inflicted' economic slowdown

Gallego told the audience he's seeing economic indicators of people slowing their investments, a trend he called frustrating and self-inflicted. He pointed to tariffs and unpredictable trade policies as major factors discouraging cross-border business, particularly with Mexico.

"As a senator from a border state, I have to remind my friends from other states... that being a border state is a superpower," Gallego said. "It is something that makes us very, very rich as a state culturally, and the more investment we have on the border, the richer we would be as a country."

He added that his working-class background informs his perspective on policy.

"My mentality is still very much being that kid from South Chicago hustling just to make it," Gallego said, noting his belief in the American Dream and a need to restore confidence among working-class Americans who feel that hard work no longer guarantees a better life.

Housing, child care and energy challenges

Gallego spoke of the lack of affordable housing as one of Arizona's most significant long-term economic threats, stating about 500 people move to the state each day. He said there is a need for rapid action to streamline the process of building multi-family housing.

The senator also highlighted the high cost of child care. Taylor Tasler, Gallego's press secretary, stated Gallego pays \$21,000 annually for child care for his child whom he shares with his ex-wife, Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego.

Even the most affordable child care costs rivals in-state tuition from local universities, Gallego said.

"(The cost of child care) is hurting families. It is a huge, huge burden on them," Galego said.

On the topic of energy, Gallego, a ranking member of a Senate subcommittee on energy, called for the state to expand its nuclear power capacity to keep pace with the growth of industries like semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

"We are lucky that as a state that we have a nuclear power plant here. We need more of them," he said.

Gallego also argued that the state that can ensure stable energy prices will attract the most jobs and lead the country in economic growth.

The ripple effect of inflation

Gallego expressed concern that persistent inflation and high interest rates are creating a ripple effect. He warned if the Federal Reserve continues to keep interest rates high, it will become tougher for Arizonans and people across the country to borrow money for homes and businesses. This, in turn, will further slow investment and economic expansion.

The event was part of the chamber's ongoing effort to connect local businesses with decision-makers. Organizers said such forums give the business community an opportunity to engage with elected officials and promote open dialogue on issues affecting the region.

Visit gallego.senate.gov for more information on Gallego's legislative goals and actions.

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Civic

- From page 4

The Arizona League of Cities and Towns created the program to develop stronger, more connected local government leaders and ensure that Arizona's municipalities are equipped to handle future challenges.

"This program offers a rare opportunity to collaborate with elected officials from across Arizona, share best practices, and bring back innovative solutions that will directly benefit our city now and for years to come," said Councilmember Laura Kaino.

The first cohort met for the first time at the League of Cities and Towns Annual Conference in August.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information.



Laura Kaino

Grant

- From page 4

support its HOPE for Success program and launch the HOPE Center, the nonprofit's first permanent satellite site located inside a correctional facility.

The program provides job readiness training, financial literacy, professional attire, and 12 months of post-release case management. It aims to reduce recidivism and help women reenter the workforce with stability and confidence.

"The work planned at the HOPE Center will have a tremendous impact on the women in our custody and care," stated Ryan Thornell, director of the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry. "Innovative partnerships like this strengthen public safety across Arizona."

At Perryville, more than 3,000 women are currently incarcerated. Participants in the program will complete more than 80 hours of career training

through a secure tablet-based platform developed by R3 Score Technologies and provided by Aventiv Technologies.

"It is a meaningful investment in our mission to help women rebuild their lives and reenter their communities with confidence," stated Tamala McBath, CEO of Dress for Success Phoenix. "Our programs provide a pathway to self-sufficiency through education, employment, and wraparound support that reduces recidivism and creates long-term change."

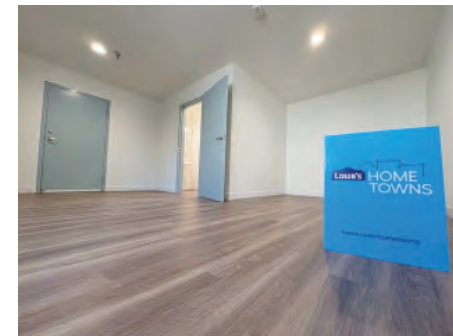
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Phase of New Life Center casita renovations complete

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The first round of casita renovations at New Life Center is complete, made possible through the nonprofit's selection for the Lowe's Hometowns Award.

The Goodyear-based organization, which operates one of the largest standalone domestic violence shelters



New Life Center celebrates the renovation of their domestic violence shelter's casitas. (Submitted photo/New Life Center)

in Arizona, was chosen as one of 100 community-nominated projects nationwide to receive a large-scale renovation through Lowe's Hometowns, the company's five-year, \$100 million community impact initiative.

The completed upgrades include new bathroom fixtures, durable flooring and energy-efficient lighting, transforming the emergency shelter casitas into more welcoming and calming spaces for survivors of domestic violence.

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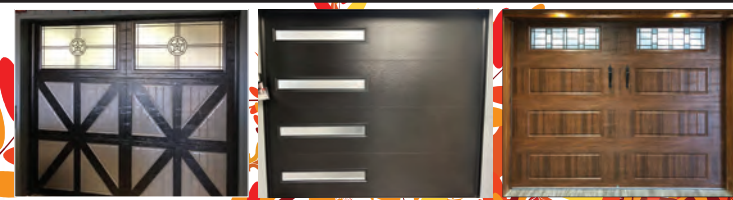
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Aviation

• From page 1

decks and created the Naval Air Facility Litchfield Park to test fly and deliver aircraft.

The construction included a landing field, hangar and runway infrastructure that would serve a variety of military purposes for decades.

When the Korean War began in 1950, the airfield returned to active duty to support military operations. After the conflict, it was again decommissioned. Remaining aircraft were sent to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, and the site was placed on the federal surplus list.

In July 1968, the city of Phoenix purchased the property to serve as an alternate airport to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The site was classified as a general aviation reliever airport, helping keep Sky Harbor's commercial operations running smoothly by accommodating noncommercial flights.

A master plan completed in 1986 called for major upgrades: a new terminal, hangars, support facilities and airfield improvements. Since then, GYR has added a terminal building, T-hangars, ramp space, tie-downs and a maintenance facility.

A modern airport on the rise

Today, GYR is part of the city of Phoenix's three-airport system, alongside Sky Harbor and Phoenix Deer Valley Airport.

"GYR is owned by the City of Phoenix and operated by Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport as part of a system of airports," said Airport Manager Bradley Hagen. "We continue to collaborate and partner with the City of Goodyear ... and we appreciate their support."

Hagen oversees all aspects of the airport's operations, from construction projects to budget planning to coordinating with tenants, the FAA, the Arizona Department of Trans-



The Phoenix Goodyear Airport sees an increase in air traffic. (Submitted photo/Eric Everts)

portation and other stakeholders.

"The average day varies significantly," Hagen said. "Most days I am working with our team and tenants at GYR on the different events taking place at the airport, as well as taking part in meetings with different stakeholders."

The airfield is inspected twice daily, once in daylight and once in darkness to check for debris, damage to markings or lighting, wildlife hazards and other concerns.

"Airport safety and security is our highest priority, and we pay very careful attention to those inspections and reports," Hagen said.

In addition to its local role, GYR is a national player in pilot training. United Airlines operates its own flight school at the airport to help address a nationwide pilot shortage.

That activity has fueled a dramatic increase in air traffic. In 2020, GYR recorded 79,599 operations. By 2024, that number had surged to 212,081, a 166% increase in just four years.

"There are months where GYR is the busiest single-runway airport in the country," Hagen said. In June 2023, it ranked as the nation's busiest

single-runway facility and 11th busiest general aviation airport overall.

Air Force One in the West Valley

For Hagen, one of the most memorable moments came in October 2020, when Air Force One landed at GYR for the first time in the airport's history.

"That was the first time any President has flown into GYR," Hagen said. "That visit in the West Valley was very prominent, and our team and tenants were very proud to support the first Presidential visit with Air Force One."

Hagen said the event underscored GYR's ability to handle a wide variety of aircraft, from small trainers to the Boeing 747 used as Air Force One, thanks to its long, high-quality runway.

Luke Air Force Base

While Goodyear's civilian airport has grown from a naval airfield into a hub for flight training, just a few miles north, Luke Air Force Base has been shaping military aviation for more than 80 years.

Established in the early 1940s,

what was initially known as Luke Field became a key pilot training center. At its height, thousands of pilots trained there in aircrafts.

Over the decades, Luke has transitioned through 12 different types of aircraft, always adapting to the needs of the Air Force.

Today, it's home to the 56th Fighter Wing, the largest fighter wing in the U.S. Air Force, and the F-35 Lightning II training center. The wing also oversees Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field and manages the 1.7 million-acre Barry M. Goldwater Military Training Range.

A global training mission

Rick Griset, a retired Luke Air Force Base historian gave a lecture with the P.W. Litchfield heritage center on Buckeye's Luke Field's legacy. Griset said the transformation reflects both necessity and vision.

"Luke Field has been a cornerstone of military aviation training since World War II, and that mission continues today with the F-35," Griset said.

The base's mission extends beyond the U.S. Air Force. Pilots from allied nations train alongside Americans to enhance interoperability and strengthen global defense partnerships.

"Our role here is to ensure pilots are trained, mission-ready and able to operate in any environment they may face," Griset said. "The base doesn't just serve the U.S. Air Force, we train alongside allied nations to strengthen global security."

While its operational focus is on combat readiness, Luke also works to maintain strong ties with neighboring cities in the West Valley.

"Luke's connection to the West Valley community is strong, and we value the partnerships we've built over the decades," Griset said. "From its origins in 1941 to today's state-



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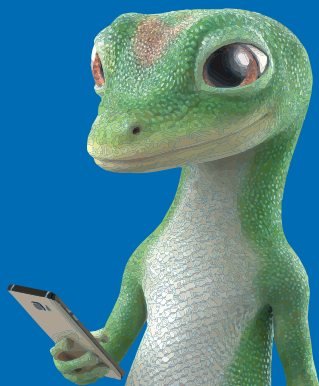
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BUSINESS



Noah and Isaiah Barajas celebrate the opening of the Ivory House's newest location with Avondale Vice Mayor Curtis Nielson. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

Ivory House celebrates ribbon cutting for new storefront

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Ivory House, a Goodyear-founded vintage clothing business started by two brothers with a passion for one-of-a-kind fashion, celebrated the ribbon cutting for its new location this week.

As the ceremony began, last-minute touches were still coming together inside and outside the new Avondale shop. The city-approved sign was finished and installed just minutes before the ribbon cutting, chairs were rearranged, and a chrome bike was rolled into the front window to complete the display.

Owners, and brothers Isaiah and Noah Barajas said the store's expansion reflects both a growing customer base and their commitment to small businesses across the region.

"We've been open for about two weeks now, and today we are doing our ribbon cutting, which would be our grand opening," said Isaiah Barajas.

Ivory House specializes in vintage

clothing from the '70s, '80s and '90s, but its new location is more than just a retail shop. The storefront also features inventory from other small vendors, who sell their goods through Ivory House.

"It's all secondhand," said Barajas. "All of the stuff in the store is from small businesses around the Valley. They sell their stuff here, and then we take a little commission."

Inside, the store features hand-painted lettering on the walls and carefully curated display and racks. Barajas said Ivory House's growth started from humble beginnings.

"My brother and I started as small business vendors," he said. "I always thought of clothing as a form of self-expression. Having something that's one of a kind is really cool to me, so I would go out and look for things that are one of a kind, and then I just started finding stuff that didn't necessarily fit me, but I think someone else might love, and

• See **New** on page 11

New

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then it just kind of built from there.”

The brothers said they wanted the new location to feel clean and organized, avoiding the overwhelming feeling Barajas says is sometimes found in vintage shops.

“Everything’s super well maintained, nicely organized,” said Isaiah Barajas. “We just wanted to make it the easiest way to shop. Everything’s color coordinated, and genre coordinated.”

Ivory House has been in business for six years and founded the West Valley Flea, a vendor market featuring about 40 local businesses at the Avondale Sports Center, where shoppers can browse clothing, shoes, candy, jewelry, custom art and more

The move to Avondale represents not just growth but also consolidation. The business recently closed its Goodyear location ahead of its lease ending

and is exclusively operating from the new Avondale space.

“This is the expansion. This is where we’re staying,” Barajas said. “We’re always out here with the sports center, so it makes sense to bring it all to one spot.”

Last weekend, Barajas said about 1,000 shoppers visited both the storefront and the market.

City and county officials attended the event, including Avondale Vice Mayor Curtis Nielson, who celebrated with the brothers and thanked them for supporting other entrepreneurs.

“What a great story to see brothers and a family business take off,” said Jim Bull, speaking on behalf of Debbie Lesko and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. “Every time a business expands, every time a business starts, you are affecting positively the entire community here.”

Ivory House is taking vendor applications for coming markets. Visit shopivoryhouse.com.



Meyer Burger secures extension to publish its 2024 annual report as restructuring talks continue. (Submitted photo/ Meyer Burger, Oliver Zarski)

Meyer Burger restructuring talks continue with extension on annual report

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Swiss solar manufacturer Meyer Burger Technology AG has received an extension from SIX Exchange Regulation AG to publish its delayed 2024 annual report, as the company continues to negotiate restructuring measures and potential partial sales of its businesses.

Trading of Meyer Burger shares, which has been suspended since June 2, will remain halted until the company submits the report.

SIX Exchange Regulation said the

extension was approved under strict conditions, requiring Meyer Burger to publish the decision in full and explain the reasons for the delay. The regulator noted that completion of the report remains impossible until the relevant negotiation results are available, citing the significant effect that restructuring talks and possible divestitures could have on the company’s liquidity, financial statements and key indicators.

Meyer Burger previously requested an extension on July 31.

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BUSINESS MOVES



Fogo de Chão, First Watch and Nordstrom Rack are announced to be joining the growing Goodyear development. (Submitted photo, City of Goodyear)

1 Livewell Animal Urgent Care of Goodyear

1400 N. Litchfield Rd., Goodyear

Opened August 23. The facility provides urgent veterinary care services.

2 Enroute Coffee & Tea

15605 W. Roosevelt St., Ste. 107, Goodyear

Reopened September 5. The business offers coffee, tea and locally sourced baked goods and carries products from other small businesses.

3 Villas Litchfield Park

12730 W. Camelback Rd., Litchfield Park

Ribbon cutting September 16. Villas Litchfield Park offers one- and two-bedroom rental villas.

4 Villas Goodyear

870 S. Sarival Ave., Goodyear

Ribbon cutting September 17. The property includes one- and two-bedroom apartment homes in a gated community

with shared amenities such as a pool, spa, grill areas and gardens.

5 Fogo de Chão

1800 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

The internationally recognized Brazilian steakhouse, plans to bring its table-side-served, fire-roasted meats to Goodyear's GSQ district.

6 First Watch

1800 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

A breakfast and lunch chain known for its made-to-order dishes and casual daytime dining experience announced its scheduled to open in the growing downtown Goodyear area in 2026.

7 Nordstrom Rack

1800 N. Civic Square, Goodyear

The off-price retailer offering discounted designer clothing, shoes and accessories announces its developing GSQ location

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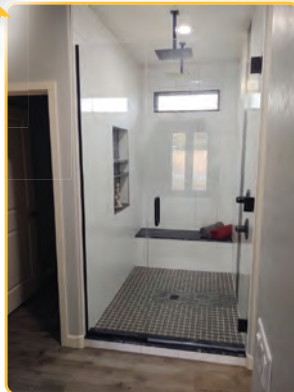
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THINGS TO DO

IN BRIEF

SEPT. 20

Master Gardener Q & A

This event provides an opportunity for gardeners to get expert advice on various topics, from landscape challenges to vegetable gardening.

1900 N Civic Sq, Goodyear, in the Georgia T. Lord Library

10 a.m.

SEPT. 26

Ballet Under the Stars

Ballet Arizona presents an evening of ballet performances with food trucks, crafts, and giveaways available for attendees.

10300 S Estrella Pkwy, Goodyear, at the Estrella Lakeside Amphitheater

5-9 p.m.

SEPT. 27

Haunted Arizona

Join paranormal investigator and author Debe Branning as she shares stories about some of Arizona's most haunted locations.

1900 N Civic Sq, Goodyear in Litchfield Park Branch Library

2 p.m.

OCT. 4

Rock the BBQ

Spend a night filled with BBQ, burgers and live rock music performed by youth bands put on by the City of Goodyear.

1900 N Civic Sq, Goodyear in Goodyear Civic Square

5-9 p.m.

Goodyear highlights culinary-inspired art with new exhibit

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

An art exhibition at the Georgia T. Lord Library is serving up more than books, it's plating food as fine art.

Local artists and community members gathered Thursday evening at the Georgia T. Lord Library for the "Kitchen Creations" artist reception, celebrating the exhibition on display.

The show, hosted by the city's Arts & Culture Commission, transforms everyday meals into visual works of art through photography, paintings and other media. The free reception featured live music, refreshments and voting for the Artist's Choice and People's Choice Awards.

The exhibition runs through Oct. 22 at the library, 1900 N. Civic Square.

Among the featured artists was Sulien Bruceta, a graphic designer and breast cancer survivor who submitted photographs of a layered vanilla cake topped with violet frosting, fresh flowers and candles.

"I took pictures of this beautiful cake that a friend of mine made that same day," Bruceta said, describing her works Sweet Composition and Sweet Dream. "I wanted to show the good things in the middle layers, the beauty of the composition with the natural flowers and the candles, and an interesting way to present food."

Her path to photography began after a friend in Florida, also a breast cancer survivor, shared nature photos that reignited Bruceta's own creative interests.

Bruceta said she hopes to even-



Sulien Bruceta celebrates her first gallery piece, "Sweet Composition." (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

tually focus on photographing other cancer survivors, capturing their experiences during treatment and beyond.

"I want to show there is no shame in being a warrior in the middle of the battle," she said.

Her dream, she added, is to one day open a small studio devoted to that work.

While Bruceta brought the perspective of an emerging photogra-

pher, Goodyear recreation leader Donovan Perez contributed from behind the scenes, helping to install the show. Perez said his own background as a photographer and visual artist shapes the way he arranges pieces in the gallery.

"I think it just comes back to finding what pieces complement the ones next to them," he said. "Maybe this artist did a black-and-white paint-

• See **Exhibit** on page 16



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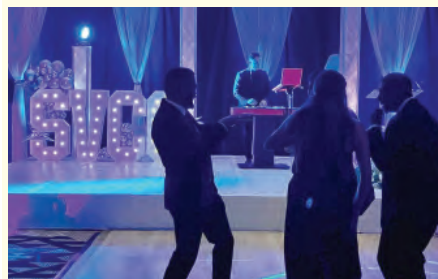


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IN BRIEF



Elected officials, community members and business owners attend the annual awards gala. (Mary Goldmeer/Independent Newsmedia)

West Valley Regional Chamber hosts 2025 Awards Gala at The Wigwam

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Business leaders, elected officials and community members gathered at The Wigwam for the West Valley Regional Chamber's 2025 Awards Gala.

The black-tie event, held at 300 E. Wigwam Blvd., began with a cocktail hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and an evening awards program. Guests later celebrated with an after party on the resort grounds.

The gala featured the presentation

of the chamber's annual awards recognizing outstanding contributions in business, education, community service and public leadership. Nominations were submitted by chamber members and reviewed by a selection committee composed of WVRC board members in a competitive process.

West Valley Arts Council showcases travel-inspired works, prepares for cultural exhibit

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The West Valley Arts Council is filling September with art, featuring a group exhibition on travel and exploration while preparing to launch a celebration of Latin-American culture later in the month.

"Wanderlust," now open at the council's Arts HQ Gallery, 16126 N. Civic Center Plaza, features paintings, photography and 3D works inspired by journeys both real and imagined. Some pieces are drawn from Arizona's own scenery.

Exhibit

- From page 14

ing, I want to put something next to it with dull colors, then follow it with something introducing more color. It's about figuring out how the pieces work together, not just putting them on the wall."

Perez said the reception also serves as a networking opportunity for artists who might otherwise never meet. Seeing attendees enjoy the display, he said, is one of the most rewarding parts of his job.

"For people to walk around the space and really enjoy their work on the walls, it makes me feel good that I'm contributing to the community and allowing these artists to feel ap-

preciated," Perez said.

Perez said that offering artists space to show their work and gather publicity builds confidence in their work and a positive community feel, especially for new artists like Bruceta.

"This is my first exhibition, and it feels amazing. Especially because I've always come to the library to see the gallery," Bruceta said. "This time, being part of it feels completely different."

Following "Kitchen Creations," the library's next show, "Futuristic Frontier," will open in October, inviting artists to imagine distant tomorrows shaped by innovation and change.

Visit goodyearaz.gov for more information and submission opportunities.

EDUCATION

Goodyear celebrates its newest namesake

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Goodyear City Council celebrated the opening of Goodyear High School, the city's first educational namesake.

At a council meeting, city leaders and school officials highlighted the school's significance for the growing community and recognized the partnerships that brought the project to completion.

"In just one year, we went from breaking ground to opening our doors," said Principal Jason Linn. "We wouldn't be here without the voters who passed the bond, the city for helping us secure permits, and the contractors who made this facility possible."

Few people in Goodyear have followed the effort to build a new high



The Goodyear City Council and school principal Jason Linn celebrate the opening of Goodyear High School. (Submitted photo/City of Goodyear)

school more closely than Councilmember Trey Terry. Before being elected to the City Council, Terry served on the Agua Fria Union High School District governing board, where discussions

about the need for a new campus in the city began years ago.

"There were many roadblocks and speed bumps along the way — site plans, different locations, different de-

signs," Terry said. "But we settled on this, and I can't say enough about Mr. Linn's leadership. He's from this community, and he serves this community."

The \$175 million campus is part of the Agua Fria Union High School District and opened earlier this month to 442 students.

Council members said the school represents both the city's growth and a new chapter for local education.

Vice Mayor Wally Campbell said the name "Goodyear High School" carries special weight for longtime residents.

"I've been waiting 25 years to have a school named after the city," Campbell said. "This is very special, and we'll support it as much as possible."

• See **High school** on page 19

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West-MEC students showcase aviation program

By Mary Goldmeer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Western Maricopa Education Center is shining a spotlight on its Aviation Maintenance Technology program, where students are training for careers that keep aircraft safe and operational.

For West-MEC, a public school district that provides career and technical education across 48 high schools in the West Valley, the program showcases how local students are preparing to enter a critical industry that powers both commercial and military flight.

Jay McDowell, the program's lead instructor and a retired Air Force veteran, described the training as one of West-MEC's most rigorous.

"We're the only ones that require four and a half hours a day," he said. The curriculum is split into two years, beginning with foundational knowledge before moving to hands-on work.

"They go through the general classes, which are a lot like core classes for a college degree," said McDowell. "Math, physics, the regulations, and all that, which is a lot of what we do, paperwork... and teaching the kids the basics to get down here on the floor."

The program ends with students testing for Federal Aviation Administration certification, which is conducted on site. McDowell said the certification, once earned, is valid for



Jacob Press, Justus Coleman, Jacob Jensen, Nicholas Pope, Keidence Whitcomb and Jay McDowell celebrate National Aviation day with West-MEC.
(Mary Goldmeer /Independent Newsmedia)

life and can open doors with airlines, manufacturers, repair stations and cargo operators.

He said the program's strength lies in both its opportunities and the growth he sees in students.

"There's no better feeling to watch a student go from eyes wide open.. to actually watch the light going on in their head," McDowell said. "I get to watch them not only get it, but enjoy it. It's a great thing to be a part of."

Students said the program has provided both community and career direction.

"I've been talking to instructors about where they worked and how they've liked it in the Air Force or just in the airlines, and it all sounds so exciting, so I'm just waiting for my opportunity," said Justus Coleman,

• See **West-MEC** on page 19



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IN BRIEF

Litchfield Park school named first Montessori Purple Star School in Arizona

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

St. Peter's Montessori has been recognized as the first Montessori school in Arizona to earn the Purple Star School designation, honoring its commitment to supporting military-connected students and families.

The recognition was announced Aug. 27 in partnership with the Arizona Purple Star School Program and Luke Air Force Base.

"Arizona Purple Star Schools are military-friendly schools who are dedicated to support students and families as they navigate challenges of military life, specifically during transitions and deployments," said



St. Peter's Montessori is named first Montessori Purple Star School in Arizona. (Submitted photo/Rebekah Singh)

Samuel Smith, school liaison program manager at Luke Air Force Base. "This recognition not only highlights their commitment to serving military families but enhances the resources and support available within the community."

Founded in 1964, St. Peter's Montessori has a 60-year history in the West Valley.

Visit stpetersmontessori.com for more information.

West-MEC

• From page 18

a homeschooled student. "It's such a fun job. I like working with my hands, and it's working on planes. I think it's a lot more detailed than working on cars."

Coleman said the first day focused on bookwork and math, but he quickly found a supportive group of peers. "Everyone's still here that you can tell really wants to stay," he said. "They kind of build you up instead of tearing you down."

Keidence Whitcomb, a Willow Canyon High School student in her second year, said the program has been demanding but rewarding.

"It's a difficult program," Whitcomb said. "You've got to understand that this is a fast thing. You're getting a certificate, so you have to do it in order to graduate."

High school

• From page 17

Councilmember Laura Kaino praised the school's effort to include a museum space highlighting Goodyear's history, while Councilmember Brannon Hampton noted its impact on families like his own.

"There's no doubt that Goodyear is growing faster than ever," Tammy Vo, the city's communications director. "That plot of land might be gone today, but it certainly lives on in a new way."

The land where Goodyear High School now stands once held the Phoenix Trotting Park, a harness racing venue that opened in January 1965 with more than 12,000 people on opening night. The park featured stables, betting windows and a fine-dining restaurant, but struggled with attendance due to its limited access from Phoenix.

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SPORTS

Champion Wolves have new volleyball coach

Compiled By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The high school girls volleyball season began Aug. 27 at schools across the state. West Valley Preps and the Litchfield Park/Goodyear Independent asked local high school coaches about their teams. Here are their responses:

Estrella Foothills Wolves

Coach: Michael Matteson (first season as head coach)

2024 Record: 34-1 overall, 10-0 region (4A State Champions)

Region: 4A West Valley

Who are your top returning players?: We return most of our roster from last year: Senior outside hitter Sadie Snyder, senior outside hitter Kaylee O'Conner, senior middle Cadynce Kirkpatrick, senior opposite/setter Miranda Monninger was brought up to varsity towards the end of our last season, junior middle Naomi Silva, junior libero/DS Giselle Wochner, sophomore setter Lily Merefield and sophomore opposite Olivia Salsbury.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Our new additions this season are: Senior opposite Sadie Howell, junior opposite Liliana Grosiak, sopho-

more DS/Librero Addison Burwell, sophomore Outside Hitter Deziree Ulibarri and sophomore Setter Gabriela Coronado. Gabby Coronado is especially going to have an impact on our season as she is taking on the other half of the setting responsibility in our 6-2 with Lily Merefield.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? This season I think our team's greatest attribute is the way the girls support each other. Everyone has high expectations of themselves, each other, and how we are going to do this season; but even with these expectations the team is really good at supporting each other and making each other better.

Which teams on this season's schedule are you most looking forward to and will be the toughest? We are looking forward to our match at Flagstaff on Sept. 3. They are always competitive, and they were our only loss last year. We know they are going to be tough, but we are looking forward to the quality of volleyball that we always play against them.

What are the primary goals for this year's team? Our goals this season are to continue the legacy our program has established. We have personal goals of setting school records in specific statistic categories.



Millennium junior libero Marianne Garcia leaps to deliver a serve during a 6A girls volleyball first round playoff win against Queen Creek Casteel Nov. 7, 2024 in Goodyear. Garcia is back for her senior year. (Courtesy Mason Norris/For Independent Newsmedia)

We have team goals of continuing our winning streak, of making playoffs, and of making it far into playoffs

again.

Millennium Tigers

Coach: Julie Vastine (12th season)

2024 Record: 21-18 overall, 3-5 region (6A quarterfinals)

Region: 6A Central

Who are your top returning players?: Senior libero Marianne Garcia, junior setter Cassidy Armstrong and junior defensive specialist Aubrey Burns.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Junior middle blocker Riian Warner and sophomore outside hitter JJ Taula.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? We do a good job defensively and making opportunities for our offense.

Which teams on this season's schedule are you most looking forward to and will be the toughest? We look forward to all of them. We play in one of the toughest regions in the conference and state. Every team we play will require us to compete and that's what it's all about.

What are the primary goals for this year's team? Compete at our highest level each time we play, and that we elevate our game as a team as the season progresses.



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NEIGHBORS

West Valley teacher earns theater award nomination

By Mary Goldmeier
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For Kathleen Berger, the text message arrived during the joyful chaos of a Peter Piper Pizza night with her children. It was her choreographer sending congratulations. Berger's initial confusion quickly turned to elation: she had been nominated for an ariZoni Award for her music direction of Fountain Hills Theater's production of "Ragtime."

The AriZoni Theatre Association states it has been a cornerstone of the Phoenix-area theater scene for over 30 years, aiming to elevate and support theater in Maricopa County through its annual awards ceremony. Each year, nearly 100 trained adjudicators attend and review over 200 productions ahead of nominations.

This isn't Berger's first brush with



Goodyear resident Kathleen Berger is nominated for the ariZoni awards. (Submitted photo/ Kathleen Berger)

the prestigious Valley theater awards; she's been nominated twice before as a performer. But this nomination, for the ceremony taking place at the Scottsdale

Center for the Performing Arts, holds a particular significance.

"The special thing about being nominated for this particular show is that I think it's the best work I've ever done," Berger said. "It is definitely the thing I am most proud of, and that includes my performances."

"Ragtime," a musical set in the early 1900s, intertwines the stories of African Americans in Harlem, Eastern European immigrants, and an affluent white family in New Rochelle, alongside historical figures. The musical explores themes of racial injustice, societal change and the pursuit of the American dream.

"It's a huge cast. It is very difficult music to learn and perform. And if you do it right, it impacts the audience enormously," Berger said. "They walked

in knowing half the music, which was amazing."

Berger said a standout moment from "Ragtime" was one of many that earned her and others from the Ragtime team their nominations.

"At the end of the first act, the love interest of the protagonist, a Black character, has just been beaten to death by the police, it takes place at her funeral. The song is kind of a hymn of where to find hope when you're hopeless."

Berger described the emotional build of the scene: "It builds in size and in volume until the entire cast is on stage singing it, and there's a moment when everything stops and then they sing the last few lines, and every single night, when they stopped, you could just hear the audience hold their breath."

• See **Award** on page 22

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Goodyear native serves aboard Navy warship

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Brandon Le serves as a Petty Officer 2nd Class on a U.S. Navy warship operating out of Mayport, Florida.

Le grew up in Goodyear and graduated from Desert Edge High School in 2021.

"Some of my teachers from high school were prior service members and instilled important values in me that carried over into my Navy career," Le said.

Le joined the Navy three years ago. Today, Le serves as an operations specialist.

"I was inspired by my uncle to join the Navy," Le said. "I wanted to become a sailor like him, and now I have the opportunity to travel the world and have a career in the military."

Le stated that he has grown during his military service and has been promoted because of it.



Goodyear native Brandon Le serves aboard a U.S. Navy warship operating out of Mayport, Florida. (Submitted photo/Megan Lemly, Andrew Hanchar)

"Serving in the Navy is a daily learning experience," Le said. "It has helped me become a better leader both in and

out of uniform," Le said. "I feel more confident now that I am a second class because I have gained experience and knowledge to better lead junior sailors."

Le serves aboard USS John Basilone, a U.S. Navy destroyer warship operating out of Mayport, Florida. John Basilone, is a multi-mission ship that can operate independently or as part of a larger group of ships at sea. The ship is equipped with Tomahawk missiles, torpedoes, guns and a Phalanx close-in weapons system.

According to Navy officials, more than 300 sailors serve aboard John Basilone. Their jobs are highly specialized, requiring both dedication and skill. The jobs range from maintaining engines to handling weaponry, along with a multitude of other assignments that keep the ship mission-ready.

Visit navyoutreach.blogspot.com for more information.

Award

• From page 21

That's special."

The power of that moment was palpable for Berger as well.

"At that time, I had to conduct the entrance. It was so hard to do because every night, I had tears streaming down my face. It was incredible."

The impact of "Ragtime" extended beyond the stage, resonating with the community in an unexpected way.

"It unintentionally ended up being very timely," Berger noted, explaining it ran just before the last election, when she said she saw heavy social divides past political parties.

Beyond her work at Fountain Hills Theater, Berger is also a music teacher, just starting at Estrella Vista Elementary School in Avondale.

Announcement

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Safety

- From page 1

posted 35 mph or higher, including Camelback and Litchfield roads, though they may cross them if no other legal route is available. Violations can lead to fines up to \$250 or citations under Arizona law.

Luke

- From page 8

of-the-art fighter training, Luke has adapted to meet the needs of each generation.”

Parallel paths in aviation history

The histories of Phoenix Goodyear Airport and Luke Air Force Base run parallel in many ways, both born out of World War II military needs, both adapted for peacetime uses, and both



The City of Litchfield Park reminds drivers of its golf cart safety ordinance. (Mary Goldmeer/ Independent Newsmedia)

The reminder comes a year after the City Council, on a 4-3 vote, approved restrictions on Camelback, Litchfield and Dysart roads.

Supporters of the change said it was a proactive move to prevent future accidents.

Opposing the ordinance, some council members said the city acted too quickly without hard evidence of danger and argued the measure went too far without data showing significant accidents or traffic problems.

“We’re anticipating more complicated traffic patterns with our roundabouts (and the development of Litchfield Square)” said Councilmember Lisa Brainard Watson.

“There’s no negative. We’re not saying they can’t make it from A to B, we’re just saying to take the safer route.”

In the discussion council discussed the balance of convenience and concern.

“Let’s keep our community safe and enjoyable for everyone — whether you’re walking, biking, driving, or riding in a golf cart,” the city said in its announcement.

City officials said they plan to develop a more extensive path system to further improve safe golf cart travel, including better connections between neighborhoods, golf courses and community areas.

Visit litchfieldpark.gov for more information on golf cart regulations.

revitalized in later years to meet new challenges.

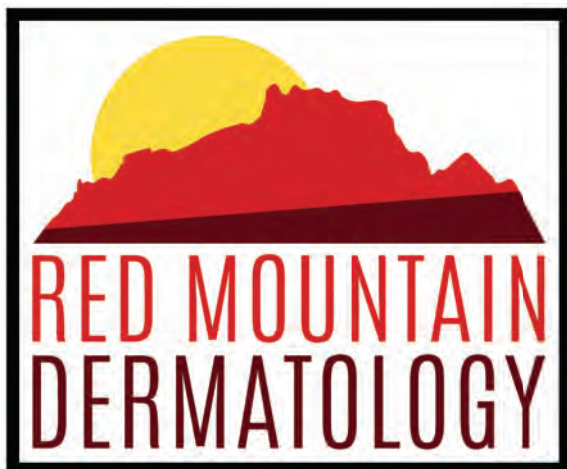
At GYR, the focus is on civilian and commercial general aviation, flight training and future technologies. At Luke, the mission is to produce the next generation of fighter pilots for the U.S. and its allies. Both, however, are defined by the people who keep them running.

“The people ... are great to work with and very supportive,” Hagen said of his team at GYR. “We also have amazing business partners that run private businesses at the airport and are awesome to work with, and everyone works together

really well. I’ve always loved aviation even as a kid. For me, this job is my avocation as well as my vocation.”

Looking to the future

Together, Phoenix Goodyear Airport and Luke Air Force Base show how the West Valley’s aviation legacy continues to evolve. From its wartime beginnings to its role in training and supporting the next generation of pilots and aircraft, the region remains a vital part of America’s story in the air. It is a history still in motion and reaching toward the future.



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