



Community

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INDEPENDENT

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West Valley Preps cross country preview; **14**



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PAY RATES

City salaries settle into upper middle of Valley

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Glendale has one of the Valley's longest serving city managers and is the fifth largest city in the Valley.

So it is not too surprising that an analysis of fiscal year 2024-25 municipal salary data shows Glendale City Manager Kevin Phelps is the second highest paid city manager in metro Phoenix and the highest paid government employee in the Valley outside of the city of Phoenix at \$376,044 annually.

Phoenix City Manager Jeffrey Barton leads all Valley government salaries at more than \$431,000 annually. But he is second highest on the city's books behind Executive Assistant Fire Chief Scott Walker at \$439,146. Four Phoenix Police lieutenants are next, making between

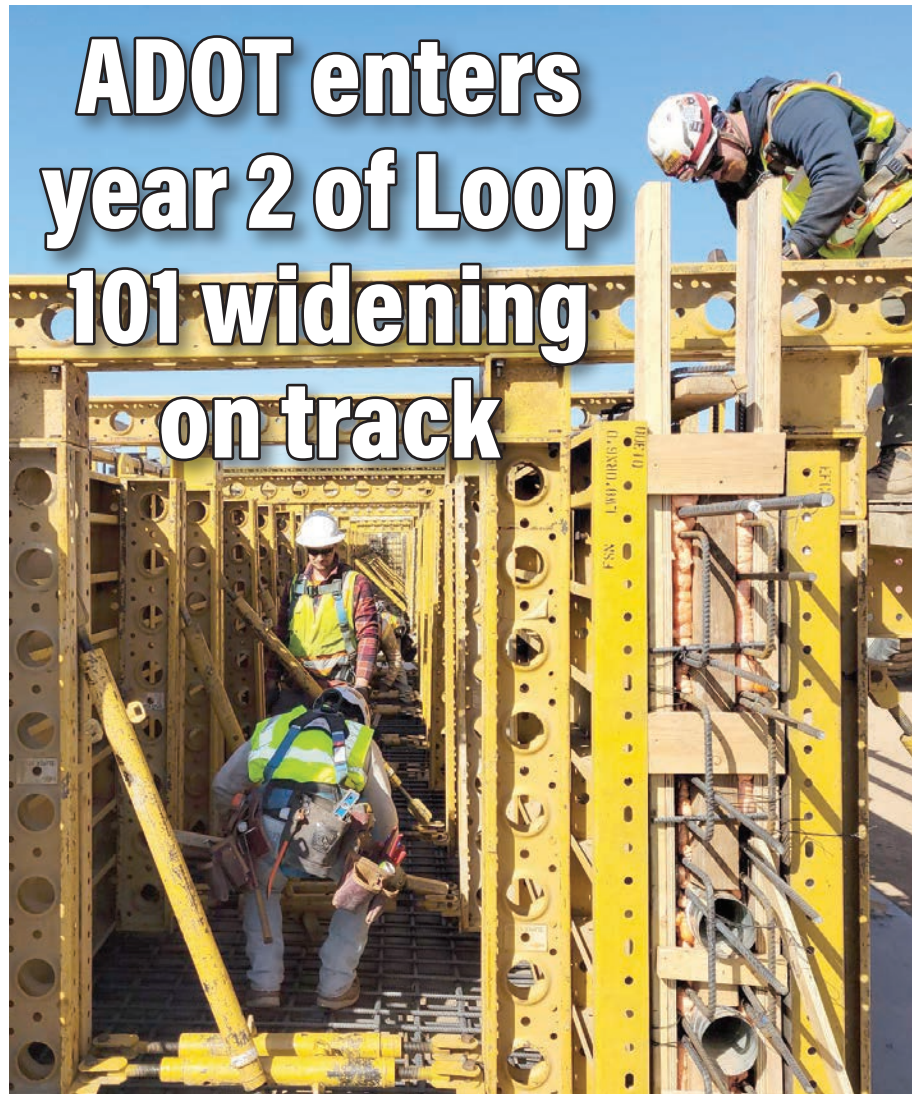
• See **Salaries** on page 20



Kevin Phelps

TRANSPORTATION

ADOT enters year 2 of Loop 101 widening on track



Construction workers install an element of the Loop 101 expansion, a \$140 million Arizona Department of Transportation project. (Courtesy ADOT)

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

One year into the Arizona Department of Transportation's \$140 million project to widen Loop 101 between Interstate 17 and 75th Avenue, the project is on budget and on time, ADOT spokesman Doug Nintzel said.

Year two of work on the Agua Fria Freeway begins with bridges being widened with new girders and on- or off-ramps being reconstructed to fit the updated freeway.

• See **Loop 101** on page 12

RAMP CLOSURES TO COME

Here is the Arizona Department of Transportation's latest schedule for reopening closed on- or off-ramp closures (subject to adjustment if necessary):

- Eastbound 101 off-ramp at 51st Avenue (Sept. 26)
- Eastbound 101 off-ramp at 27th Avenue (Oct. 3)
- Westbound 101 off-ramp at 67th Avenue (Oct. 10)
- Westbound 101 on-ramp at 59th Avenue (Oct. 17)

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Glendale slates 3 informational meetings on bond election

Glendale leads three informational meetings about its Nov. 4 bond election.

All open houses are from 6:30-7:30 p.m.:

- ♦ Sept. 25 in the Glendale Civic Center, 5750 W. Glenn Drive.
- ♦ Sept. 30 at Foothills Recreation and Aquatics Center, 5600 W. Union Hills Drive.
- ♦ Oct. 2 in the Glendale Main Library, 5959 W. Brown St.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/5x8yfc8>

Council crafts conditions of e-bike, e-scooter ordinance

Glendale City Council members laid out ground rules for a future city ordinance on electric bikes and scooters during a Sept. 9 workshop. They are:

- ♦ E-scooter - age 12 and up.
- E-bikes with a top speed of 21 mph - age 14 and up.
- ♦ E-bikes with a top speed of 28 mph - age 16 and up.

The consensus is maximum fines of \$50 for the first offense, \$250 for a second offense and an automatic \$500 for the third violation.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/2h9yrs36>

Arrowhead Farmers Market finds new site in Glendale

The Arrowhead Farmers Market will move in October from its regular spot outside Arrowhead Towne Center to a new location in Glendale.

On Oct. 4, the market will arrive at its new site, Dream City Church, 21000 N. 75th Ave., Glendale.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/mv5nnkj>

WILDLIFE

Petition opposes council plan to relocate many peacocks, peahens

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Glendale resident Stacy Damitio started a Change.org petition to stop the relocation of about 100 peafowl now living around Sahuaro Ranch Park and the Glendale Main Library, following a city council consensus to humanely remove the birds at an Aug. 12 workshop.

As of Sept. 15 the petition, titled "Stop the relocation of the Sahuaro Ranch Park peacocks," has 3,828 signatures. Peafowl is the catch-all term that refers to both peacocks and peahens.

The decision on relocating all but 30 or 40 of the peafowl is not listed as an planned agenda item for the Sept. 23 voting meetings.

Glendale Parks and Recreation Director John Kennedy said on Aug. 12 that right now, between 130 and 160 peafowl roam the park, library and nearby areas.

"Staff has documented 28 complaints in the last two years," Kennedy said. "There's concerns of unsanitary conditions due to the peafowl droppings."

A February 2024 census counted 111 peafowl, the February 2025 census showed 160 peafowl and in March 2025 it was 137 peafowl.

If nothing is done, and 50% of each peahen's litter of between three and eight eggs survives, the population could be 300 by next fall.

"The census way not done in any kind of way to ensure the same bird was not counted multiple times. The number 300 was come to by a Google Gemini prediction. I used the same AI platform, using the city's own



A peacock surveys the landscape from atop a garden structure at Sahuaro Ranch Park in Glendale. (Independent Newsmedia/Kelly O'Sullivan)

numbers and could not get it to give a number of 300," Damitio said during the Sept. 9 voting meeting. "All we are asking is for the city and parks and rec to follow the master plan, which includes controlled feeding, population monitoring, public education signage as well as implementing egg addling. And please don't forget that the study call for public input, which can't be properly done without including it on the council agenda."

The peafowl are beautiful and many people associate them with Glendale and Sahuaro Ranch Park, Kennedy said. But the population growth and territorial behavior is

pushing more birds out of the park to the library, the Glendale Adult Center and nearby homes.

"It's not sustainable. They cause damage and are messy," Kennedy said.

Visitors feeding peafowl when they should not has led the birds to congregate in parking lots for handouts.

The \$12,000 budgeted by the city for sidewalk and parking lot cleanup is not enough, and will increase to \$24,000 annually. It also costs \$55,000 to secure the area.

Peafowl-related cleanup also costs \$55,000 yearly for area skylights, and \$25,000 for a chiller replacement.

"The roof of the main library leaks. There's an unknown cost to that repair. And it is partially due to peafowl roosting on that roof," Kennedy said.

The large birds often peck rooftops, windows and solar panels, attacking their reflections. They impede traffic in and around the library.

City staff recommended using Raptor Events for humane removal and relocation of the peafowl, at \$425 per bird.

Glendale would leave a population of about 30 peafowl.

"Raptor Events would offer transportation to vetted farms and residences within Arizona that are at least 20 miles away to prevent return," Kennedy said.

Texas A&M University's Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology is interested in up to 40

• See **Peafowl** on page 22

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AUTOS

Clients flock to Porsche Arrowhead during Glendale dealership's opening week

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Porsche Arrowhead opened Sept. 8 on Glendale's western terminus of Bell Road. It was right on time, in multiple respects.

Owner Richard Cvijanovich said the dealership's construction was on budget and met the Sept. 8 target date to open at 8330 W. Bell Road.

That date, a week after Labor Day amid the Valley's slow transition from summer heat to fall, was intentional, he said.

"The summer months are slower in highline clientele market as many Porsche owners have other residences outside of Phoenix, which they reside during the hot months," Cvijanovich stated in an e-mail. "That said, Labor Day brings many individuals back in town and business will continue to be strong until Memorial Day. Plus, with snowbirds returning, the ability to have onsite outdoor cars and coffee events, traffic will only continue to increase in the coming months."

Ground broke on the 60,000-square-foot facility in late June 2024. Getting to that point at the site just east of Loop 101 and north of Bell was a nearly 15-year saga.

John Lund, longtime Cadillac-Hummer-Saab dealer in the Valley, originally owned and planned to build on the site.

Cvijanovich stated Lund sold his dealerships and exited the Phoenix auto business soon after 2009, when General Motors disbanded the Saab and Hummer franchises.

From the Porsche dealer's 2022 announcement through a bit more than 14 months of construction, the



Customers and sales representatives walk the floor of the new Porsche Arrowhead dealership in Glendale on Sepy. 8, the dealership's opening day. (Courtesy Porsche via Facebook)

process went smoothly with Glendale city officials.

"Glendale had been great to work with throughout the entire process from start to finish ... any issues were addressed quickly and to all parties' satisfaction," Cvijanovich stated.

Cvijanovich's portfolio includes Porsche Chandler, Audi Gilbert, Subaru Superstore of Chandler, Subaru Superstore of Surprise, Volvo Cars Gilbert and Autobahn Collision.

Unlike some other area dealerships, Porsche Arrowhead is primarily accessible off Bell Road instead of Loop 101 exits. It is on the northeast corner of Loop 101 and Bell Road, in

between Carvana and Arrowhead Cadillac.

"The Arrowhead luxury car corridor in Glendale has seen a lot of success over the past several years. But we couldn't be more thrilled to welcome Porsche to our community. Porsche's commitment to this exciting new dealership validates the growing influence of the Glendale-West Valley consumer market," stated Glendale City Manager Kevin Phelps in an e-mail.

Sales hours are 8 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday. The service center is open 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through

Friday and 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

All departments are fully functional and serving clientele daily at the two-story dealership, he said. A grand opening event is slated for early December, with more details to come.

"Community response has been outstanding among both Porsche and non-Porsche owners. Many individuals have stated they have watched the project develop and have been waiting for the dealership opening," Cvijanovich said. "They have watched the project develop and have been waiting for the dealership opening," Cvijanovich said.

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BUSINESS MOVES



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3 Tre Bicchieri celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony led by The Glendale Chamber of Commerce on Sept. 4 at 6685 W. Beardsley Road. This Italian-style restaurant features champagne for brunch, martinis for happy hour, and wine for dinner.

4 Kendra Scott, the lifestyle and accessories brand opened its newest store Sept. 26 at Arrowhead Towne Center, at 7700 W. Arrowhead Towne Center Drive, on the first level. Kendra Scott will celebrate its grand opening weekend Oct. 3-5 with giveback events, gifts with purchase and giveaways. RSVP at kendrascottarrowheadtownecentre.splashthat.com.

5 Arizona Animal Dentistry recently opened and celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony led by The Glendale Chamber of Commerce on Sept. 4 at 9494 W. Northern Ave. The dentistry's focus is on affordable, preventive dental care that keeps small issues from becoming big problems.



RED ZONE



VAN TRUST

NOW OPEN

Photo courtesy Glendale Chamber of Commerce

1 The Glendale Chamber of Commerce led a ribbon cutting ceremony for **Red Zone Sports Grill**, formerly Charley's Sports Grill Aug. 1 at 8110 W. Union Hills Drive. After four years, Kelli List and Sal Fernandez passed the torch to new owners Emily and Josh Taylor. Red Zone plans for bigger game day experience and a new Wednesday night steak special.

2 The Grove Family Dental recently opened in an office built from the ground up at 17215 N. 72nd. Drive, Suite A100. Dr. Brady Garrett and his team welcome kids to adults this new, modern family dentistry. Visit www.grovedentalaz.com for information.

ANNOUNCED

Photo courtesy VanTrust Real Estate

6 VanTrust Real Estate recently announced its latest development. **VT303 North**, a 1.1 million square foot speculative industrial building in western Glendale. Situated at the southwest corner of Northern Avenue and Reems Road, the 66-acre project is designed to meet the demand for modern logistics and distribution facilities. Construction for VT303 North is set to begin in December.

CLOSED

7 Panera Bread recently closed its location inside the Arrowhead Towne Center food court.

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EDUCATION

Deer Valley district attendance rates up early in new school year

Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The new school year is young but attendance is on the rise throughout Deer Valley Unified School District.

That's key, considering that the Arizona Department of Education earlier this year reported significant spikes in chronic absenteeism statewide, with some districts reporting more than 30% of students missing at least 10% of the school year.

An early look at the new school year shows a 95% attendance rate at all Deer Valley Unified schools since school opened July 31, which is up a couple ticks from last year's 93% rate, according to district data.

"Across the nation, rates of chronic absence have nearly doubled from pre-pandemic levels, and Arizona is facing its own urgent

challenge, with one of the highest chronic absence rates in the country," the Arizona Chronic Absence Resource Guide, published by the Read On Arizona task force in September 2024, wrote in its findings. "Nearly one in three of our students are missing this significant amount of instructional learning time, with certain negative impact on their success in school."

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% of the school days. In a typical school year of 180 days that meets five days per week, this means missing at least 18 days.

Over the course of a full school year, missing two days of school per month equates to being chronically absent.

The reasons for chronic absentee-

• See **Attendance** on page 9



First-grade teacher Michelle Abraham welcomes each student as they arrive at their classroom on Sept. 8 on the Glendale campus of Copper Creek Elementary School. (Independent Newsmedia/ Steve Stockmar)

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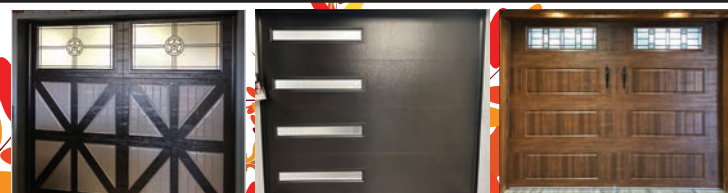
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Attendance

• From page 8

ism can vary widely among students and their unique circumstances. As a result, ways to reverse the trend can be just as varied but one Deer Valley Unified elementary campus is in its third year with a program that is helping the effort.

As part of the district's "Everyday Counts" initiative that encourages each campus to focus on attendance, Copper Creek Elementary, at 7071 W. Hillcrest Blvd., in north Glendale, has all teachers stand everywhere from the curb where students are dropped off to their classroom doors in a coordinated – and clearly fun – effort to welcome each student as soon as they arrive for the morning.

When teachers might otherwise have been making final preparations for the day as students file in, instead every teacher stands at the door for a high-five, a fist bump, or hugs.

Simple, yes. But for a kid – particularly those who may be anxious about arriving for school – it's a big thing. And it encourages students to embrace the idea of arriving at school on a positive note with a broader aim at maintaining attendance.

While students across Arizona experience a 30% chronic absenteeism rate, Copper Creek, with an enrollment of almost 700 students, has a chronic absenteeism rate of 15%.

"If that child wasn't seen or heard in the morning or had a rough start or maybe was on the fence about coming to school or didn't feel good, when they get here and their teacher says, 'good morning, happy to see you, how are you, how was your game,' they instantly have a connection," Copper Creek Principal Christina Myers, who has more than 30 years of experience in education, said Monday morning as

ATTENDANCE RATE

2025-26: Copper Creek (95%), all district elementary schools (95%), all district schools (95%)

2024-25: Copper Creek (93%), all district elementary schools (94%), all district schools (93%)

2023-24: Copper Creek (94%), all district elementary schools (94%), all district schools (94%)

2022-23: Copper Creek (93%), all district elementary schools (93%), all district schools (93%)

2021-22: Copper Creek (93%), all district elementary schools (92%), all district schools (92%)

2020-21: Copper Creek (98%), all district elementary schools (97%), all district schools (97%)

SOURCE: Deer Valley Unified School District

she, naturally, greeted students for the morning. "I think it just starts their day out a positive connection."

Unlike truancy, chronic absence focuses on students who miss school regularly whether the absences are excused or unexcused, the Arizona Chronic Absence Resource Guide notes. Chronic absence is an indicator that shows the level at which students are missing instructional time.

In 2021 in the midst of COVID, chronic absenteeism more than doubled, according to the study. One in five enrolled students in grades 1-8 missed more than 10% of the school year, and one in four of all Arizona public schools had 30% or more of their students chronically absent.

Chronic absenteeism continued to rise in 2022, the report found, with one in three students chronically absent in grades 1-8, and 59% of schools throughout Arizona showing 30% or more of their students chronically absent.



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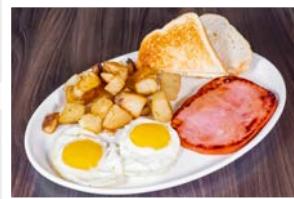
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OPINION

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Corrections

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

Longtime Glendale councilwoman urges support of bond

I am a retired Glendale city council member with 24 years of service as the Yucca District council member. I serve as the chairperson of the Glendale Bond Committee 2025.

Legally, the committee as a whole may not take a position publicly for or against these bond questions. We may, as individuals, express our opinions publicly.

On Nov. 4, 2025, Glendale voters will be asked to decide two questions asking for the authority to issue bonds in the coming years. Question 1 is in the amount of \$30 million for flood control. Question 2 is in the amount of \$35 million for renovation of the



Joyce Clark

city's operations center.

This past August, we experienced monsoon storms. As a result, you may have driven on some flooded streets. One of the worst flooding problems occurs at the intersection of 43rd Avenue, Bethany Home Road and Grand Avenue. Approval of Question 1 will fix this issue as well as other severely flooded locations throughout the city.

Many departments, such as transportation and sanitation, which maintain the city's infrastructure, work out of the old Spring City Knitting Mill. It is a 40-year-old complex and some of the buildings have never been renovated. Others still have swamp coolers and inadequate working space.

It's time to upgrade this complex to provide better working conditions for city employees.

Voters often ask if these bonds raise property taxes. The answer is no. For

LETTERS TO THE NEWSROOM

the past seven years, property taxes have remained at the same rate or even lowered.

When you see an increase in your property tax bill, it is usually due to Maricopa County or a school district rate increase.

Glendale's policy is to only issue bonds when others have been paid, thereby creating capacity to issue new bonds without a property tax increase.

These requests are not frivolous. Funds will be used to maintain critical infrastructure within the city. We all take pride in Glendale and part of that pride means we must maintain our streets and the employee environment. I urge you to vote yes on Glendale Questions 1 and 2 on Nov. 4.

Joyce Clark
GLENDALE

Bond approval will allow renovations of outdated operations center

I have lived and worked in Glendale my entire life. I retired as Glendale's Cactus district council member this past December. I love Glendale and have worked to ensure that this city is a point of pride within the Valley.

This November, Glendale voters will be asked to approve two bond questions. Question 1 asks for \$30 million to correct street flooding throughout the city. Question 2 asks for \$35 million to renovate the city's Operations Center.

Whenever we get monsoon storms there are areas of serious flooding affecting both residents and businesses. The area on Camelback Road west of Grand Avenue is one of those areas. By passing Question 1, the flooding in this area as well as other critical areas can

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finally be remediated.

Questions 2 addresses the city's Operations Center in the more than 50-year-old Spring City Knitting Mill. With the addition of several departments over the years, the space has become inadequate to meet employees' needs.

It houses fleet maintenance, street signs and markings, warehousing, transportation and sanitation departments. Some of the buildings still use swamp coolers which are inadequate. Most of these departments maintain the city's infrastructure. It's time to maintain this vital employee infrastructure.

Renovation of this campus is critical to meet the needs of our employees by offering a better working environment.

Approval will not raise your property taxes. Council has adopted a policy that states that no new bonds will be issued if they increase in property taxes.

These bond questions are a win-win for all. They eliminate some of the worst flooding problems within the city and create a better, more productive work environment for city employees. These bond questions received serious scrutiny by senior management and the City Council before they received approval to bring before voters. This fiscally conservative city only asks for further bond capacity when it is truly



Ian Hugh

transportation and sanitation departments. Some of the buildings still use swamp coolers which are inadequate. Most of these departments maintain the city's infrastructure. It's

OPINION

Letters

• From page 10

needed.

I ask voters to vote yes on Glendale bond Questions 1 and 2.

Ian Hugh
GLENDALE

Editor's note: Ian Hugh is a member of the Glendale 2025 Bond Committee.

Learn an immigrant's story before judging them

In response to Lisa Everett's letter on Kelly Yu, I thought it was lovely and highlighted the experience of someone special in our community.

Where we seem to struggle is in recognizing that many immigrants in our country have similar stories. I hope we find a more humane path moving forward. These detention facilities should not be the death sentence we've read about in too many headlines.

Annie Malekzadeh
PEORIA

Paying digitally is great, but it poses risk for teens

A guide for Arizonans who want to help their kids manage money and

conduct safe transactions

The ability to quickly send and receive money through via digital payments on a smartphone or computer has become second nature for today's teens. Whether they are splitting the bill at lunch or shopping online, digital wallets and financial apps offer speed and convenience.

While this technology simplifies transactions, it can also lead to poor spending and safety habits if not used responsibly.

This creates an opportunity for parents to provide guidance that sets teens up for long-term financial success.

Short decision gaps can lead to impulse spending

Making a purchase used to require more time and effort. Teens might have needed to go to a store or ask their parents for cash, which made spending feel more intentional. Today, digital payments happen in seconds and do not involve physically seeing money leave their hands. As a result, teens may not fully grasp the impact of their spending.

One way to encourage better habits is to reward delayed spending. For example, offer a higher allowance or small perks when your teen chooses to wait before making a purchase. This helps build the habit of delayed gratification, a skill that can benefit them well into adulthood.

Lower pain of payment can mean higher spending

Another concern is the reduced "pain of payment," which refers to the psychological discomfort people feel when they spend money. Be-



Christina Kredit

cause digital payments are less tangible than cash, teens may not fully register the loss of financial resources.

This can lead to overspending or difficulty managing a budget. One helpful strategy is to set up push notifications or text alerts that display the updated account balance after each transaction. These reminders reinforce the idea that money is actually being spent, even if it happens with just a tap.

Digital safety should not be optional

Parents should also talk to teens about how to stay safe while using digital payment platforms.

One simple but often overlooked risk is the "notes" section of payment apps. Some platforms default to public visibility, meaning anyone can see what your teen paid for and to whom. Hackers and scammers sometimes use this information to track behavior or collect personal details.

Encourage your teen to keep all payment notes private. It is also

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important to make sure they understand never to send money to someone they do not know and trust. Digital payments often do not offer the same protections as credit or debit cards, and once funds are sent, they are rarely recoverable.

Digital payments are here to stay, and teens will continue to be early adopters of new tools and technologies.

But with thoughtful guidance, parents can help ensure their kids are not just tech-savvy but also financially wise. Teaching teens how to manage spending psychology, make informed decisions, and protect themselves online can go a long way in building strong financial habits for life.

Christina Kredit
COPPER STATE CREDIT UNION

Editor's note: Christina Kredit is vice president of marketing for Copper State Credit Union, which has branches in Anthem, Glendale, Goodyear, Payson, Phoenix and Surprise.

Civility Checklist

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



☐ **Take the high road.** Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.

☐ **Be respectful.** Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment and threats directed at another person — or that person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone's character or motives.

☐ **Be truthful.** Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes.

When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.

☐ **Don't misrepresent.** Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.

☐ **Listen and learn.** It's both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don't agree with your own.

☐ **Look for common ground.** When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.

☐ **Respect privacy.** Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.

☐ **Set a good example.** Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it's OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.

Loop 101

• From page 1

The series of 60-day ramp closures along this stretch of freeway serving Glendale and Phoenix are staggered to avoid consecutive on- or off-ramps being closed at the same time.

“It’s never easy but the project team is working to limit the overall impacts on traffic. We thank drivers for their patience when they need to use detours,” Nintzel stated in an email.

He said the following 60-day ramp closures will start before November: Westbound 101 on-ramp at 27th Avenue, westbound 101 on-ramp at 51st Avenue, westbound off-ramp at 59th Avenue and the eastbound 101 on-ramp at 75th Avenue.

ADOT staff will continue to provide updates about the ramp closures, since adjustments are possible.

Helena Johnson, board president of Arrowhead Ranch Phase II, said she has not heard anything regarding the freeway work yet in the neighborhood. That most likely that will happen when the 75th Avenue ramp closure is imminent. The HOA sends out reminder notices as it gets them.

Recent construction milestones include placement of girders to expand the width of freeway bridges at 31st and 51st avenues. New LED freeway lights have been installed above the center median wall within the proj-



Construction workers install an element of the Loop 101 expansion, a \$140 million Arizona Department of Transportation project. (Courtesy ADOT)

ect’s limits.

“The contractor is more than 60% done with that earthwork and grade preparation. And when you’re driving through the work zone, you’ll notice that crews are moving along with the construction of retaining and screen walls. They’re more than halfway done with those,” Nintzel stated.

Coffman Specialties Inc. is the project’s primary contractor.

The first year of work has focused on removing existing concrete, including some outside pavement and barrier walls, and earthwork to provide the room for the sub grade, or base, below the path for the new lanes.

“We would ask drivers to take work zone safety seriously. There’s a lower speed limit (55 mph) for a reason. The corridor is set up with barrier walls, temporarily leaving less room for error in some areas. It’s more important than ever to slow down and stay alert,” Nintzel stated.

Work remains on schedule for completion in spring 2027, he said. As with most projects this size, the biggest challenge is getting work done while keeping traffic moving.

That includes detour routes and minimizing issues along cross streets that intersect with the freeway. ADOT staff follow up on concerns as

soon as possible.

“Given the amount of work that still needs to be done, we’re going to need patience before stretches of the new lanes are available. The project team anticipates one of the key late stages will be the diamond grinding of the existing travel lanes, where specialized machines are used to grind and smooth the pavement surface,” Nintzel stated.

“We expect the new lanes will open once that grinding work is done and pavement marking has been completed toward the end of the project in 2027.”

Diamond grinding involves the use of specialized machines fitted with rotating drums that use diamond-tipped blades to remove a thin layer of the existing concrete pavement, smoothing the surface while also creating small grooves to help limit tire noise.

It also withstands the wear of heavy freeway use far better than asphalt, which starts to become problematic five years after it’s laid down and is severely compromised after 10 years.

“Diamond grind is estimated to be more like 15 to 20 years before it needs to be replaced,” said Arminta Syed, MAG transportation policy and initiatives program manager, in 2024.

For information, visit the project website at azdot.gov/Loop101-75th-ave-I-17. A sign up is available to receive free emailed project updates.



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RUNNING

West Valley Preps' cross country preview



Deer Valley sophomore Daequan Tigie finishes fifth at the state Division II meet on Nov. 2, 2024. He returns for the Skyhawks. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The high school boys and girls cross country season began Aug. 26.

West Valley Preps and the Glendale Independent asked local high school coaches about their teams. Here are their responses.

Cactus Cobras

Boys Coach: Rich Levan (ninth year as Cactus head coach)

Girls Coach: Sandy Black (first year as Cactus head coach)

Section: Division III Metro

Who are your top returning runners? Top returning boys are senior Andrew Martinez, juniors Hunter Black, Trenton Carpenter and Ramon Carrillo, and sophomore Tim Boggler. Top girls are juniors Sophia Orozco and Haley Reyes.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? For the boys, Landen Faulk and for the girls, Isabella Jordan.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? I would say the closeness of the team. They are very encouraging of each other, especially encouraging and helping the new runners. We have seven freshmen and first time runners.

What are the primary team and individual goals for this year? We would like to have both the boys and girls teams qualify for state. It has been 10 years since the girls team qualified. Individually, looking to maybe have four or five total medals at sectionals.

Deer Valley Skyhawks

Boys and girls Coach: Kevin Riegle (eighth year as Deer Valley coach)

Section: Division II Metro (Boys finished sixth in Division II, Girls finished 14th)

Who are your top returning runners? On the boys side, junior Daequan Tigie is our top returner. Seniors Aukai Fletcher normally comes in at No. 2 and Ezra Zufelt at No. 3. Senior Teagan Theall will lead the charge on the girls side. She is a two-time sectional champion and senior Carrie Baughman has looked good in the early parts of the year.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Aiden Hernandez on the boys side is a freshman that has come in looking strong. On the girls side newcomer sophomore Elisabeth Reynolds and Freshman Maci Blanchard look to

• See **Preview** on page 15



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SPORTS

Preview

• From page 14

crack the top five on the team this year.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? We have a lot of great kids on the team. Thus far they have been great workers and they are fun to be around.

What are the primary team and individual goals for this year? Our goal as a team is to repeat as sectional champions on both the boys and the girls teams and then follow up with a strong showing at state. Teagan Theall has the opportunity to three-peat as sectional champion and Daequan Tigie aims to crack the top four at the state meet and make a run for his first individual sectional championship.

Glendale Prep Griffins

Boys and girls coach: Eric Webdale (10th year at Glendale Prep)

Section: Division IV Metro (Boys won Division IV state title, girls finished fifth)

Who are your top returning runners? Girls: Adi Gameros, Sydney Lester and Carolyn Reeves form the core of our returning runners. Boys: We're returning our top seven runners from last year's state championship team.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Girls: We have two freshmen I'm especially excited about. Maycee Brady has the potential to be our top runner, and Natalie Leuschner — new to running — has already been a pleasant surprise. Boys: Rafi Gameros, David Honeycutt, and Zander Rich all have the potential to compete for a varsity spot.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? The girls have an incredible ability to make the team feel like a family. Their support for each other motivates them to accomplish great things. Our boys' greatest strength is how hard the athletes push each other to improve. Our

top five runners have personal bests within 40 seconds of each other, and that pack mentality creates a highly competitive environment.

What are the primary team and individual goals for this year? Our girls' main goal is to improve on last year's 5th-place finish. With such a young team, we're also focused on continued development for future success. Our boys' primary goal is to stay healthy and defend last year's state championship.

Mountain Ridge Mountain Lions

Boys and girls coach: Mitchell Moses (eighth year at Mountain Ridge)

Section: Division I Northeast (Boys placed 11th in Division I)

Who are your top returning runners? Our top returning runners for our boys team are Collin Foley, Alex Crotty, Jake Olson and Eric Reed. Our top returning runners for our girls team are Sydney McCracken, Sadie Jensen, Katy Durell and Shea Kalama.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Our new impact runner for our boys team is Jakob Burke. He adds a needed and strong top five for our boys team. Our new impact runners for our girls team are Mia Torrez and Emma Langer. They bring a lot of energy, focus and dedication to our girls team.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? One of our team's biggest attribute entering this season is the depth on our boys team and how hard they work to get better every day. They are super consistent and they do everything together. Our girls team loves to compete and they push each other every day in practice which will pay dividends when it comes to the big meets at the end of the year.

What are the primary goals for this year? Our biggest goal as a team is to be disciplined and consistent in the way we train every day and then go and compete.



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SPORTS

VOLLEYBALL

Local volleyball squads settle into season

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 Glendale Independent asked local high school coaches about their teams. Here are their responses:

Cactus Cobras

Coach: Deb Martin (first season as head coach)

2024 Record: 17-12 overall, 7-3 region (4A play in)

Region: 4A West Valley

Who are your top returning players?: Well, for our returning players there is only three: Haley Stewart, senior setter, Kenli Petty, sophomore

middle blocker, and Ziara Pauli, sophomore setter/hitter.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year?

Newcomers are Laila Long, junior outside hitter, Faith Connell, senior libero and senior Audrey Morgan, a middle blocker. Also making the team are two freshmen - Addison Martin, a setter/hitter and Skye Moore, an outside hitter. Making the team this year from last years JV team are Reyna Lindsey, a right side/middle, Andie Laube, a libero/defense specialist and senior captain outside hitter and middle Charley Enos.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? Our best attributes are working together as a team

• See **Season** on page 19



Cactus junior setter/defensive specialist Haley Stewart digs a ball during the Cobras' Oct. 21, 2024 home game against Peoria. She is back for her senior season. (Courtesy Ed Russell Photography/For Independent Newsmedia)

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COMING UP

Hot Rod Nights rolling back into Glendale Westgate

Car show, live music coming on Wednesdays in October

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Westgate Entertainment District in Glendale is bringing back its Hot Rod Night series on select Wednesdays in September and October.

Look for a full showing of classic cars and hot rods, live music, and happy hour deals from restaurants and bars.

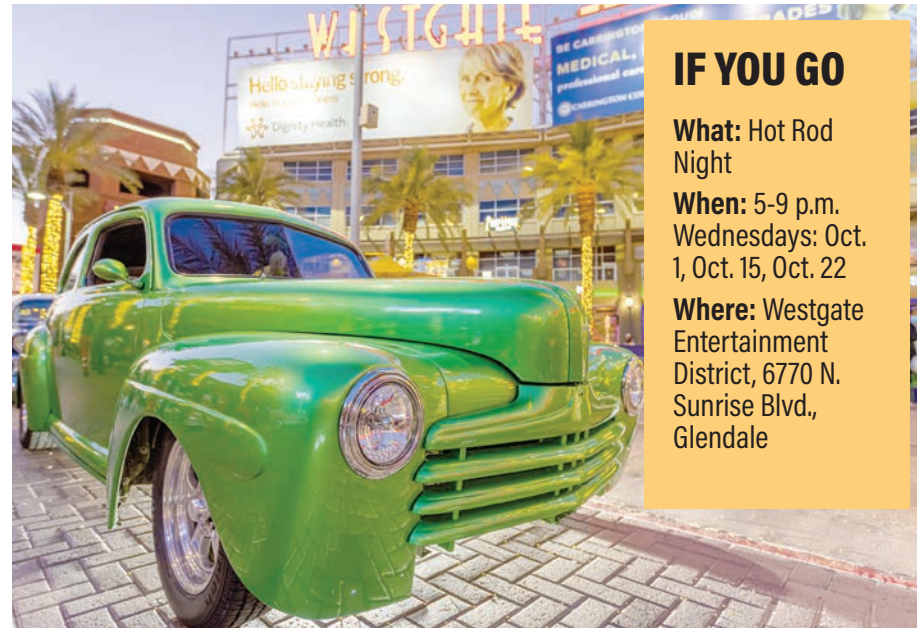
The night goes from 5 to 9 p.m. on the following Wednesdays: Oct. 1, Oct. 15, Oct. 22.

"This event series celebrates car culture while giving people a place to connect and have fun," Alexandra McNeil, YAM Properties marketing manager, shared in a press release.

To participate in the car show, arrive at Westgate at 4 p.m. on the evening of the selected show. Spots will be allocated in the order that vehicles arrive. Cars made in the 1980s and earlier can park on Entertainment Blvd. in WaterDance Plaza. Cars made in the 1990s and later can park on Westgate Blvd. near Fountain Park.

Desert Diamond Arena and State Farm Stadium events may impact on-site parking.

Visit westgateaz.com/events for parking information.



(Photos provided by Evolve PR and Marketing)

IF YOU GO

What: Hot Rod Night

When: 5-9 p.m.
Wednesdays: Oct. 1, Oct. 15, Oct. 22

Where: Westgate Entertainment District, 6770 N. Sunrise Blvd., Glendale

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Season

• From page 16

and playing for each other and the school colors. The whole team is brand new to each other as well as a completely brand new staff. So, we know we are starting from scratch, basically from the bottom up. We've made huge accomplishments in practices and we constantly work towards perfection and mending areas that need attention.

Which teams on this season's schedule are you most looking forward to and will be the toughest? I, as a coach am coming from the 6A division so I really have not been paying too much attention to the 4A division, but I know that Estrella Foothills and Flagstaff always compete and brings a showing throughout the year and then to the state playoffs. So I imagine they will be our biggest target, but we are taking every game as just as important as the top contenders.

What are the primary goals for this year's team? Our primary goals are to keep in check with every practice and every game. We have goals and we dream big, so we plan to be one of the teams at the championship game. I think we will be the surprise of the 4A Region. We plan on making Cactus the talk of the year.

Deer Valley Skyhawks

Coach: Jackie Wallace (20th season)

2024 Record: 22-19 overall, 7-3 region (4A play in)

Region: 4A West Valley

Who are your top returning players?: Izzy Darnell - four-year varsity veteran and senior captain, She's an outside hitter and region offensive player of the year, Hailey Berg - four-year varsity veteran and senior setter. Hana Delkic - senior middle blocker, and Leia Malick, senior defensive specialist.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Sienna Borst — a sophomore outside hitter that's bringing some firepower to

the second outside hitter spot. Dayami Holguin, senior opposite hitter, Makyleigh Gorenstein, senior middle blocker, Tatum Sendaj, senior defensive specialist, Kristine Borgstedt sophomore setter, Janelle Osborn, junior, setter.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? With being a senior laden team, our more experienced players have taken on leadership roles which have helped our team focus and stay on track. Our team camaraderie has been off the charts and our team energy has been super positive.

Which teams on this season's schedule are you most looking forward to and will be the toughest? We always love the competition with Thunderbird and Estrella Foothills.

What are the primary goals for this year's team? Do all the little things right. Always compete.

O'Connor Eagles

Coach: Amanda Burbridge (fifth season)

2024 Record: 30-3 overall, 8-0 region (6A quarterfinals)

Region: 6A Desert Valley

Who are your top returning players?: Leylah Duran, MB, senior; Kristin Sheehy, MB, junior; Anabelle Cummings, L, sophomore; Kaiya Kearney, OH, senior and Brooklyn Palmer, OPP, senior.

Who are some of the newcomers that may have an impact this year? Sami Mondino, OH, junior; Alaya Krein, OH, sophomore and Ahvah Florence-Littles, S, freshman.

What is your team's best attribute entering this season? Our team is physical, hard working and determined.

Which teams on this season's schedule are you most looking forward to and will be the toughest? Xavier, Casteel and Liberty.

What are the primary goals for this year's team? The team has the goal set of winning a 6A State Championship and is working towards that goal.



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Stagecoach Village, 7100 E. Cave Creek Rd., Cave Creek



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Salaries

- From page 1

\$393,514 and \$423,642.

Phelps is seventh overall with \$376,044. His peers include Scottsdale's Gregory Caton at about \$372,008, and Tempe's Rosa Ichausti, who earns \$370,000.

City Attorney Michael Bailey is the next highest paid Glendale employee at \$295,555. He ranks third Valley-wide behind Scottsdale's City Attorney Sherry Scott and Interim City Attorney Luis Santaella (both about \$319,009).



Michael Bailey

"We don't compete just with just other cities like Peoria and Goodyear. We compete as well with the private sector," Phelps said. "We've gotten to the point where our compensation is competitive."

Next door, Peoria has a newer city manager in Henry Garcia, that earns \$340,000.

At Phelps' previous employer, Pierce County, Wash. — whose largest city is Tacoma — he said the county compared its salary offerings with similar sized municipal and city governments throughout the West Coast. In Glendale, the city measures itself strictly against nine other Phoenix suburbs as well as the major city itself..

"For our primary data points, we typically look at the average midpoint for a matched position within our benchmark cities and set our pay range at, or in harder to fill positions, slightly above the average market rate," Glendale Human Resources Director James Brown stated in a email.

The city conducts market studies at least once every two years to ensure it remains competitive within the market and continue to attract and retain highly qualified employees. Glendale recently incorporated a compensation software called PayScale that will assist in maintaining a competitive compensation plan, Brown stated.

Glendale's salary patterns are similar to other large local suburbs. After Phelps, the highest-paid positions belong to assistant city managers Jamshed Mehta and Vicki Rios, both earning about \$276,913.

Phelps said the identical salaries are intentional. Mehta and Rios have similar levels of experience.

Glendale promoted former Assistant Police Chief Colby Brandt in June. That caused a raise from his assistant chief salary of \$227,817, to his \$268,296 salary as chief.

Presiding Judge Nicholas DiPiazza is sixth among city employees, making about \$262,728. Deputy City Manager Rick St. John follows closely at \$262,728.

Fire Chief Ryan Freeburg receives \$259,889, eighth in Glendale.

Brent Stoddard was making about \$259,815 as a Glendale deputy city manager before his hiring as an assistant city manager in Mesa,

The city hired Thomas Adkins and he began work Aug. 25. His salary of \$255,000 ranks ninth in Glendale.

"In the executive search process, we don't differentiate between an external or internal candidate. In both cases, the candidate has an opportunity to negotiate salary, and we ensure that their pay is appropriate for the position they are accepting and level of experience they bring. We also ensure that pay is equitable among existing directors in similar pay grades," Brown stated.

Chief Information Officer Steven Martin earns \$246,951. The job requirements can make that role particularly difficult.

"My CIO in a government role is underpaid compared to a CIO in the private sector," Phelps said.

All government salaries are public knowledge, while private business salaries are not.

"Our candidates know what the marketplace is," Phelps said. "We try to get the right candidate and if we get to the upper end of the midpoint is salaries locally, that's the way we go."

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Peafowl

• From page 2

birds, which would be used for behavioral studies.

Backers of the petition shared concerns with both removal plans.

“While it is important to address concerns about park maintenance and the welfare of both the peacocks and visitors, relocating the peacocks is not the solution. Instead, the city could block off the affected skylights, institute a neutering program, the use of “dummy eggs”, and allowing companies who volunteer to come out and power wash the sidewalks (saving the city money),” the petition reads. “Dwindling the flock down to just 33 will leave them weak to predation. When a flock of birds has lived together in certain numbers for their whole lives, they create a system within the flock for protection. When you wipe those numbers out, the flock does NOT know how

to protect itself in such small numbers. Considering the amount of predatory animals in the area, this could very well lead to the complete eradication of the remaining birds.”

Four council members spoke in favor of sending 40 peafowl to Texas A&M. That plan has since been changed and Glendale will not send any to the university, Vice Mayor Lauren Tolmachoff confirmed Sept. 15.

Raptor Events will relocate another more than 100 birds. No council member spoke against the recommendation.

“I’m always concerned that the people that love seeing the birds out there are going to get upset, but then, too much is too much. If damage is being done, we need to look after the taxpayer’s resources,” Mayor Jerry Weiers said.

Spending approximately \$50,000 for relocation will save the city much more long term, and is best for the

birds, said Council Member Bart Turner, whose Barrel District includes the library and park.

“My office has fielded a number of complaints, particularly for the way in which they soil the library and that area,” Turner said. “I think the appropriate population size is around 30, 40 at maximum. Having that small of a population will keep them in the park.”

Council members also said they want the city to enforce no feeding signs, similar to people feeding pigeons.

City Attorney Michael Bailey said if Glendale wants to do something limiting the feeding of peafowl, it would need to do so in city ordinances.

“Anybody who’s been over there knows there’s probably too many of them. I think this is a win-win. The birds aren’t going to be harmed,” Tolmachoff said. “The population will grow back.”



A peacock from Sahuaro Ranch Park rests on a bench at the nearby Glendale Main Library, March 1, 2025. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Chernek)



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HEALTH

Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers, left, presents the Black History Month proclamation to Marcia Garland, founder of Black Business Owners Coalition Of Glendale, Feb. 13, 2024 in the Glendale Civic Center. (City of Glendale)



Growing group supports sickle cell warriors

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A support group to assist with what can often be a lonely battle against sickle cell anemia started meeting a year ago in a side room of a downtown Glendale church.

It started mostly because of a summer 2024 seminar Glendale resident Rev. Marcia Garland — who does not have the blood disorder — could not get out of her mind,

Garland also is the founder of the Black Business Owners Coalition of Glendale.

“I got introduced to the sickle cell community as a result of being invited to an event that was hosted by Vitalant. I left the meeting quite confused because I thought sickle cell had been cured,” Garland said in December 2024. “There was so little being said around it. The community has gone completely underground and is coping as best it can.”

On Aug. 25, Garland filed Glendale Sickle Cell Support Group LLC with the Arizona Corporation Commission. It was a bit less than a year since the group’s first meeting.

Incorporation also occurred less than a week before September, which

is Sickle Cell Awareness Month.

As she began to contact people interested in the group, they learned that the only sickle cell support group in Arizona was in Tucson.

The Glendale group had its first meeting in September 2024, and continued gathering on the fourth Wednesday of every month at Mount Zion Prayer Ministries International Church, 7025 N. 55th Ave.

Meetings can have up to 15 participants and about half of them log in on Zoom.

“We’re just growing and ballooning since that time, so we’re excited,” Garland said. “We have a wonderful combination of warriors, family members and the community.”

The group includes Tucson resident and sickle cell warrior Akilah Gilbert, and sickle cell survivor Nikita Toney of Phoenix. Caleb Afanou, a teen from Tolleson battling sickle cell, attends with his dad, Kuoami, when he can.

The early contact with Vitalant proved vital. Katrina Eaton, senior account manager at Vitalant, is the linchpin of the group, connecting members with medical resources and

• See **Support** on page 24

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INDEPENDENT

Support

• From page 23

learning their stories.

“Especially around this time of year, there’s such a great need because the next two weeks is the highest usage for blood for accidents and traumas,” Eaton said during the Dec. 18, 2024 meeting. “That really puts a strain for our sickle cell warriors and patients that need blood consistently.”

Sickle cell disorder is still far more frequent among African Americans at more than 90% of the cases in the United States, though an estimated 3-9% of the cases are those of Hispanic or Latino descent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2024.

Other numbers are not favorable for those with the disease.

The National Marrow Donor Program, formerly Be The Match, statistics show only 8 percent of the potential donors on its registry are African



Teen sickle cell warrior Caleb Afanou, from Tolleson, left, his father, Kuoami Afanou, and Vitalant Senior Account Manager Katrina Eaton, right, smile during the Dec. 16, 2024 meeting of a Glendale-based sickle cell support group at Mount Zion Prayer Ministries International Church. (Independent News-media/Richard Smith)

American.

NMDP Member Recruitment Coordinator Lindsey Coutts was the special guest at the Glendale support

group’s July 23 meeting.

Beyond the registry, this organization focuses on education, awareness search for potential donors’ tissue antigens. Keeping the information kept private is a top priority along with donor safety.

“We’re a non-profit organization so we also don’t share your information with any outside organization,” Coutts said. “It could be months or you may never get called. It depends on if your person — I like to say your doppelganger or tissue twin — needs you. Then we will contact you.”

She said there are two ways to donate. One is similar to a power red blood donation. Instead of collecting blood, NMDP is collecting stem cells. Marrow donation occurs about 10 percent of the time.

Marrow is drawn from hip and recovery takes two to seven days.

“A lot of times when we get patients that have sickle cell, they have pain crises. This is one way we can actually cure them from their sickle cell disease. We have to find them a matching donor,” Coutts said. “We work to find a sibling match, but

70% of the time patients don’t have a match in their family. Then they come to us and say they need a complete stranger to come and donate some of their healthy cells.”

The disease causes cells to die early. A shortage of healthy red blood cells is called sickle cell anemia.

Red blood cells also can contort into a sickle shape and block blood flow causing intense pain, a sickle cell crisis.

Blood transfusions are common for patients. A lot of patients NMDP serves need blood donors in the meantime while hoping for a marrow match.

“We’re very thankful for Vitalant,” Coutts said. “We try to collaborate to save patients who need blood and stem cell and marrow donations.

NMDP also has a peer connect program to guide patients through a transplant by talking to someone who already had it, providing emotional support for patients and caregivers.

The group also publishes a YouTube podcast called Black Blood

“We have a need for people to join the registry, but education and awareness is huge for us,” Coutts said. “Especially with medical mistrust. With sickle cell patients and other patients, their doctors don’t always understand the pain crises they’re going through. It can be very difficult.”

Glendale Sickle Cell Support Group spent its first year making connections beyond Vitalant and NMDP.

It is involved with the Arizona Blood Alliance, the Sickle Cell Foundation Of America, Phoenix Children’s Hospital and Dr Amina Simmons from Paradise Valley Community College.

Simmons organized a sickle cell walk that’s partnered with Vitalant.

“We are clothing and finance. We are layers of support,” Garland said. “It’s what are you doing for your community. What are you doing to give back.”

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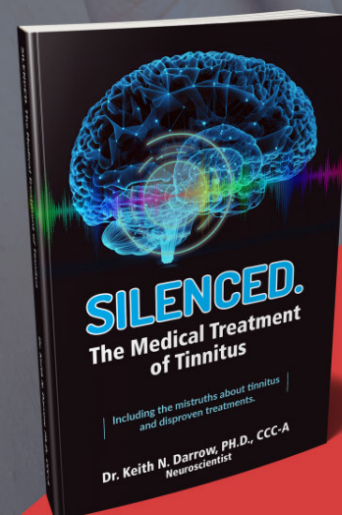
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