



Community

City pivots after operations bond failure; **2**



INDEPENDENT

Sports

Glendale Prep boys cross country holds off Hopi for repeat; **18**



November/December 2025

Volume 31 Issue 12

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EDUCATION

Override approval bucks recent Deer Valley election trends

Having already faced 50+ staff cuts with full-day kindergarten at risk, district moves forward

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Voters within the Deer Valley Unified School District have forged a new path to financially support schools.

After two consecutive Novembers of the electorate turning away ballot initiatives to extend the maintenance and operations budget override, final unofficial election results this time around show voters approving the measure.

Two years ago the measure failed by a 55% to 45% margin. One year ago the gap closed to a

• See **DVUSD** on page **10**

HOLIDAY SHOPPING



Shoppers mill about on the second floor of Arrowhead Towne Center in Glendale on Nov. 12. (Independent Newsmedia/Philip Haldiman)

Arrowhead area presents something new for Black Friday

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA
Spencer's TV and Appliance
Arrowhead Store Manager Patrick

Gleason said he still finds the notion of the locally-based retailer as a Black Friday destination a bit odd. The retailer sells TVs and mattresses as well but both are niches supporting the bread and butter of the appliances. Gleason said 90-91% of his Bell Road store's sales dollars come from appliances.

"I've never thought of an appliance store being a Black Friday store because people are buying Christmas presents. But we have just blown up," Gleason said. "It's no longer Black Friday. It's Black November, with Black Friday prices."

• See **Shopping** on page **14**

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ON YOURVALLEY.NET**Council debates allowing residents more code violation complaints**

For the rest of this year, Glendale will not change its policy limiting residents to two reports of code violations in their neighborhood per week.

Consensus, however, is building to once again allow up to five code violation complaints a week per resident in the city's GlendaleOne app/portal.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/3ey3srjf>

Stage Left theater exits Glendale for Peoria

Practically a year to the day Stage Left Productions arrived in Glendale, the left the city for Peoria because of a zoning-related fee.

On Oct. 26, the run of "Rosenkrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead" wrapped at 5930 W. Greenway Road, Suite 1A, Glendale. On Oct. 27, Artistic Director Cody Dull and his partner, Stage Left President Rodney Rickard, were taking what set decorations, chairs and furniture they could into storage.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/2f7ubyv6>

Cascalote affordable housing for seniors blooms

The Cascalote community opened at 4910 W. Glenn Drive in August. Many residents of this 148-unit apartments for seniors age 62 and older took part in its grand opening festivities Oct. 22.

This \$61 million project also marked the return to the Valley of Mercy Housing, which had not developed a community in Arizona in 13 years.

Read more: <https://tinyurl.com/58s84cnn>

ELECTION 2025

City pivots after operations bond failure

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Glendale is recalcutating and searching for funding sources for renovating its operations campus after voters sent a \$35 million bond proposal for the campus down to defeat by a slim margin Nov. 4.

Final unofficial vote totals released by Maricopa County Nov. 8, show Glendale's bond question failing by a mere 12 votes, with 12,652 against (50.02%) and 12,640 (49.98%) for it. On election night, the "no" votes led by nearly 300.

The Glendale City Council declared the canvass of votes official at a special meeting Nov. 14.

"The city will look at alternative funding sources as part of the 10-year capital improvement plan, which will be presented for consideration in the spring of 2026," Assistant City Manager Vicki Rios stated in a text Nov. 17.

The proposed project was envisioned to cost \$39.6 million. Some of that cost would not be funded by bonds or it will be paid back by city enterprise funds.

The operations bond question was all about the city facilities near 62nd Avenue and Orangewood Drive, just south of Grand Avenue.

A new police evidence storage facility opened Sept. 24 at the site. Now most of the other buildings at the site need to be revamped or demolished.

Glendale's fleet — police cars, fire vehicles, trash pickup trucks and the like — is maintained here. The operations campus stores warehouse equipment. Glendale has ran out of space on the campus.

The former home of Spring City on this campus was converted into a storage facility, but it leaks and



Glendale residents walk into and exit the Foothills Recreation and Aquatic Center the morning of Nov. 4, some of them dropping off their election ballots. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

needs to be demolished.

Some of the buildings at the operations campus still have swamp coolers instead of air conditioning. Operations campus bond funds include language can only use for things related to the campus.

That bond question focused on upgrading operations facilities that support city infrastructure maintenance.

Bond question 1 passed comfortably. It dealt with flood control and water retention and is for \$30 million.

Final results showed 14,056 votes (53.32%) in favor of this question and 12,308 votes (46.68%) against it.

"The surprise was the number of people who voted on question 1 — either yes or no — but did not vote on question 2. There were 1,072 people who didn't vote on question 2," Rios stated.

The last update revised voter turnout in Glendale to 22.82%.

It is the second city bond proposal targeted at specific areas. In

2023, Glendale voters passed an \$82 million public safety bond and a \$78 million street improvements bond, both by fairly large margins.

Glendale's original bond discussions beginning in January were for a much larger package in four areas, including \$65 million for parks and recreation upgrades and \$50 million for library renovations.

Survey results caused city staff and council members to agree to remove the parks and library projects from the bond.

Bond projects, if approved by voters, come with a strict time limit. All bond money must be spent within three years of issue date to avoid arbitrage, Rios said in September.

For the flood control projects, Glendale would receive matching funds from the Maricopa County Flood Control District.

Glendale listed five flood control projects, the largest planned on Bethany Home Road from 43rd to 51st avenue, estimated to cost \$13.6 million.

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RECENT ARRIVALS

Pilates studio opens in Village at Arrowhead

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Glendale Planning Commission approved conditional-use permits for two new fitness-related businesses in opposite areas of town on Oct. 23.

Reformed Pilates received its conditional-use permit and opened its new location at 20028 N. 67th Ave., just south of Loop 101, in October.

It is in the Village at Arrowhead shopping center, two suites south of AJ's Fine Foods.

"At any time there will be anywhere between five to 10 employees on site," planner Joseline Castaneda said during the commission meeting.

Reformed Pilates will be open 6 a.m.-7:30 p.m. daily.

The lone response from the public to the permit application was in support of the Pilates studio.



Reformed Pilates opened earlier in October at 20028 N. 67th Ave. in Glendale. (City of Glendale)

Planners also unanimously approved another conditional-use permit application that night, for a fitness center for 2KnuckleSports MMA & Fitness.

The gym is on 2.2 acres north of Olive Avenue and west of 43rd Avenue. It is in a commercial shopping center, Olive Crossing.

This 4,800-square-foot gym will

offer instruction for karate, jiu jitsu, Muay Thai and boxing.

It will be open 9 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturdays. The gym is closed on Sundays.

"Neither staff nor the applicant received any communication based on this application letter," Glendale Senior Planner Alex Lerma said.

Glendale staff found no issues with the application.

Both conditional-use permits do not require approval from the City Council.

"I am one of the principal owners of that shopping center. I've owned four shopping centers within the city of Glendale and every single center I have owned, I always wanted it to be better when I sold it. Olive Crossing is a center I'm very concerned with. That's the reason I'm here," said Martin Kornblu-

th of Scottsdale.

At its brief Nov. 13 meeting, the commission denied a request for a retail smoke and vape shop called S Smoke n Snacks at 13810 N. 51st Ave. Commissioner Bryan Hooper was absent, and commissioners Vern Crow, John Crow and Sergio Arellano voted against the permit, while commissioners Ed Nyberg, John Geurs and Tom Cole voted for it.

The 3-3 deadlock means the measure fails.

Another retail smoke and vape shop previously operated in this store.

"This is essentially a change of ownership where the applicant was actually the previous proprietor of that previous smoke and vape show in that tenant space. A new party is coming in to be the entrepreneur of a tobacco shop," Senior Planner Phil Martinez said.

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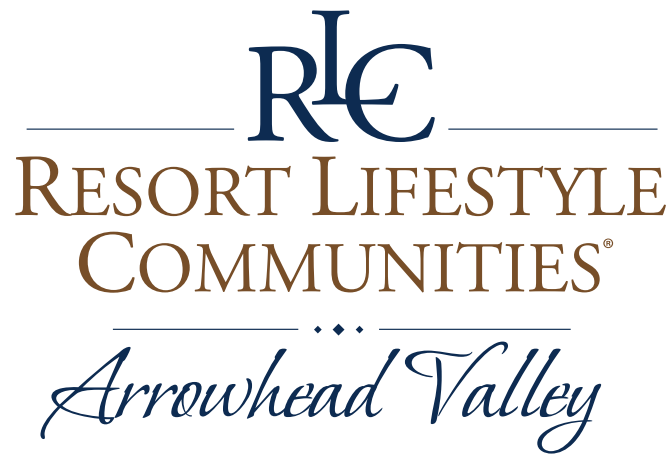
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BUSINESS MOVES



W. Arrowhead Towne Center Drive, near the food court.

3 At the beginning of this year, **Play and Bloom Speech Services** opened at 11851 N. 51st Ave., Suite C-140. It offer pediatric speech and language pathology services.

4 **Black Cadillac Salon and Barber** opened in late May as part of The Beauty Studios in Glendale. It is at 7155 W. Campo Bello Drive, Suite 18.

COMING SOON

5 **Frederick Fisher Jewelers** announced it plans to open soon in the northern end of the city at 23423 N. 67th Ave.

REMODELING

6 **Babbo Italian Eatery** recently expanded its original Arrowhead location at 20211 N. 67th Ave B3, Glendale. The restaurant opened in 2002. Babbo opened as a 22-seat, bring-your-own-bottle neighborhood eatery and has evolved into a 5,000-square-foot restaurant featuring a private dining room, expanded bar, wine wall, updated patio and the debut of a new To-Go Market. Its grand opening celebration was Nov. 13, to coincide with Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month.

GROUNDBREAKING

Photo courtesy NCG Hospitality

7 **NCG Hospitality**, a national hotel ownership, development and operations company, officially broke ground on **Moxy Glendale** in early November. This new five-story, 153-room hotel at the northwest corner of 95th Avenue and Maryland Avenue joins NCG Hospitality's existing three-hotel Glendale campus and is slated to open in summer 2027.

NOW OPEN

1 **La-Z-Boy Incorporated**, the American furniture brand, opened its newest distribution center in Glendale. The facility spans approximately 225,000 square feet and employs 30 team members. Located at 17000 W. Glendale Ave., Suite D100, the new Glendale Distribution Center will serve as a key logistics hub, streamlining product storage, order fulfillment, and delivery operations.

2 **Pickleman's Gourmet Café** opened Nov. 20 on the second level of Arrowhead Towne Center, at 7700

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EDUCATION



Legend Springs Elementary School, at 21150 N. Arrowhead Loop Road, in Glendale, hosts summer programming for students on July 17, 2025. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

How Deer Valley Unified fared in statewide letter grades report

No schools throughout the district received a 'D' rating

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Arizona State Board of Education released school letter grades for the 2024-25 school year.

Deer Valley Unified School District — a district with 42 schools spanning almost 400 square miles across Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Anthem, New River, Cave Creek, and unincorporated areas of Maricopa County — jumped to having 93% of all schools rated with either A or B scores.

The district received an overall

A rating, and has no schools that received a D.

Mirage Elementary (K-6), at 3910 W. Grovers, in Glendale, in particular, moved up to a B rating this year under Principal Bobbi Cerro. Mirage had been close to a D rating when Cerro arrived on campus and has steadily worked its way up.

Also, all five Deer Valley Unified high schools maintained their A rating. Barry Goldwater specifically was named the first Model PLC (Professional Learning Community) High School in all of Arizona.

State statute requires the Arizona Department of Education, subject to final adoption by the State Board of Education, develop an annual achievement profile for every public school in the state based on an A through F scale.

• See **Grades** on page 9

Grades

• From page 8

The process evaluates key measures, including student proficiency on statewide assessments, academic growth from year to year, graduation rates (at the high school level), and readiness indicators such as college and career preparation. State schools earn points in each area, and those points combine to determine the overall letter grade for each school.

“This collaborative approach allows us to identify what’s working, address areas for improvement, and ensure every student receives the support they need,” the district notes on its website. “That ongoing cycle of reflection and teamwork in our district helps drive both stronger student outcomes and continued improvement in our letter grades year after year.”

All nine high schools in the Glendale Union High School District earned an A rating.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Arizona has 2,431 public schools that are comprised of 1,572 district schools, 572 charter schools, and 287 Career and Technical Education (CTED) school sites.

There are 661 districts in Arizona that are comprised of 236 traditional districts and 425 charter districts.

SOURCE: Arizona Department of Education

WHAT DOES EACH LETTER GRADE MEAN?

A (Excellent): Distinguished performance on the statewide assessment, significant student growth, high four-year graduation rates, students on track to proficiency; overall performance is significantly higher than state average.

B (Highly Performing): High performance on statewide assessment and/or significant student growth and/or higher four-year graduation rates and/or moving students to proficiency at a higher rate than the state average.

C (Performing): Adequate performance but needs improvement on some indicators, such as proficiency, growth or graduation rate.

D (Minimally Performing): Inadequate performance in proficiency, growth and/or four-year graduation rate relative to the state average.

F (Failing): Systematic failures in proficiency, growth and graduation rates (below 67%); performance is in bottom 5% of the state

SOURCE: Arizona State Board of Education



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FROM THE COVER



Legend Springs Elementary School, at 21150 N. Arrowhead Loop Road, in Glendale, hosts summer programming for students on July 17, 2025. Voters in November passed a 15% M&O override ballot question for Deer Valley Unified School District. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

DVUSD

• From page 1

53% to 47% defeat.

The result this time shows the “yes” votes with an unofficial winning margin of just 1,512 votes out of more than 50,000 cast.

Maricopa County Elections show a local voter turnout for the Deer Valley Unified off-year election ballot of just 29%, although that’s slightly better than the county’s average voter turnout of almost 27%. The school district was asking voters for a continuation of the existing 15% M&O budget override, which provides for the district’s operating resources, including staff salaries. Voters can authorize the district to exceed the amount of the budget otherwise allowed by the state by 15%.

The override was first approved by voters in 1991. The current override was reauthorized in 2019, but with its seven-year lifespan approaching, fiscal year 2025 was the last year of its full funding.

In anticipation of sunseting money, the district had trimmed \$11 million from its 2025-26 budget, which resulted in 51 staff positions being cut. While the new authorization won’t result in new money injected into the district, the M&O override will now likely prevent drastic staff cuts next year. Also, had the measure failed, the district

would have been faced with ending its full-day kindergarten programming as soon as next school year.

The override authorized by this election will be funded from a levy of taxes on the taxable property within the school district and will be in effect for seven years.

Overrides around Maricopa County generally had a good night on Election Night in November.

Of 15 school districts, including Deer Valley Unified, to put an M&O override on the ballot, 11 passed.

Bond sale questions for school districts, meanwhile, didn’t fare as well.

Bonds are sold to investors who are repaid with interest over time from property tax collections, generally between 10 and 25 years. The approved Deer Valley Unified 2019 bond led to the construction of Inspiration Mountain School and Union Park School, plus improvements at all five high schools, for instance.

But while Deer Valley Unified didn’t put a bond question to the voters this time around, 10 other county school districts did put bonds on the ballot, with six of those measures failing.

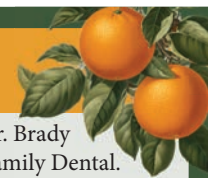
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Donation delights Glendale animal shelter volunteer

It was heartening to read of Sun Canyon Bank's generosity (No-kill animal shelter relies on resident donations) — but especially which organization was their beneficiary.

As a volunteer with Sun Valley Animal Shelter, I was delighted to find an informative article about the worthy service they provide, even amid financial challenges.

Visiting with the dogs at SVAS several times a week, I can attest that this relatively small shelter manages to use their donation-only funding to offer an extremely nurturing environment to all the dogs and cats they take into their care.

Sun Valley Animal Shelter in Glendale may not be the largest or most well-known shelter in the Valley, but rest assured that they are continually working hard, and lovingly, to place pets into carefully matched forever homes.

They are definitely worthy of donations of time, money and/or physical items.

Robin Kilrain
SUN CITY WEST

Public interest must come before private gain in CD8

When public officials control the flow of federal dollars, they also carry the responsibility to protect the pub-

LETTERS TO THE NEWSROOM

lic interest above private gain. That's what makes recent defense-related moves in Arizona's 8th Congressional District worth a closer look.

Rep. Abe Hamadeh recently met with representatives of the Israeli Defense Force to discuss "research and development."



Brett Peak

Only a few months ago, Hamadeh inserted language into the National Defense Authorization Act tasking Peoria Mayor Jason Beck's company, TYR Tactical, with produc-

ing a research report on next-generation body armor for the U.S. Department of Defense. Beck had visited Hamadeh in Washington shortly before that language appeared.

TYR Tactical already holds major federal contracts supplying gear to the military and law enforcement. Beck is also Peoria's mayor, which means he holds both public power and private interest in the same hand. None of that is illegal on its face, but the appearance of a conflict matters.

Taxpayers deserve to know whether congressional influence is being used to advance personal gain. Were any companies discussed in Hamadeh's IDF meeting? What oversight exists when a member of Congress promotes legislation that could benefit a friend's business? Has Mayor Beck ever formally recused himself from related city or federal matters?

These are reasonable, civic questions — not accusations. Our community deserves transparency from both men. Public trust depends on knowing that decisions about defense spending and federal research

are guided by service to the district, not by personal or political connections.

In a democracy, sunlight isn't optional — it's the guarantee that power still serves the people.

Brett Peak
PHOENIX

Editor's note: Brent Peak is the co-chair of the progressive grassroots group, Northwest Valley Indivisible.

Families have resources for food, essentials

As holiday lights begin to glow across Arizona neighborhoods, many families are preparing to celebrate. Yet countless others are stretching grocery budgets, watching pantry staples run low and deciding which essentials will have to wait.

With everyday costs rising and programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program disrupted, many families may be seeking help for the first time this winter. So where can they turn?

Locate food in your community

The Arizona Food Bank Network, azfoodbanks.org/in-this-together, connects individuals and families with food banks, pantries, community centers and meal programs statewide. Using the directory and holiday distribution calendar, families can locate nearby sites, mobile distributions and seasonal meal boxes. They also can



Kelly McGowan

FROM THE CEO

Enjoy Thanksgiving as you navigate 'sus' comments during family dinner

Happy Thanksgiving to our valued readers who make it worthwhile to publish community digital and print publications.

We appreciate your enduring support during this holiday season.

If you're like me and you have teenagers, you may often wonder how the modern language keeps shifting into shortened words, or lingo that doesn't quite make sense.

I'm still trying to understand the phenomenon of 6-7, and why my teenagers and/or their friends try to bait me to say it. And, not so surprisingly, it made word of the year, and an NFL football commercial. Huh?

Moving on, I recently learned fire now means it's cool, and crashed

out doesn't mean passing out on the couch. Apparently, it means he's mad or frustrated about something.



Charlene Bisson

I asked AI what the rest of the popular slang words are in 2025 that teenagers and young adults use. Here's the AI quick

hits:

Bussin': Describes something as really good or amazing.

No cap: Means "no lie" or "for real."

Ate that: Used to praise someone for doing a great job, especially in a performance or presentation.

Sus: Short for suspicious.

Rizz: Short for charisma, a term

used to describe someone's charm or skill in romantic situations.

Bet: Used to show agreement or confirmation.

Iykyk: An acronym for "if you know, you know."

It's giving: Used to describe the vibe or energy something is exuding (e.g., "It's giving 80s").

Drip: Refers to someone's great style or fashionable outfit.

Bae: An abbreviation for "before anyone else" or baby, used to refer to a romantic partner or close friend.

Cap: Means "lie" or "false" (the opposite of "no cap").

Glow-up: A significant improvement in someone's appearance or confidence.

Mid: Describes something that is mediocre or unimpressive.

Big yikes: An expression of embarrassment or secondhand cringe.

Touch grass: An insult telling someone to go outside and be more in touch with reality.

Delulu: Short for delusional, used to describe someone with unrealistic expectations.

I've heard about half of the above, but not as much as late as 6-7, which is the 2025 Word of the Year from Dictionary.com.

Best wishes during the Thanksgiving holiday.

P.S. If you'd like to share your thoughts on slang language that's not inappropriate, please email me at cbisson@iniusa.org.

Letters

• From page 12

call the Hunger Hotline at 602-528-3434.

Get help with SNAP

Wildfire, wildfireaz.org/find-help/snap, offers free enrollment assistance for SNAP, including guidance via the Arizona Self Help screening tool, which helps families check eligibility and determine

next steps.

Access WIC nutrition support

Women, Infants and Children



April Badham

program, azdhs.gov/prevention/azwic, provides monthly nutritious foods, breastfeeding support and referrals for pregnant individuals, caregivers and children under 5.

Many appointments can be completed by phone, reducing transpor-

tation barriers.

Receive free diapers

Wildfire partners with community action agencies across 13 Arizona counties to provide up to 150 free diapers per month for each child in a household.

Visit wildfireaz.org/find-help/arizona-diaper-pilot-program. Some locations also offer wipes or cloth diaper kits.

How neighbors can help

Call ahead before donating to

confirm high-need items, consider giving financially to help food banks fill inventory gaps, and when possible, offer groceries or diapers directly to a neighbor.

Kelly McGowan and April Bradham
PHOENIX

Editor's note: Kelly McGowan is executive director of statewide anti-poverty nonprofit, Wildfire. April Bradham is president and CEO of the Arizona Food Bank Network.



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FROM THE COVER

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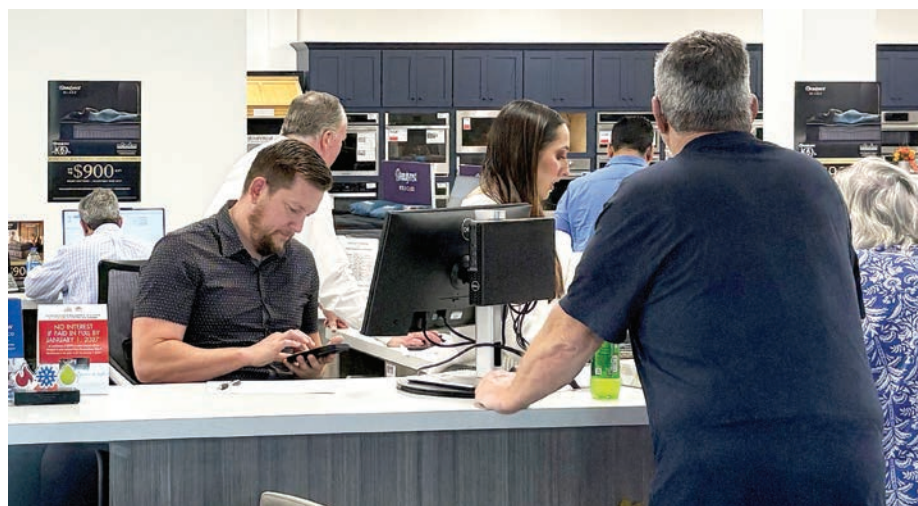
• From page 1

ing all November. It happened with Home Depot and Lowe's and those guys. All of a sudden you have to follow suit. I don't think of Black Friday as that big day, except for the business presents. But I'm surprised at how busy we are on Black Friday."

He's worked in the area since Spencer's opened its former Arrowhead area location in May 2005 at 7346 W. Bell Road. Sales trends suggest Nov. 28 will be the store's biggest Black Friday yet.

This is the retailer's first Black Friday and holiday season at its new freestanding location, 7760 W. Bell Road, Glendale.

The new store opened in late May and sales are up 28% from the same time frame last year, Gleason said.



Sales associates and employees work with customers just inside the entrance of Spencer's TV and Appliance's new store on Bell Road and Glendale, just south and west of the entrance to Arrowhead Towne Center. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

"Rick's goal was, I thought, over the top because he said, 'The minute you move down there, you're going to increase by 20%. I would be happy with 10% because the market is 6%. He was right. We've

been up over 20% since we've been over here," Gleason said. "We rely a lot on word of mouth, that we have — hopefully — the greatest customer service, we know what we're talking about and that we have our

own service center."

The new store, largest of the company's 11 in Arizona, also benefits from a new location a short walk from the entrance road to Arrowhead Towne Center, rather than a big box spot a half-mile away. The mall remains the main local draw on Black Friday

Senior Marketing Manager Rachel Olish began working at Arrowhead in January 2021, after beginning with mall owner Macerich in 2019.

Online shopping has, and will continue to, take a chunk out of the mall's former business. But market surveys suggest shopper behaviors are changing a bit.

She cited an International Council of Shopping Centers Holiday Intentions Study released in October stating that 92% of shoppers plan to

• See **Black Friday** on page 15

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Black Friday

• From page 14

spend time in a physical store looking for gifts.

“We see people looking for things and then coming in. They like to feel the specific item,” Olish said.

According to Mastercard in 2024 in-store sales grew by 0.7% while online increased by 14.6% for a total year-over-year retail increase of 3.4% for Black Friday.

Olish said the National Retail Federation projects sales to increase between 3.7% and 4.2% on Black Friday. But Deloitte forecasts between 2.9% and 3.4%.

Spencer’s is the biggest independent appliance dealer in Arizona, with about \$300 million in sales. A decent percentage of its business comes from contractors when a new apartment complex goes up, or something similar.

Its most direct competition are gigantic brands like Home Depot, Lowe’s, and, now, Costco.

Sears formerly dominated the appliance market but began closing its department stores rapidly in the 2010s. Now, only five stores remain in the U.S. and none are in Arizona.

“Spencer’s being here over 50 years helps. But of course we have thousands of people moving in here every day in Arizona that don’t know anything about Spencer’s. They know Home Depot, Lowe’s and Best Buy,” Gleason said. “The one thing I love that Rick’s always had the philosophy of is once you walk in the door, even if they’re saying ‘Black Friday pricing, 36% off,’ we’re usually lower. Then when Black Friday ends, that doesn’t change.”

In 2015, Spencer’s became an employee-owned business. The service department, Envirotec water purification company and all employees with six years of more of service become vested in the Employee Stock

Ownership Plan.

Delivery services are independent of the employee-owned model.

Former owner Rick Biederbeck’s retirement in 2015 started the transition to an employee-owner business. Biederbeck was the architect and designer of this new building.

Arrowhead Towne Center also has several new and renovated stores to present a new face for Black Friday.

Nine stores are new since the 2024 holidays, while others are in newer spaces. Recent arrivals Kendra Scott and James Avery Artisan Jewelry prepare for their first Black Friday.

“We see a multigenerational base of shoppers and they make a day of it,” Olish said.

For TVs and mattresses, Spencer’s focuses on Simmons beds, because when a retailer buys the bed, it owns the bed. Plus, beds are unsanitary to resell.

Simmons are built in Arizona and have a very low dissatisfaction rate after 60 days. Mattress Firm is ubiquitous in the market.

The in-store TV displays are also in a narrower range, as Spencer’s cannot come close to matching a Costco and Target in sheer volume of options.

“TVs anymore have become a dime a dozen. It’s a hard business to stay in, but our store says TV and appliance,” Gleason said. “Model for model, we try to go narrow and deep, so we can buy enough of them to have the right price. Model for model, we have good prices on TVs. But as you can see, my store is not full of TVs.”

Once the shopping is done, plenty of spots for food and diversions are nearby. Round1 opened smack in the middle of December 2023 and is now a place to go after the shopping is done, or at least for a break from it.

Both Sizzle and Pickleman’s opened in the last calendar year.

“Chompie’s, Sizzle and Pickleman’s are great opportunities to sit down and eat. They’re great for brunch,” Olish stated.



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MOUNTAIN RIDGE

High school athletes cherish reading days at Copper Creek

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Tre Hickem's connection to community service started when he attended the local boys and girls club, then deepened as a player at Scottsdale Saguaro from 2011 to 2013.

He came back to the area as an assistant coach at Horizon High School on the border of Phoenix and Scottsdale. Then, when Mountain Ridge hired former Saguaro assistant Andy Johnson in summer 2024, Hickem joined his staff and started setting up new connections.

Hickem is the program director at the Louis & Elizabeth Sands Branch of the Boys and Girls Club at 4730 W. Grovers Ave., Glendale. He started taking Mountain Ridge football players to read to students at nearby Cop-

• See **Reading** on page 24



Mountain Ridge cheer, football and flag football athletes, left, read to third grade students at Copper Creek Elementary School, just down the street in Glendale on Nov. 7. Athletes in the photo are, from right, Teymur Ehitsham, Sanel Eminovic, Hayden Fiore, Alianna Escobido and Ava Griffith. (For Independent Newsmedia/Courtesy Elliott Glick)

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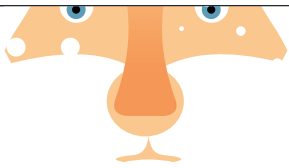


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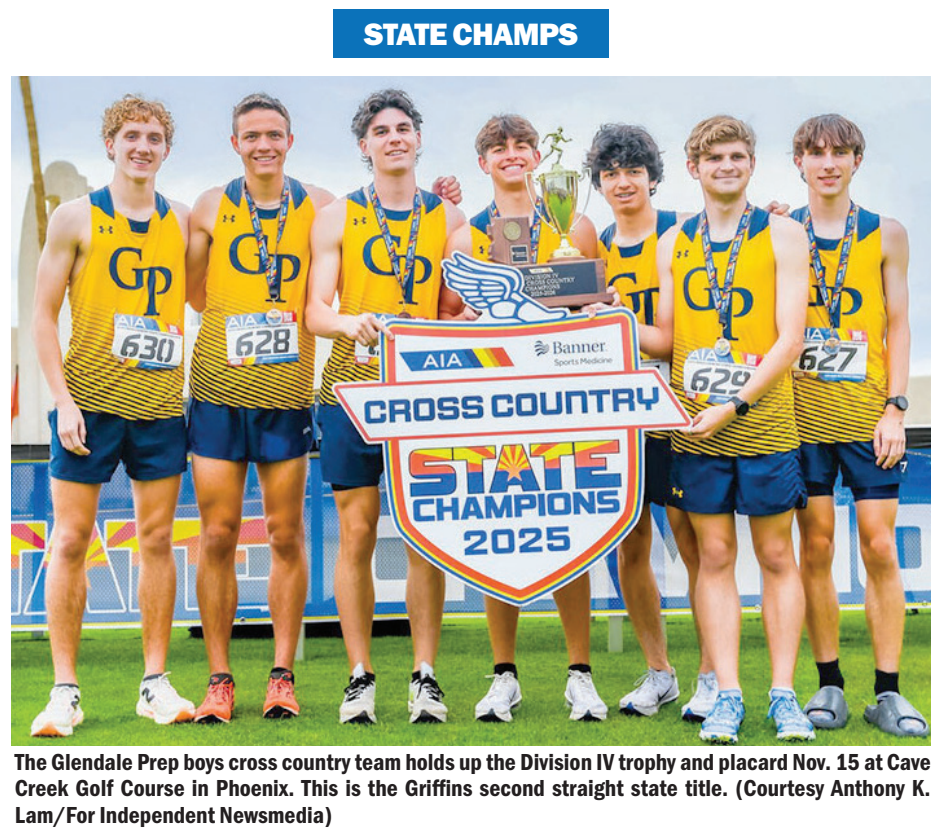
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STATE CHAMPS



The Glendale Prep boys cross country team holds up the Division IV trophy and placard Nov. 15 at Cave Creek Golf Course in Phoenix. This is the Griffins second straight state title. (Courtesy Anthony K. Lam/For Independent Newsmedia)

Glendale Prep boys cross country holds off Hopi for repeat

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Nothing was guaranteed, not a spot on the Glendale Prep boys cross country top seven for state, and not a repeat Division IV state title.

All of the Griffins top eight runners returned, yet the defending state champions were pushed to the limit by Arizona's most legendary small school distance runners from Hopi High School.

A team's five best runners determine the final the score — the lower the better — and all of the top five runners for Glendale Prep and Hopi placed in the top 19. Hopi led the race after one mile, but Glendale Prep reeled the Bruins in during the finals to win with 34 points compared to Hopi's 47.

"We knew they were going to go

out fast in the first mile. That's just what Hopi does almost every year. We saw all five of them and we were trying to pick them off one by one," Griffins junior Luke Webdale said.

Webdale placed fourth in Division IV, just behind senior teammate Daniel Andersen in third. Sophomore Alde Kuwawytewa was the top finisher for Hopi in sixth.

Andersen and Webdale game planned to stay together. Andersen said he and his teammates were definitely aware of the Hopi runners because at the beginning all five of them got in front of all of the Griffins.

The duo's finish was likely the determining factor.

"They both PR'ed at state, which is unusual. That was the difference, I

• See **Cross country** on page 19

Cross country

• From page 18

think, their performance,” Glendale Prep Coach Eric Webdale said.

Sophomore Logan Hartman finished eighth, junior James Reamer was 11th and junior Tanner Janssen placed 16th to round out the Griffins' top five.

The Griffins needed all of them, because in a couple of major meets earlier this fall, Hopi edged by the defending champs.

“They actually beat us at Twilight and then we saw them at Woodbridge and they beat us at Woodbridge,” Eric Webdale said. “We thought okay, we look good in the rankings but head to head they got us.”

Both team posted a better score than the Griffins' 68 points to win the title in 2024, by a razor-thin three points over Flagstaff Northland Prep with 71.

Glendale Prep built up toward this

meet all year. And the whole team contributed.

Eric Webdale said nine Glendale Prep runners have times under 18 minutes.

Senior Zack Rich placed sixth for Glendale Prep and 34th overall. He is a home school student that runs for the Griffins.

“Every single hard day, every little practice, we're just trying to stay with the group and keep that pack mentality. That definitely helps,” Rich said.

The team got better this year, by constantly competing for top seven places.

Junior Rafael Gameros earned a spot in the top seven after just missing out last year. He was the Griffins' seventh best runner Saturday, placing 36th overall.

“There's not one person that does it for us. We all have to do it together,” Andersen said. “This year was a big improvement for all of us.”



Glendale Prep senior Daniel Andersen, right, prepares to cross the finish line Division IV boys cross country race while junior teammate Luke Webdale, left, finishes fourth on Nov. 15 at Cave Creek Golf Course in Phoenix. Glendale Prep repeated as Division IV team champions. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)



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HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS

City welcomes public to True Star Christmas Parade

Glendale shares the spirit of Christmas during its annual Hometown Christmas Parade, where the community comes together to honor the true star of the season: Jesus Christ.

The parade starts at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, and the route is on Glendale Avenue, from 51st Avenue to 58th Avenue.

In the center of downtown Glendale, this festive event features a marching band competition, floats and awards for the best Christmas Spirit.

All proceeds bene-

fit Hope for Hunger, a Glendale-based food bank that brings help and hope to local families in need.

Attendees will include Mayor Jerry P. Weiers and honorary marshall Mel Martin, founder of the Martin Auto Museum on the border of Glendale and Phoenix.

Local mascots from professional and collegiate teams will be featured in the parade, as will more than 20 classic cars from Martin Auto Museum.

Santa is there for the festivities. More than 100 floats are expected.



The Glendale Hometown Christmas Parade returns down Glendale Avenue. (Courtesy Lisette Perez)

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EVENTS

Fall brings series of wine festivals to Phoenix area

With cooler temperatures, it's festival time in the Valley, particularly for those who like wine.

There are six upcoming wine festivals stretching from the Phoenix area up to Willcox in northern Arizona for those looking to partake in something off the vine, courtesy of Arizona Wine Events, Vermillion Productions and Wilcox Wine Country.

Each festival will have different award-winning local wineries in attendance, nationally renowned artists from across the U.S., live entertainment and local eateries.

The lineup is:

Nov. 21-23: The 16th Annual Sonoran Fine Art & Wine Festival

A three-day festival in Cave Creek will feature open-air shopping, fine

wine tastings, patio dining, and live musical entertainment. Local and regional artists will showcase their work, and a variety of Arizona wineries will be in attendance for wine tasting.

Dec. 5-7: Wigwam Holiday Festival of the Arts

This three-day event at the historic Wigwam Resort in Litchfield Park provides a weekend of art, entertainment, and festive cheer. Guests are invited to enjoy a glass of wine while strolling through the resort's holiday display.

"The Arizona wine industry is bigger than ever but since many don't have nearby tasting rooms, festivals like these are one of the best ways for wine lovers to find ones they like, and



The Westworld Art & Wine Experience is one of six wine festivals in the Valley and around the state that will occur through the end of the year. (Submitted photo/Vermillion Productions)

it's one of the easiest ways for festivals to connect with communities throughout the state," said Mike Pigford, owner of Arizona Wine Events.

"These events not only give wine lovers access to exceptional local vineyards but also shine a spotlight on the

• See **Wine** on page 23

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Wine

• From page 21

arts through our long-running partnership with Vermilion Promotions who showcases award-winning artists from across the country,” Pigford said.

Entry to each festival is free and early bird tickets for wine tasting — ranging from \$20 to \$35 per person — are on sale at www.willcoxwinecountry.org or www.vermillionpromotions.com. Tickets will be available day-of, ranging from \$30 to \$45 per person.

Every wine tasting ticket will include a commemorative wine glass and tasting tickets. Additional tasting tickets will be available for \$10, which includes five tickets, and each winery will be pouring by the glass.

For information, visit www.willcoxwinecountry.org or www.vermillionpromotions.com.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Glendale Glitters returns night after Thanksgiving

Glendale recently announced the return of its holiday tradition, Glendale Glitters, lighting up Downtown Glendale once again this holidays.

The kickoff event will take place 5-10 p.m. Nov. 28 and 29. This two-day celebration will feature an arrangement of lights, complemented by interactive displays and holiday scenes for visitors of all ages.

Guests can visit local shops, enjoy seasonal treats, listen to the sounds of carolers and meet Santa Claus himself.

The official lighting ceremony will take place at 5:45 p.m. Nov. 28 in front of the Glendale Civic Center, 5750 W. Glenn Drive.

There will be more than 20 vendors in attendance offering a variety of treats, crafts, and local favorites. This includes desserts from Nothing Bundt Cakes, holiday and variety-themed facepaint-



A father and his baby look at Christmas Lights during the 2024 Glendale Glitters kickoff event in Downtown Glendale. (Dana Gibbons/City of Glendale)

ing from Visualize Creativity, food from KTT Concessions, and dishes from Island Noodles.

Visitors can extend the celebration on Small Business Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Nov. 29 to support local shops, discover holiday gifts, and enjoy promo-

tions throughout Downtown Glendale.

After the kickoff weekend, the Holiday Light Display will continue 5-10 p.m. through Dec. 31.

In addition to the ongoing lights, Santa Claus will be at Santa's Village every Friday and Saturday, beginning Dec. 5 through Dec. 20. Starting at 6 p.m. families can visit Santa at 5836 W. Palmdale Ave., with photos available for \$5.

“It truly is the most wonderful time of the year,” stated Glendale Mayor Jerry P. Weiers in a press release. “Glendale Glitters has become synonymous with the Christmas season across the Valley. I urge everyone and their families to come down and take in the holiday festivities in our downtown.”

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Reading

• From page 16

per Creek Elementary School last fall.

“When we got hired last year, we first wanted to instill the culture because before, it was all over the place. We had kids in and out of the program because they didn’t know who was going to be head coach,” Hickem said. “At least now we’re establishing something into the community that we’re going to stay.”

After the first football season deeper ties were made on campus.

Three teams regularly go this school year.

“I got girls flag football doing the Sands Christmas party. They got into it from there. Cheer started going to Copper Creek this year too,” Hickem said.

These Mountain Ridge seniors read every Friday before noon. The cheer program sends 10 girls, and up to 25 student athletes show up.

Senior Ethan Fernandez is a regular and said now the players and the elementary students have formed a bond.

“It’s a very positive school,” Fernandez said. “People always say, ‘school is sad. I don’t want to go to school.’ But I enjoy coming here. I like walking through those doors.”

Senior Teymur Ehtisham said senior friends described the reading to the kids last year. All of them want to help people and make a impact on the community, he said.

“I think this is a huge part of the community, bringing everyone together,” Ehtisham said.

Flag football senior star Cameron Mailloux and teammates have enjoyed their reading sessions.

“I always wanted to be a role model and coach. This is definitely in my ballpark. I love going in there any they’re all excited to see you. They’re yelling your name and voting for you to read,” Mailloux said.

Ehtisham, Mailloux and fellow se-

nior Sanel Eminovic read to Ms. Mans’ third-grade class.

Eminovic saw how joyful his friends were after visiting Copper Creek.

“That day, before the game, they’d be smiling, all happy and really excited. I wanted to try it and the kids sounded like they really enjoyed it,” he said.

Hickem said the seniors read to special education, pre-K and third-grade classes regularly. Sometimes they add another class.

Senior Jacob O’Dell joins Fernandez in the special needs class.

“It’s a really rewarding thing to see how happy they get to see us, the big football players,” O’Dell said.

He said the kids seem to like all the stories.

“One of our kids used to give us feedback after every page,” O’Dell said. “It was really nice to hear all his big opinions.”

Seniors can go to Copper Creek after class is over on Fridays.

It’s also a chance to unplug from school, and the preparation for the next game.

“We don’t have to worry about a record. We come here and bond with fellow teammates. We read to the kids and enjoy their company. They bring a spark to our day,” Fernandez said.

Hickem said the group of readers probably will be bigger next year.

He plans to get together kids from these three teams for the Sands Branch Christmas party this year.

“It’s amazing to see it come full effect. This is my biggest group and probably one of my closest groups, if not the best group I’ve had,” Hickem said. “It’s a blessing to see because every Friday, every practice, they thank me. The coolest thing is they’ve been asking for recommendations.”

On Nov. 7 Ms. Mans’ class put on a talent show.

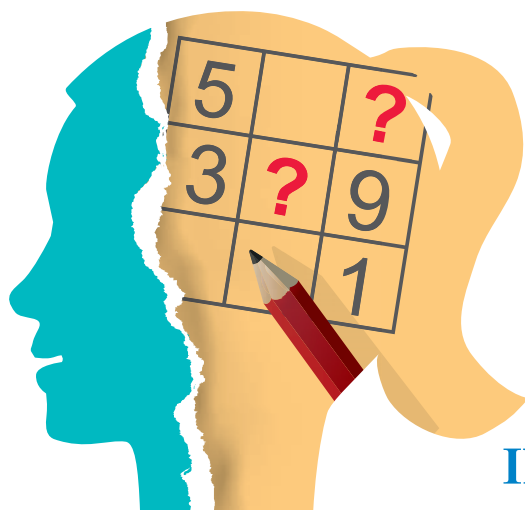
It takes the seniors back.

“When I was that age, I was always excited to see older kids, whether it was two grades older or four grades older,” Mailloux said.

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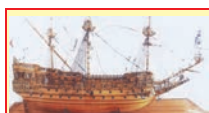
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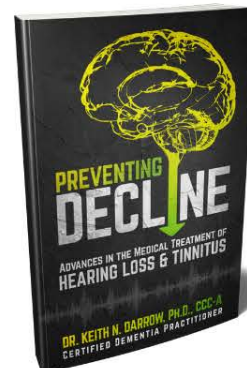
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