



Community

Clean-up event included rock painting; **2**



APACHE JUNCTION/GOLD CANYON INDEPENDENT



Neighbors

Kizziar in Fresh Start's Legacy Luminaries; **34**

January 2026

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Lost Dutchman Days Rodeo returns Feb. 27-March 1



By Richard H. Dyer

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The 62nd annual Lost Dutchman Days Rodeo — a rain-or-shine event — will be held Feb. 27-March 1 with all proceeds donated to local children's organizations.

It is presented by the Lost Dutchman Days Committee, a partnership of the Apache Junction Mounted Rangers and Superstition Mountain Promotional Corp.

New for 2026, a massage therapist will be available for free for rodeo contestants and rodeo volunteers Thursday through Sunday near the announcer booth.

"So I'm going to be there to do sports massage for the contestants and the staff of the rodeo. It's through the entire rodeo — the whole rodeo day," said RaNae Cowley, a licensed massage therapist. "If we can stretch and kind of work out some of the kinks before they ride, the aftereffects of their ride aren't as bad."

The city of Apache Junction in the past year com-

• See **Rodeo** on page 4

Jayde Houston, a Lost Dutchman Days junior teen queen contestant, pushes a calf during the horsemanship competition at the Apache Junction Rodeo Grounds. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H. Dyer)

OFFICER FACIO DRIVE

Street, park renamed to honor police officer killed in line of duty

By Richard H. Dyer

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A street west of Ironwood Drive in south Apache Junction was renamed to honor a police officer killed in the line of duty, Officer Gabriel Facio. The street also has a solar-lighted sign on the southeast corner with Radiance Avenue.

The blue sign with white letters at Officer Facio Drive and Radiance was unveiled in a ceremony Jan. 22 with Apache Junction Police officers, city council, city employees and members of Facio's family.

Facio, 46, a three-year veteran on the force, died June 8 from injuries suffered while answering a June 2 radio call about a driver waving a gun in what was described as a threatening manner. He is the first Apache Junction police officer to be killed in the line of duty.

In addition to the street renaming, the lighted sign and a memorial plaque at Radiance Avenue, Fall-

• See **Officer Facio** on page 6

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3-story multifamily rental community before council

A permit sought for a 300-unit, three-story multifamily residential rental development near the southeast corner of Idaho Road and the Scenic Street alignment is to be considered by the Apache Junction City Council in February.

The conditional-use permit request by Roers Cos., represented by Greg Davis of Iplan Consulting, is to be voted on during the 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 3, meeting in the council chambers, 300 E. Superstition Blvd. Go to tinyurl.com/25fh3472

Bobcat attacked 3 hikers near Gold Canyon in Tonto National Forest

A bobcat attacked three hikers in separate incidents along the Peralta Trail near Gold Canyon on Jan. 15, the Tonto National Forest reports.

Go to tinyurl.com/4arza2zt

Fleming, 17, missing from Apache Junction, police say

The Apache Junction Police Department is seeking the public's help in locating 17-year-old Kenadie "Kenna" Fleming who is missing and was last seen at approximately 4:20 p.m. Jan. 20 leaving her residence and heading west on foot.

Go to tinyurl.com/ypdz2263

Republic Services contract 1 of 3 topics of council executive session

Potential amendments to waste contracts with Republic Services is one of three topics of the Apache Junction City Council's Jan. 20 closed-door executive session.

Go to tinyurl.com/3weywx5

COMMUNITY NEWS

Street clean-up event included rock painting



Apache Junction residents Steven Pickett and Ingrid Abundiz volunteered to pick up litter at Community Action Day. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H Dyer)

By Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Cigarette butts, plastic fast-food cups and other litter strewn along Baseline Road in Apache Junction, just east of Ironwood, were recently scooped up by hand or with a trash-picker tool and bagged by volunteers to be deposited at the landfill as part of a nonprofit's Community Action Day.

"So many cigarettes on the ground. So many," Apache Junction resident John Schmitz said.

"We turned in a bag of garbage already," his mother, Carrie Schmitz, said early during the 8 a.m.-noon Jan. 17 event.

Gilbert resident Heidi Hills said a friend suggested she participate in the cleanup.

"My friend invited me and I said

yes... (I am) just somebody who came out and cares about community," she said. "Today pulling out the different types of trash. There were car mats, lots of cups — fast-food cups, things like that. I'm picking things up and putting them in a bag."

Rudy Esquivias, development services director for the city of Apache Junction, volunteered picking up litter.

"It's just a good chance for people to get together and get to know each other and feel like they are doing some good... Just a civic pride kind of thing," he said.

Frank Rodriguez, a senior plans examiner in development services for the city of Apache Junction, also volunteered.

"We're just doing a community cleanup. They provided the trash bags

and the gloves and the pickup bars," he said.

Volunteers at six Apache Junction locations cleaned streets, painted rocks or helped residents dispose of waste in dumpsters at the event hosted by the Apache Junction Community Development Corp. in partnership with the city of Apache Junction and Republic Services.

The work, designed to help beautify Apache Junction, used to be held in October as Make a Difference Day.

"We call it Community Action Day because historically the day was in October when it was too hot... (and) it's 100-and-something degrees, so we did this instead," said Thomas Kelly, vice chair of the Apache Junction Community Development Corporation, during the street cleanup.

• See **Neighbors** on page 15

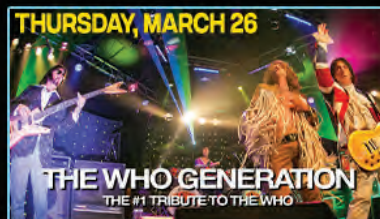
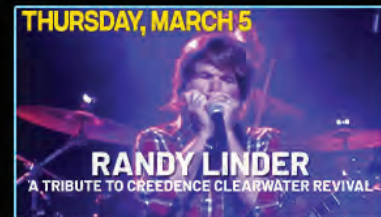
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FROM THE COVER

Rodeo

• From page 1

pleted upgrades to the vendor side of the rodeo grounds, 1590 E. Lost Dutchman Blvd., said Lost Dutchman Days Committee Chair Sherry Coker. "The concrete pads where the tents used to be; in the future they are going to have a big ramada there. They added sidewalks to all the vendors. And landscaping in the wash — it looks really nice out there," she said. "They added concrete pad parking for all the handicapped parking against the fence."

"They made the vendor area more handicapped accessible," said Denny Walters, SMPC member and former Lost Dutchman Days Committee chair.

Just like the past two years, a set number of tickets will be sold for each day's rodeo performance, and patrons

will not be able to transfer days, Coker said.

"So there's 3,000 tickets a day. And they are labeled 'Friday,' 'Saturday,' 'Sunday.' Buy what day they want," she said. "There will be tickets for sale at the front gate starting at 10 a.m. every day. We did it last year to see how it worked and it worked real well, so ahead of time they can come and buy tickets there."

Since 1994, more than \$1.6 million has been donated to children's charities from funds raised through the rodeo. Funds go to charities that do good works in the community.

Rodeo royalty chosen

Lost Dutchman Days rodeo royalty were chosen Jan. 10 after horsemanship tests at the rodeo grounds before judges Wendy Hughes, Monti Mongold, Riley King and Michael Pooley. Contestant speeches were held at the Apache Junction Multi-generational



Payton Spahn, who went on to win as 2026 junior teen queen, pushes a calf during the horsemanship competition at the Apache Junction Rodeo Grounds. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H. Dyer)

Center.

The 2026 Lost Dutchman Days rodeo royalty are Emalise Zuber, queen; Darian Phillips, senior teen queen; Payton Spahn, junior teen queen; Remi Houston and Chloe Houston,

both as little miss LDD.

The horsemanship portion at the rodeo grounds went well, Queen Coordinator Ashley Anderson said.

• See **Rodeo** on page 12



Mary Frances Nebel

September 4, 1948
~ December 26, 2025

Mary Frances Nebel passed away on December 26, 2025, after a brief illness, at Swedish Hospital in Seattle, Washington.

Mary was born and raised in Arlington, Washington, to Eleanor and Samuel Nebel, one of six children. She shared in family sing-alongs on road trips, around the campfire ~ and just about anywhere.



Family vacations were almost always centered around car camping and mountaineering adventures, either backpacking or skiing. As a result, Mary developed a lifelong passion for singing, music, and outdoor adventures. Among her siblings, her gentle kindness always served as a calming influence. Her dedication to and love for family were unparalleled.

Mary graduated from Arlington High School and then

attended the University of Washington. Following in her mother's footsteps, she graduated with a degree in nursing and then worked at the University of Washington Hospital in Obstetrics before becoming a public health nurse. Because of her generous, kind and nurturing personality, this was perhaps the path she was born to follow. Parenthood was another. After practicing on her youngest sibling, giving birth to her

beloved daughter, Tracy, was a dream come true ~ and one that eclipsed all else in life, except perhaps becoming a grandmother. Mary loved and was devoted to Tracy and her husband, Bill. She adored her Grandsons, Quinn and Riley.

After retiring, Mary spent many years RV-ing with her friends, and snow-birding at Superstition Mountain Resort in Arizona. She celebrated and was a proud member of the Rainbow

Community.

Mary's nurturing kindness and unflagging loyalty will be deeply missed by those of us who relied on it. She is survived by her daughter, Tracy and husband, Bill; grandsons, Quinn and Riley; siblings, Sam, Stephen, Elizabeth, Sally, and Veta. She is also survived by Karen Walters and Lorie Dwinell, both former partners and forever friends.

A celebration of life will be held in her honor this Spring.

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FROM THE COVER



Apache Junction Police Chief Michael Pooley speaks at a ceremony prior to the unveiling of a solar-powered lighted sign at Officer Facio Drive and Radiance Avenue. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard H. Dyer)

Officer

• From page 1

en AJPD Officer Facio Park will be within the Blossom Rock Community at Ironwood and Ray.

The idea for renaming the street was suggested to the city by an official with housing developer D.R. Horton.

"We wanted to do something impactful, not just something that would be a one-time thing, that would last," Jose Castillo, D.R. Horton vice president for development, said during the ceremony. "So we came up with the idea of not only just renaming the street so it will be here forever going in every direction, so everybody who drives by, they can remember the sacrifice that he made, but also a special sign that's lit here. So the sign is solar operated so at times it gets dark it will light up and remind us of the light he gave in his life and his loss."

Officer Facio Drive and Radiance is where the shooting occurred, AJPD Chief Michael Pooley said.

"When we come out here and we



Officer Gabriel Facio, 46, a three-year veteran on the Apache Junction Police Department, died June 8, 2025, from injuries suffered while answering a June 2 radio call about a driver waving a gun in what was described as a threatening manner. He is the first Apache Junction police officer to be killed in the line of duty. (AJPD)

see this sign, it's a reminder of what happened. This is the intersection where Officer Facio lost his life back in June. This is the intersection where everything happened," he said.

• See **Officer Facio** on page 14

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INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

There were 54 business licenses issued in December 2025 in the city of Apache Junction.

The following business licenses are listed by name — including doing business as or dba; city; contact name; and North American Industry Classification System (code). For the full list, go to YourValley.net.

- ♦ Dragon Wing Designs; Apache Junction; Owner; Independent Artists, Writers, And Performers (711510).

- ♦ Zipfizz Corp.; Woodinville, Washington; Terri; Drugs And Druggists' Sundries Merchant Wholesalers (424210)

- ♦ A Mae's Cakes; Mesa; Charmae Gastelum; Mobile Food Services (722330)

- ♦ Gimme That Fluffy Stuff LLC; San Tan Valley; Ashley Lopez; Mobile Food Services (722330)

- ♦ Messymama Makings; Apache Junction; Alyssa Wilda; Gift, Novelty, And Souvenir Retailers

• See **Business** on page 28



The Apache Junction Senior Expo, hosted by Independent Newsmedia, was held Jan. 7 at Central Arizona College, 805 S. Idaho Road in Apache Junction. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H. Dyer)

Senior Expo hosted by Independent Newsmedia

By Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Several hundred adults attended a recent Apache Junction Senior Expo hosted by Independent Newsmedia that showcased businesses as vendors and sponsors.

The event, held the morning of Jan. 7 at Central Arizona College, 805 S. Idaho Road in Apache Junction, included resource booths, merchandise giveaways and free information.

Mesa resident Richard Schneider attended the expo to gather information on health.

"Just kind of check out the health end of it. The plumbers were here too," he said of Zippity Split Plumbing, which had a poster with photos of clogged and open pipes.

"They're horrible — the buildup," he said of the clogged pipes.

Cheryl Tverberg of Apache Junction liked that she could get Medicare insurance and medical information at one place.

"I'd seen the signs and stuff, and I had gone to one several years ago but I hadn't gotten back to it. This one was much better. I found a lot

of information, I had questions that were answered," she said. "The urgent care was there, just the different (Medicare) insurance companies to get some ideas for next year."

Apache Junction resident Betty Turner said she learned at the senior expo about the need for two types of research.

"I really liked the research — the girls that were explaining about how important it is to research for migraines and neurology. That's the one

• See **Expo** on page 30

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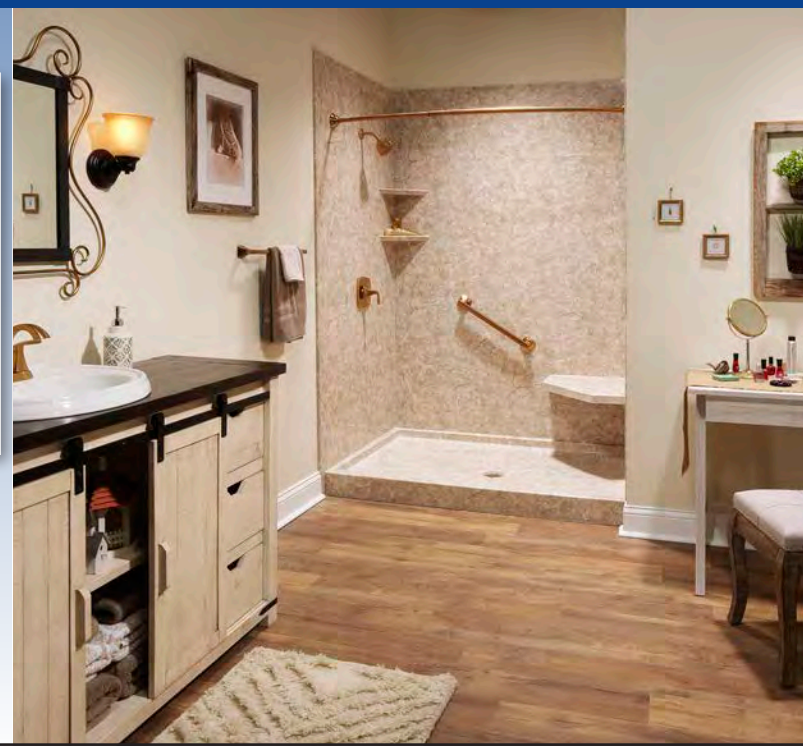
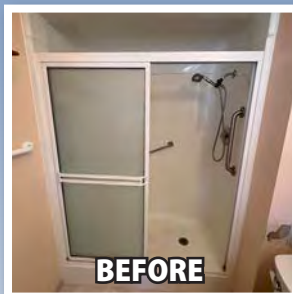
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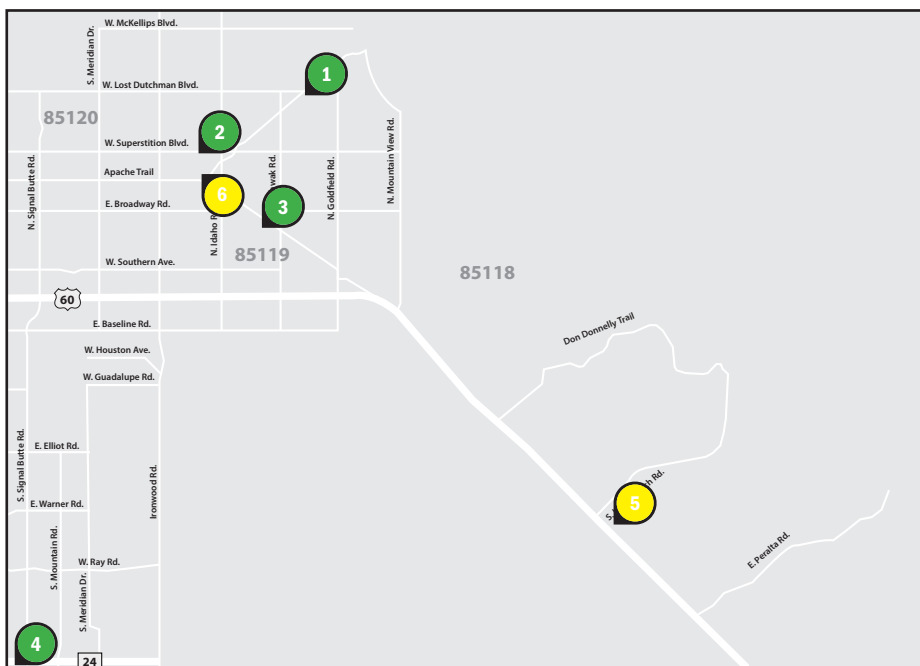
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BUSINESS MOVES



Map not to scale

Compiled by Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

IN THE NEWS

1 Hitching Post Saloon in Apache Junction has received awards from BusinessRate as the best pizza and best restaurant for 2025 for nationwide reviews on Google. The business at 2341 N. Apache Trail is owned by Tina Lovelady and Mehmood Mohiuddin and is on Facebook @azhpsaloon.

2 Horizon Health and Wellness, Earth Heart Park Garden Club, 625 N. Plaza Drive, is the winner of the 2025 Jingle in the Junction decorating contest. A total of 11 area businesses and organizations participated in the contest. Votes could be cast Nov. 29-Dec. 17 for the business that lights up the Apache Junction community with the most holiday spirit in 2025. Previous winners by year are: 2017, **Arizona Tiremen Services**, 870 W. Apache Trail; 2018, **The Little Prospector**, 1802 S. Ironwood Drive; 2019, **Handlebar Pub & Grill**, 650 W. Apache Trail; 2020, **Apache Trail High School**, 945 W. Apache Trail; 2021, **Horizon Health and Wellness**, 625 N. Plaza

Drive; 2022, **Toast Gio's**, 1422 E. Broadway Ave.; 2023, **VFW Post 7968 and Auxiliary**, 250 S. Phelps Drive; and 2024, **Twistd Treatz**, food truck.

3 Mediacom Communications recently recognized 10 employees based out of the Apache Junction Mediacom office at 1435 Old West Highway who achieved the company's top performance rankings for outstanding customer service over the past year. An award ceremony was held with corporate executives, where the individuals were recognized for their high performance in 2025:

- Connor Bigler earned the highest marks in performance over the past year, receiving a national gold-level "Warehouse Employee of the Year" award for excellent service performance in 2025.

- Maria Contreras was recognized for outstanding technical support in 2025.

- Erik Ruiz was recognized for outstanding sales performance in 2025.

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- Tammy Kowalewski was recognized for outstanding technical support in 2025.

- Silvia Trujillo was recognized for outstanding sales and customer service.

- Nathanael Fischer received a national bronze-level award for outstanding technical support performance.

- Ariel Eschen was named the Area Operations Employee of the Year.

- Jessica Baumgartner was recognized for outstanding technical support.

- Cynthia Wilson received the Employee's Choice Award for outstanding customer service in 2025.

- Trish Karba received a People's Choice Award for outstanding service performance.

Go to mediacomcable.com.

4 Construction has begun at **DSV's** \$14.5 million, 950,000-square-foot regional headquarters near the northeast corner of Pecos and Ellsworth and near Mesa Gateway Airport, and it is to be completed in early 2027. DSV's transport logistics services moves millions of shipments for its customers



HORIZON HEALTH & WELLNESS



LIQUOR LICENSES

every year, it states at www.dsv.com. The regional HQ in Mesa will house the company's air, sea, road transport, inventory management solutions and contractor logistics divisions, and have up to 160 employees, officials said prior to a groundbreaking ceremony near the northeast corner of Pecos and Ellsworth. The airport is operated by the Mesa Gateway Airport Authority, with representation from Apache Junction, Mesa, Queen Creek, Gilbert and the Gila River Indian Community.

LIQUOR LICENSES

5 The Pinal County Board of Supervisors recently voted to recommend that the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control approve an application for a temporary extension of premises/patio permit 2-10 p.m. Tuesday, March 17, an application of Deborah Harris dba **Rodeo Lounge**, 8333 E. Sunrise Sky Drive in Gold Canyon.

6 The Apache Junction City Council recently voted to recommend the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control approve a new series 10 beer and wine store liquor license for **Nex Gen** at 420 N. Apache Trail in Apache Junction.

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FROM THE COVER



From left, Sam and Dan Buckingham of Apache Junction move calves at the Lost Dutchman Days rodeo royalty competition. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H. Dyer)

Rodeo

• From page 4

“It went really good. The girls did great. It was definitely windy and cold out there, but they were troopers. Yeah, I’m super proud of all of them,” she said. “The wind definitely makes it harder for rodeos. It makes it really hard to hold flags and stuff for the horses. And the horses usually get a little bit friskier on colder and windy days. Yeah, but all the girls and horses did really good this morning. I was really happy about it.”

The little miss LDD contestants did not participate in the horsemanship portion.

“The little miss title is nonriding. We just want to kind of get girls started in rodeo queening or kind of just in the Western industry from a younger age to kind of keep the rodeo queening alive. So we let them do parades and they’ll ride in the barrel truck at the rodeo. They are right there with the big girls — just not on the horses to keep it safe,” Anderson said.

Rodeo queen fundraiser

Lost Dutchman Days Queen Jaelee Mernaugh, chosen in 2025, is hosting a three-event gymkhana fundraiser starting at 9 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 7, at

the Apache Junction Rodeo Grounds.

The fundraiser at 1590 E. Lost Dutchman Blvd. will benefit Rachel’s Rescue in honor of Rachel Hansen, who was murdered June 4, 2022. The rescue is dedicated to rescuing dogs and puppies in her honor. Learn more about the rescue at <https://rachelsrescue2022.com/>.

Signups start at 8 a.m. Feb. 7 for the queen fundraising gymkhana. Cost is \$25 for entry plus lunch. Lunch costs \$10 if separate. A 50/50 raffle is planned. Monetary donations are welcome.

For information, call Ashley Anderson at 480-238-6856 or Jaelee Mernaugh at 605-460-4040.

2026 rodeo

The full eight-event rodeo, sanctioned by the Grand Canyon Professional Rodeo Association, has cowboys and cowgirls competing for prize money beginning at 1:30 p.m. each day at the Apache Junction Rodeo Grounds, 1590 E. Lost Dutchman Blvd., at Tomahawk Road.

The rodeo features hundreds of contestants, all of whom put up an entry fee to win the coveted Lost Dutchman Days Rodeo prize money and belt buckles.

• See **Rodeo** on page 24

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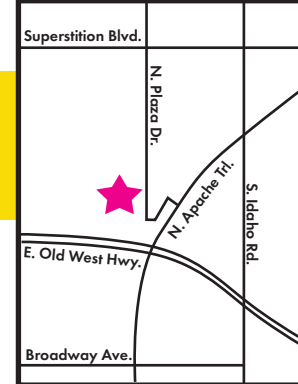
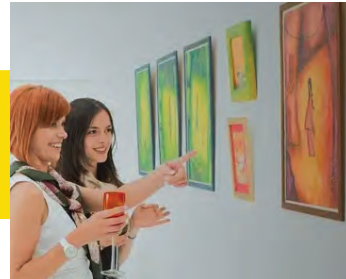
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FROM THE COVER



Apache Junction Police Chief Michael Pooley unveils a solar-power lighted sign at Officer Facio Drive and Radiance Avenue. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard H. Dyer)

Officer

• From page 6

“He was a little guy, but he had a big heart. And like Jose said, he lit up everybody’s life anytime he was around you. And that sign that we are going to unveil is a reminder of that. In dark times, which we all have in our lives, we can remember that there is good — there was good in Facio — and there continues to be good in everybody that’s around here,” Pooley said.

Apache Junction Mayor Chip Wilson thanked D.R. Horton for re-naming the street.

“I want to say a special thank you to D.R. Horton and the community

here for recognizing this street naming. It is an honor to be able to not only for Officer Facio’s loss, but also to honor the family (and) his service to the community,” he said at the ceremony.

The Apache Junction City Council on Sept. 3 voted unanimously to approve the replat of the map of dedication for Officer Facio Drive, originally filed as Davis Drive, and the replat of Superstition Vistas, Phase 1B, to change the name of Davis Drive to Officer Facio Drive.

Richard H. Dyer can be reached at rdyer@iniusa.org, or on X @rhdyer. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AsOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines, <https://www.yourvalley.net/civility-checklist/>.

Neighbors

• From page 2

Rocks could be painted on tables at Flatiron Park, 100 N. Apache Trail, as part of the volunteer effort.

The rock painting was added to the annual event so children could participate, said Robin Barker, a volunteer with the Apache Junction Community Development Corporation.

"Some of the things, like picking up trash on a busy road, that's not a place for children to be. So this is something children can do," she said.

Painted rocks were to be left at the park, said Apache Junction resident Heidi Young, who coordinated the activity.

"So they go back into the rock garden right behind us back there. So we just place them. We've got a lot of rocks over there already from previous events," she said. "It just brings art to people's lives. Sometimes they have



From right, Apache Junction resident Carrie Schmitz and her son John cleaned litter on Baseline Road in Apache Junction for Community Action Day. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H Dyer)

scenes on them. Something pretty to have and to share."

Apache Junction resident Alicia

Groneberg painted a cactus on a rock "just to participate in the Community Action Day," she said. "The Arizona

sunset."

Apache Junction resident Judy Ponio helped others paint but also designed one.

"I'm here volunteering. They inspired me to paint a rock," she said. "Some people, children, need to know that there is more than their phone to look at, to be able to leave something — paint a rock here and then leave one. They can come back and see the rocks."

Her painted rock had a pink ribbon showing breast cancer awareness.

"Recently had a lumpectomy, so getting over that and acknowledging that it's going to be gone from me," Ponio said. "I'm going to leave it here. I'm going to put my date on the back of it — the date I had the surgery. So I'm leaving it because it's never coming back."

Dumpsters were set out for neighborhood clean-ups at:

• See **Neighbors** on page 26

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OPINION

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

Your Opinion

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

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

Speak Up

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

Corrections

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

Here are some comments about stories happening in your area:

20 APACHE JUNCTION HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA STUDENTS HEADING TO NYC IN MARCH

"Wow! That's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these drama students. To be able to visit Manhattan's Theater District is an incredible experience in itself. And the itinerary is so well planned. Definitely exciting. Experienced it all and I wouldn't change a thing." — **Mark B.** via Nextdoor comment

SUPERSTITION HARLEY-DAVIDSON CELEBRATES A DECADE OF GIVING WITH THE 10TH ANNUAL TROLLS TEDDY BEAR RUN

"Thank you for helping the children out." — **Elizabeth Winger** via Nextdoor comment

LANES CLOSED ON SUPERSTITION, MERIDIAN TO NORTH APACHE TRAIL IN APACHE JUNCTION

"The other day when they had the lane closed they got it done pretty damn fast. Especially compared to the rest of the valley's construction/roadwork. On top of it, they did an amazing job redoing our road on superstition. I am super happy with the

SPEAK UP

work they did and how fast it took." — **Destin Fuller** via Nextdoor comment

"I wish they would get Apache Trail done." — **Lynnel Savage** via Nextdoor comment

"Come repave North Idaho." — **Nicholas S.** via Nextdoor comment

60-FOOT-TALL FLAGPOLE OK'D AT KB HOME DEVELOPMENT IN GOLD CANYON

"Beautiful." — **Brian Campbell!** via Nextdoor comment

"Unnecessary virtue signaling." — **Shawna Hanley** via Nextdoor comment

"Shawna, 'virtue signaling' usually means saying something you don't believe to impress others. Flying the flag reflects values many people genuinely hold. U.S.A." — **Jeff Luft** via Nextdoor comment

GOLD CANYON PARCEL'S DAY-CARE BUSINESS ZONING CHANGED TO RESIDENTIAL BY SUPERVISORS

"May have been a day care for senior adults." — **Sharon Hancock** via Nextdoor comment

"Day care could have been nice." — **Tj Keefe** via Nextdoor comment

CODE VIOLATIONS ON NORTH CEDAR DRIVE PROPERTY NEAR APACHE JUNCTION BEFORE SUPERVISORS

"Glad. This could cause wildfire. Clean it up." — **Rose Johnson** via Nextdoor comment

"Need an aerial view. From this angle, it looks like a junkyard. The statement says that it is a code violation, but this requires you to accept the premise." — **Roger Mellen** via Nextdoor comment

"Wake up. This is land grab." — **Jeanne Gilson Shaffer** via Facebook comment

Corrections

The last names of two individuals were misspelled in a photo caption on page 4 of the January 2026 issue. It should have said: Volunteers at the Dec. 6 buffelgrass removal at Silly Mountain Park are, standing from left, Jan Favorite, Micah Hudson, Ruby Bigelow, Michael Castle, Nickolaus Lancaster-Eistle, Ivan Lancaster-Eistle, Geoffrey Fitzwater-Castle and Robert Sanor; and sitting from left, are Amber Hudson and Lena Bigelow.

Also, it incorrectly stated Commissioner Nicholas Kelley was absent from a meeting in the story "Affordable apartment development planned at Idaho, Scenic" on page 24 of the December 2025 issue. Kelley was appointed to the planning commission but had not been sworn in.

BREAKTHROUGH NEUROPATHY TREATMENT

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FEB. 7**Burro Derby, Prospector Play Day, Concert in the Park**

Join Apache Junction Parks and Recreation Department and the Bray Club 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at Prospector Park, 3015 N. Idaho Road in Apache Junction. Games and activities for all those who are interested in spending a day at the park.

Activities will be taking place while burros and their running partners are out on a 3-mile course. Starting at 12:30 p.m., local band Reign N' Country will be taking the stage and playing until 2 p.m. The event and all of its activities are free to all ages.

Call 480-983-2181

Go to www.apachejunctionaz.gov/parks

FEB. 21**'Tangled'**

The Apache Junction Parks and Recreation Department's free February Movie in the Park, presented by SRP, starts at 6:30 p.m. at Flatiron Park, 100 N. Apache Trail in Apache Junction

"Grab your friends and family along with a blanket or lawn chair to enjoy a nice evening outside with a great movie," it states in a release.

For information on this program or other programs and services, call the Parks and Recreation Department at 480-983-2181 or go to www.apachejunctionaz.gov/parks.

FEB. 28**Phil Collins
Genesis Experience**

"One More Night — The Phil Collins Genesis Experience" performs at 6 p.m. for a fundraiser benefiting Apache Junction Unified School District that will be used for facility/grounds improvements.

Doors open at 5 p.m. at the Apache Junction Performing Arts Center, 2525 S Ironwood Drive, for the concert featuring the music of Phil Collins and Genesis.

Come early starting at 4 p.m. for food and beverages provided by a local food trucks.

Purchase \$25 tickets

at <https://ajpac.ludus.com/200514761>

THINGS TO DO

Desert Delights Family Days at museum in February, March

Desert Delights Family Days, a new series of immersive workshops designed to connect families with the incredible biodiversity of the Arizona desert, is offered at the Superstition Mountain Lost Dutchman Museum in Apache Junction.

The three-hour interactive sessions at 4087 E. Apache Trail (State Route 88) offer a rare opportunity for hands-on learning, at no cost, alongside premier animal experts.

Upcoming free events on the Superstition Mountain Lost Dutchman Museum grounds are:

♦ 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 21: "Danger Noodles!" — Desert wildlife and safety with Phoenix Herpetological Sanctuary. Safely coexist with Arizona's unique reptiles.

♦ 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, March 21: "Birds of Prey with Liberty Wildlife" — history, safety and preservation of native birds of prey

The first workshop, PicasZoo with the Phoenix Zoo, held in January was



Learn about desert wildlife and safety Feb. 21 with the Phoenix Herpetological Sanctuary. (Metro Creative)

a success.

"We recognize that sometimes the best classrooms have no walls," Kat Palma, the museum's marketing strategist, said in the release. "We've partnered with renowned wildlife organizations to bring the wild a little closer to home. Our mission has always been to preserve our history, and this includes the living history of our wildlife."

**About the Superstition Mountain
Lost Dutchman Museum**

Visitors can learn about the area, ranching life, geology, Indigenous culture, early settlers and so much more at the Superstition Mountain Lost Dutchman Museum.

Learn about the Lost Dutchman and his legacy, even to this day, drawing gold hunters and myth busters alike. Go to www.smldm.org.

Limited-engagement performers planned at Renaissance Festival

The Village of Fairhaven at this year's Arizona Renaissance Festival welcomes something entirely new — limited engagement performers "Blades and Bravery" Jan. 31-Feb. 1; "Jacques Ze Whipper" Feb. 7-16; "Dungeons and Shakespeare" Feb. 21-March 8; "Tiny Girl Big Show" March 14-29; "Judas and Magnolia" Jan. 31-Feb. 22; and "Witch Trials" Feb. 28-March 29.

Each show at the Arizona Renais-

sance Festival, 12601 E. US Highway 60 in Gold Canyon, brings something entirely different to the stage and you won't want to miss a single one, it states in a release.

The stage schedule can be downloaded at <https://arizona.renfestinfo.com/entertainment>.

The 2026 Arizona Renaissance Festival is open rain or shine 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and Presidents Day Monday from Jan. 31 to

March 29. Free parking. No pets allowed.

The fanciful European-style village is on a 50-acre site just below the foothills of the Superstition Mountains. This is where you'll find theater, circus, an arts and crafts fair, acrobatics, a jousting tournament, people-powered rides, and a feasting — all rolled into a non-stop, day-long adventure.

• See **Festival** on page 32



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Date Night Out	Queen Creek Olive Mill DC Steakhouse Hales Center Theatre
Event Planner	Queen Creek Olive Mill Bente Perfect Party Planner
Event Venue	Queen Creek Olive Mill Schnepf Farms Superstition Manor Wedding and Event Center The Ashley Castle
Festival	Queen Creek Olive Mill Garlic Festival Tempe Festival of the Arts Ostrich Festival
Hotel/Resort	Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Arizona Grand San Marcos Crown Plaza
Live Theatre	Chandler Center for the Arts ASU Gammage Hale Theatre
Local Attraction	Phoenix Zoo Pecan Lake San Tan Flat
Local Author	Lawley Publishing Mark Driscoll Jenn McKinlay
Movie Theater	Fat Cats Queen Creek Harkins Queen Creek AMC

Museum	Chandler Museum Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) Superstition Mountain Lost Dutchman Museum
Music School/Instruction	Mad Music East Valley Yamaha Music School The Music Store Studio
Music Venue	Chandler Center for the Arts The Nile Theater Queen Creek Olive Mill
Musical Instrument Store	Mad Music Milanos Musical Instrument Museum
Place to People Watch	Chandler Fashion Center Old Town Scottsdale Queen Creek Olive Mill
Place to Have a Birthday Party	Queen Creek Olive Mill Main Event Jake's Unlimited
Place to Take the Kids	Musical Instrument Museum Main Event Pecan Lake
Tourist Destination	Phoenix Zoo Queen Creek Olive Mill Old Town Scottsdale
Wedding Venue	Queen Creek Olive Mill Windmill Winery The Ashley Castle

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Charter School	Benjamin Franklin Charter Schools Tempe Preparatory American Leadership Academy - Mesa North Elementary

College/University	Arizona State University Grand Canyon University Chandler Gilbert Community College
Community Event	Mary Gloria Foundation Heart Cry Church Fall Festival Queen Creek Family Market
Community Outreach	Mary Gloria Foundation Heart Cry Church Fall Festival Nancy's Closet
Fundraising Event	Mary Gloria Foundation Nancy's Closet East Valley Giving Circle
Non-Profit Civic Organization	The Mary Gloria Foundation Queen Creek Resource Center Nancy's Closet
Non-Profit Multi-Cultural	The Mary Gloria Foundation Nancy's closet United Food Bank
Park	Frontier Family Park Gilbert Regional Park Kiwanas
Philanthropic Individual/Organization	Mary Gloria Foundation United Food Bank National Charity League- Santan
Place for a Quiet Stroll	Riparian Wildlife Preserve Queen Creek Olive Mill Queen Creek Wash
Place for a one day trip	Sedona Queen Creek Olive Mill Bisbee
Place to Worship	Heart Cry Church The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Flatiron Church
Place to Watch a Sunset	Superstition Mountains Queen Creek Olive Mill
Place to Work	Heart Cry Christian Academy Queen Creek Unified School District City of Chandler

Pre-School	International School of Arizona Heart Cry Pre-School WonderWise Preschool	Butcher/Meat Market	The Pork Shop Von Hanson's Meats & Spirits Gilbert Butchery	French Fries	In-N-Out Burger Five Guys Queen Creek Olive Mill
Private School	International School of Arizona Heart Cry Christian Academy Gilbert Christian	Caterer	Queen Creek Olive Mill Portillos M Culinary Concepts	Fried Chicken	Chick Fil A Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers Dave's Hot Chicken
Public School District	Queen Creek Unified School District Chandler Unified School District American Leadership Academy (ALA)	Cheesesteak	Portillos Eddie's Cheesesteaks & Hoagies	Frozen Treats	Andy's Frozen Custard Queen Creek Olive Mill Milkshake Factory Playa Bowls
Teacher	Diana Ramirez - International School of AZ Lori Sterenberg Emmanuel Del Caro Castillo Mary Fort Melissa Martin	Chicken	Chick-Fil-A Dave's Hot Chicken Thirsty Lion	Gourmet Specialty Shop	Queen Creek Olive Mill Sip N Shop D'Vine Gourmet
Technical & Trade School	EVIT Power Campus American Leadership Academy Applied Technologies Pima Medical Institute	Chinese Restaurant	Jade Palace Dragon Wok Hong Kong Kitchen	Grocery Store	Trader Joes Fry's Sprouts
Youth Organization	Paladin Sports The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints Sun Valley Community Church	Classic Cocktails	The Ostrich Hidden House Thirsty Lion	Happy Hour	Postino's Queen Creek Olive Mill Firebirds
FOOD & DRINK		Coffee Shop	Peixoto Black Rock Third Place Cup	Health Food Store	Trader Joes Sprouts Whole Foods
Asian Restaurant	Mekong Palace Dragon Wok China Chef Taste of China	Comfort Food	Blue 32 Joe's Farm Grill Portillos	Ice Cream	Handel's Cold Stone Creamery Andy's Frozen Custard
BBQ	Caldwell County BBQ Queen Creek Woodbarn BBQ Joes BBQ -Gilbert Lil Miss BBQ	Country Cooking	Original Biscuits Cheddars SugarJam The Southern Kitchen	Italian Restaurant	Queen Creek Olive Mill Salerno's Pizzeria North Italia
Bakery	Nothing Bundt Cakes Queen Creek Olive Mill Piefection Rise Up Bakery	Crab Legs	Angry Crab Shack High Tide	Local Brewery	Catalyst Crafted Ales Ellsworth Brewing Pedal Haus Brewery
Bar	Catalyst Crafted Ales Thirsty Lion The Handlebar Pub and Grill	Craft Beer	Catalyst Crafted Ales Ellsworth Brewing Hundred Mile Brewery	Local Winery	Windmill Winery Garage-East Down Time Wines
Breakfast	Over Easy Queen Creek Olive Mill Topsy Egg	Date Night Restaurant	Queen Creek Olive Mill DC Steakhouse Francine Restaurant	Mexican Restaurant	Nando's La Ristra Salt + Lime Modern Mexican Grill
Brunch	Queen Creek Olive Mill Brunch Snob Topsy Egg Toast Gio's Breakfast & Lunch	Deli	Chompies Jason's Deli Downtown Chandler Cafe	New Restaurant	Cold Beer & Cheeseburgers Portillos Mexicano Chandler
Burger	Culver's Five Guys Arizona Wilderness Zin Burger	Dessert	Queen Creek Olive Mill Insomnia Cookies Chompies	Outdoor Dining	Queen Creek Olive Mill O.H.S.O. Hidden House
		Dinner Under \$10	Salad & Go Portillos Ghett Yo Taco	Pizzeria	Vero Chicago Pizza Queen Creek Olive Mill Salerno's Pizzeria
		Donuts	Bosa Hurts Donut Company Randy's	Restaurant	Queen Creek Olive Mill Salerno's Pizzeria Cold Beers & Cheeseburgers
		Family Restaurant	Queen Creek Olive Mill San Tan Flats Black Bear	Seafood Restaurant	Salt Cellar Blue Wasabi Red Lobster
		Fine Dining Restaurant	The Ra Ra Room Cooper's Hawk Hidden House		

FOOD & DRINK

Sports Bar	Cold Beer & Cheeseburgers Zipps Goldie's Sports Cafe
Sushi	Blue Wasabi Ra Sushi Bar Restaurant Sushi Creek
Takeout Food	Salad N Go Portillos Yaos Chinese Restaurant
Taproom	The Sugar Bar Craft Beer & Wine Taproom & Bottleshop Whining Pig Quarthaus
Wine Bar	Queen Creek Olive Mill Postino's Black Sheep Wine Bar
Wings	Zipps Buffalo Wild Wings, Gilbert Cogburns

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Dentistry: Cosmetic	Smiles by Hanna
Dentistry: Dental Implants	New Horizon Dental Center
Dentistry: Family	Crockett Dental Nielson Family Dentistry Dynamic Family Dentistry
Dentistry: Orthodontic	Rollins & Petersen Orthodontics Wright Orthodontics
Dentistry: Pediatric	Sun Valley Pediatric Dentistry
Dentistry: Surgical	New Horizon Dental Center Brent Boyse Matheson Dentistry
Dermatologist	Skin & Cancer Center of Arizona Bingham Dermatology Desert Sky Dermatology Red Mountain Dermatology

Doctor	Keystone Natural Family Medicine Premier Health Family Practice Dr. Ann Marie Padilla Dr. Carlblom at Protea PA Trevor Whiting
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Emergency/ Safety Services (First Aid, CPR, AED, etc)	Staying Alive LLC Snappy CPR
--	--

Fitness Center/Gym	D1 training - Joshua Brinkman Mountainside Fitness Planet Fitness
--------------------	--

Health Insurance Agent	Alicia Rosenquist Arizona Health Insider
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Hearing Aid Center	ABC Hearing Mesa Livingston Hearing Aids
--------------------	--

Home Health Care	Right at Home Queen Creek Seniors Helping Seniors East Valley Always Best Care Senior Services
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Hospital	Banner Mercy Gilbert East Valley ER
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IV Therapy	IV League Arizona Prime IV Hydration & Wellness - Red Mountain Gateway Health, Wellness & Aesthetics
------------	---

Local Pharmacy	CVS Mixtures Pharmacy Ahwatukee
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Med Spa	Wallflower Beauty & Wellness Flawless Faces Med Spa Gateway Health Wellness & Aesthetics
---------	--

Medicare Insurance Agent	Alicia Rosenquist The Medicare Navigators Greg Gudis
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Mental Health Therapist	East Valley Psychiatric Services Warm Milk and Honey Healing Psychotherapy Services, LLC AZ Whole Heart Connection Horizon Health & Wellness
-------------------------	---

Physical Therapist	AFC Physical Medicine & Chiropractic Centers Spooner Jim Coleman at Welch Physical Therapy
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Physical Therapy Center	AVC - Mesa Spooner
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Physician: Family	Rock Point Family Medicine Premier Health Family Practice Dr. Ann Marie Padilla
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Physician: Pediatrics	Premier Health Family Practice Natural Pediatrix Dr Heather Dirkmaat Dr. Sonal Shah of Sunrise Pediatrics
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Primary Care Office	Hope Heart Heal Premier Health Family Practice Natural Pediatrix
Vein Treatment Center	Natural Pediatrix Advanced Vein Center

HOME & GARDEN

Carpet Cleaning Company	SkyBlue Carpet & Tile Cleaning Voda Cleaning & Restoration Of Phoenix Zero Rez
-------------------------	--

Contractors/General	Bulldog Design/Build LLC
Exterminator/Pest Control	American Desert Pest Control Magic Pest Control Pest R Us

Floor Covering Store	Floor Daddy
Furniture Store	American Furniture Warehouse Norwood Furniture Furniture Brat

Garage Door Sales & Service	Triple B Garage Doors State 48 Garage Doors
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Hardware Store	Ace Kabats Ace
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Heating & AC Services	MechaniCool Simper Fi Heating & Cooling True Home Maintenance AC & Heating LLC
-----------------------	--

Home Appliance Store	Spencer's The Home Depot Lowe's
----------------------	--

Home Repair Company	Voda Cleaning and Restoration of Phoenix Bulldog Design/Build LLC HomeLyfe
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House Cleaning	Two Maids Voda Cleaning & Restoration Of Phoenix Barazza's House cleaning Merry Maids
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Outdoor Living	Southwest Spas
Plumber/Plumbing Company	Steadfast Plumbing Flying Plumber

Remodeling Company	Bulldog Design/Build LLC
Restoration Services	Best Option Restoration 1-800-Water Damage

Tree Service	Family Tree Trimming Caretaker Landscape
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PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Assisted Living Facility	The Summit at Sunland Springs Mirabella The Opportunity Tree
Attorney/Law Firm	AVID Esq. Group LLC The Parker Law Office, LLC - Heather L. Parker, Esq. Lerner & Rowe Injury Attorneys
Bank	Midfirst Bank Academy Bank Chase
Business/Corporate Attorney or Law Firm	Harrison Law Peterson Law Offices
Childcare/Daycare Facility	Wonderwise Preschool Lil' Einsteins Busy Bees
Commercial Real Estate Agent/Agency	Suzanne Dye Janine Iglane Adrianne Lynch, the Lynch Team
Credit Union	Desert Financial Credit Union Arizona Financial Credit Union
Customer Service	DeBellevue Global Marketing Premier Health Family Practice Lerner & Rowe Injury Attorneys
Estate/Trust Attorney or Law Firm	AVID Esq. Group LLC The Parker Law Office, LLC Walk-in Wills
Final Resting Place	Mountain View Funeral Home and Cemetery San Tan Memorial Gardens Legacy Funeral Home
Financial Advisor	Erick Geryol - Edward Jones Ann Martin, Apricity Wealth Management James Hundley - Edward Jones
Funeral Home	Gilbert Memorial Park Valley of the Sun Red Mountain Funeral Home
Independent Senior Living Community	The Summit at Sunland Springs Mirabella Solterra
Insurance Agency	Jarrett Christianson Comparion Insurance The Medicare Navigators Calvert Agency LLC
Insurance Agent	Jennifer Goedken, The Benefits Gallery Alicia Rosenquist Jarrett Christianson Comparion Insurance

Mortgage Lender	Teresa Dempsey, Cornerstone First Mortgage Movement Mortgage
Personal Injury Attorney Law/Firm	The Husband & Wife Law Team Lerner & Rowe Injury Attorneys East Valley Injury Law
Pet Boarding	Dogtopia Pete & Mac Gilbert K9 Resorts Top Dog
Pet Grooming	Petco Pawgo
Photographer	Heather Robinson, One Shot Beyond Photography Flovara
Printer/Photocopying	Printing Specialists Minuteman Press Queen Creek UPS Store - Queen Creek
Real Estate Agent	Heather Werner, Ravenswood Realty Janine Iglane Randy Courtney
Residential Real Estate Agency	Ravenswood Realty The Home Selling Team The Lynch Team
Residential Real Estate Team	The Home Selling Team The Goodman Taylor Team Courtney Valleywide
Senior Living Community	The Summit at Sunland Springs Brookdale Gilbert North Mirabella
Senior Resource/Placement	EverCare Placement All About You Senior Placement and Resources The Senior Solution Group
Signage	Minuteman Press Queen Creek Speed Pro Mesa Gilbert Signarama
Title Company	Magnus Title Pioneer Title Mesa American Title East Mesa
Travel Agent	Ashley Leatham Linda's Travel Hut Pam Hunley

SHOPPING & BEAUTY

Aesthetician	Emily Smolke Wildflower Beauty Bar
Cannabis Store	Ponderosa Dispensary Nature's Wonder

Gift Store	Olivespa Queen Creek Olive Mill D'Vine Gourmet
Hair Salon	Toni & Guy Mozzie Fox Salon Boardroom Styling Lounge Chatti Chix Eden - Aveda Lifestyle Salon
Jewelry Store	J'Renee Bejeweled Kyhn's Jewelers Myranda Fine Jewelry
Paddle, Racket, and Apparel Sales	Scheels Dick's Sporting Goods
Sporting Goods store	Scheels The Shooting Range AZ Gun Safe
Women's Clothing Store	Nordstrom Rack Ross Apricot Lane

VEHICLES & SERVICES

Auto Dealership	Elohim Auto Sales Chapman Chevrolet Cardinal Way Mazda
Auto Detailing	Nine Star Detailing Signature Auto Detailing Bodega Details
Auto Glass Repair	Mr. Auto Glass Diamondback Auto Glass Bang AutoGlass
Auto Service Department	Ooroo Auto H&I Automotive Good Works Auto Repair
Golf Cart Store	World of Golf Carts East Valley Carts Flivver
Oil Change	OOROO Auto H&I Automotive Good Works Auto Repair
Tire Services	Discount Tire H&I Automotive
Towing Service	Camel Towing Phoenix Metro Towing Valley Express Towing

FROM THE COVER

Rodeo

• From page 12

The classic events include bareback, calf roping, saddlebronc, steer wrestling, ladies breakaway roping, barrel racing, team roping and the crowd favorite of bull riding.

Theme days are: "Tough Enough to Wear Pink" on Friday, "We Are AJ Day" on Saturday, and military and first-responders day on Sunday. A kids grocery race is planned Saturday and Sunday during the rodeo.

Adult tickets are \$20 for the rodeo and \$15 for ages 10 and under at the gate, with a \$2 discount on both for advance purchases. Advance rodeo and carnival ticket sales are only available at the Apache Junction Area Chamber of Commerce, 567 W. Apache Trail in Apache Junction; 480-982-3141. Carnival tickets cost \$35 for an all-day ride pass if bought early at the chamber (quantity limited) or \$45 at the event.

Mutton bustin'

The mutton bustin' competition for ages 4-7 who are under 60 pounds in weight will be Saturday, Feb. 28, immediately following the rodeo. They must have rodeo tickets for Saturday's performance

to participate. Register at 1 p.m. until full or at the end of barrel racing on Feb. 28 at the rodeo west of the grandstands under the pop-up tent. Cost is \$30 per rider, cash only, with a limit of 45 riders.

A carnival, the rodeo, vendor booths, free entertainment, food and more will be Feb. 27-March 1 at the main Event Center at the Apache Junction Rodeo Grounds, 1590 E. Lost Dutchman Blvd. Event Center admission is \$2; and parking is free.

Free entertainment at the Carnival Stage at the rodeo grounds stage will be offered Feb. 27-March 1:

• Friday, Feb. 27: 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Local Bread; 3-6 p.m., Livin' on Mars.

• Saturday, Feb. 28: 10 a.m.-noon, The Massengales; 12:30-3:30 p.m., Way Out West Band; 4-7 p.m., Mary Jane's Rocket.

• Sunday, March 1: 10-11 a.m., Cowboy Church with Steve Edwards and the Broken Chair Band; 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Roadhouse Ranglers; 2-5 p.m., Outside the Line.

For a full list of events, go to <https://www.lostdutchmandays.org>.

Richard H. Dyer can be reached at rdyer@iniusa.org, or on X @ rhdyer. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines, <https://www.yourvalley.net/civility-checklist/>.

ALSO BRATWURSTS/ BEER PARTY, DANCE, PARADE

Other Lost Dutchman Days events include:

• Noon-8 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 26 — Annual bratwurst and beer party at Apache Junction Elks Lodge No. 2349, 2455 N. Apache Trail. Entertainment includes: noon-4 p.m. Julie Lee Band; 5-8 p.m., Just For Fun Band. Buy a bratwurst and beverage and enjoy the music. Proceeds benefit local youth charities.

• 7-11 p.m. Friday, Feb. 27 — rodeo dance featuring Crossroads Band at Apache Junction Elks Lodge No. 2349, 2455 N. Apache Trail. Admission \$10; must be 21 or older to attend the nonsmoking event.

• 9 a.m. start time Saturday, Feb. 28, for the Lost Dutchman Days Parade on Apache Trail between Idaho Road and Ironwood Drive. Parade entry deadline to the Apache Junction Chamber of Commerce is Feb. 6 go to <https://www.ajchamber.com/58536-2/>.

For a full list of events, go to lostdutchmandays.org.






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FEBRUARY 27- March 1, 2026



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- Rodeo, Friday-Sunday at 1:30 pm
- Brat Party, Thursday, Feb. 26 at 12 pm
- Rodeo Dance, Friday, Feb. 27 at 7pm
- Parade, Saturday, Feb. 28 at 9am

Main events take place at 1590 E Lost Dutchman Blvd, Apache Junction, AZ 85119. Please check the website for specific times and locations.



**More information at
LostDutchmanDays.org**

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Apache Junction residents Judy Ponio and Alicia Groneberg painted rocks as part of the Community Action Day volunteer effort (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H Dyer)

Neighbors

- From page 15

- 108 S. Ocotillo Drive and West First Avenue
- 1890 S. Plaza Drive at Love Gospel Church parking lot
- South Cedar Drive and West 12th Avenue
- North Pinyon Drive and West Cactus Wren Street

"It helps alleviate some of the code-compliance issues, getting rid of debris and old mattresses and stuff. We're bringing the dumpster to them so they don't have to travel too far," said Shawn Brown, code compliance manager for the city of Apache Junction.

Volunteers were treated to dough-

nuts, muffins and coffee during the street cleanup, and were to be given a free lunch later thanks to donations from community sponsors, he said.

Sponsors included Starbucks, Fresh Press, Walmart, Blue Bell Creameries, Dutch Bros, JustServe, Apache Junction Community Development Corporation, the city of Apache Junction and Republic Services, he said.

To volunteer for upcoming events, go to <https://apachejunctioncdc.com/index.php/events>.

Richard H. Dyer can be reached at rdyer@iniusa.org, or on X @rhdyer. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines, <https://www.yourvalley.net/civility-checklist/>.

APACHE JUNCTION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Originally established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the community development corporation went through a revamp in 2017 with a more defined purpose. This purpose was to support and improve the long-term health and quality of life of individuals and the community by:

- Combating community deterioration through redevelopment.
- Acting as a resource for economic development by disseminating information to help facilitate and support business growth in the community.
- Creating a neighborhood beautification program to help those less-fortunate maintain their yards.

Through community outreach and partnerships, the AJCDC hopes to create a business-friendly atmosphere thereby making it easier for business to thrive.

The first Make a Difference Day event was held in 2019. On Oct. 26, 2019, more than 130 volunteers gathered to help in several beautification projects throughout the city. The event was such a benefit to the community that it was determined the AJCDC should continue its efforts to make this day of service a staple each year.

The demand stemming from Make a Difference Day gave rise to the community revitalization project so the needs of city residents could be better met year-round. The AJCDC joined forces with the city of Apache Junction and Just Serve. This partnership allowed residents to get help they needed any time of the year instead of having to wait until October.

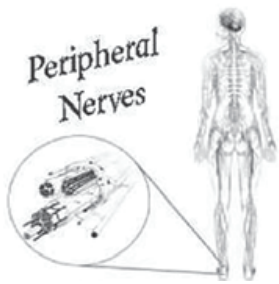
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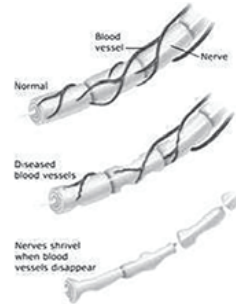
PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY AND CHRONIC PAIN WARNING!

Mesa, AZ — The most common method your doctor will recommend to treat your chronic pain and/or neuropathy is with prescription drugs that may temporarily reduce your symptoms. These drugs have names such as Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Neurontin, and are primarily antidepressant or anti-seizure drugs. These drugs may cause you to feel uncomfortable and have a variety of

Chronic pain and/or peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves often causing weakness, pain, numbness, tingling, and the most debilitating balance problems. This damage is commonly caused by a hands and feet which causes the nerves to begin to degenerate due to lack of nutrient flow.



As you can see in Figure 2, as the blood vessels that surround the nerves become diseased they shrivel up which causes the nerves to not get the nutrients to continue to survive. When these nerves begin to "die" they cause you to have balance problems, pain, numbness, tingling, burning, and many additional symptoms. The main problem is that your doctor has told you



to just live with the problem or try the drugs which you don't like taking because they make you feel uncomfortable. There is now a facility right here in Mesa that offers you hope without taking those endless drugs with serious side effects.

(See the special neuropathy severity examination at the end of this article) neuropathy three factors must be determined.

- 1) What is the underlying cause?
- 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained.
- 3) How much treatment will your condition require?

NOTE: Once you have sustained 95% nerve loss, there is likely nothing that we can do for you.

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- 3) Decrease brain-based pain

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The amount of treatment needed to allow the nerves to fully recover varies from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. As long as you have not sustained at least 95% nerve damage there is hope!

Aspen Medical will do a chronic pain and neuropathy severity examination to determine the extent of the nerve damage as a public service to you and/or your family and friends. This neuropathy/pain severity examination will consist of a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, and a detailed analysis of the findings of your neuropathy.



Aspen Medical will be offering this chronic pain and neuropathy severity examination from now until February 28, 2026. Call 480-796-1136 to make an appointment to determine if your chronic pain and peripheral neuropathy can be successfully treated.

Due to our busy office schedule, we are limiting this FREE consultation to the first 15 callers. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SUFFER ANOTHER MINUTE, CALL. Call 480-796-1136 ... NOW!

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Business

• From page 8

(459420).

• Irst LLC; Fontana, California; Isabelle Wilcox; Lessors Of Residential Buildings And Dwellings (531110)

• Mer-Sea Co. LLC; Lenexa, Kansas; Sarah Telford; Clothing And Clothing Accessories Retailers (458110)

• Eternal Co. Jewelry; Apache Junction; Destiny Dyer; Jewelry Retailers (458310)

• National Education Institute LLC dba My Dental Dentistry And Implants; Mesa; William Fulcher; Offices Of Dentists (621210)

• Arizona Solar Solutions Inc. dba Suntria; Tempe; Emily Stipp; Electrical Contractors And Other Wiring Installation Contractors (238210)

• Potter And The Clay; Apache Junction; Elizabeth Harned; Pottery, Ceramics, And Plumbing Fixture Manufacturing (327110).

• K And V Lighting Inc.; Chandler; Joe Schumer; Electrical Contractors And Other Wiring Installation Contractors (238210)

• Fair & Square Pool Builds; Chandler; Mac McCullough; All Other Specialty Trade Contractors (238990)

• Sean Douglas Maloney dba Pet Waste Armory; Apache Junction; Sean Maloney; Pet Care (Except Veterinary) Services (812910)

• Kathy's Painted Wood; Mesa; Kathleen Lamb; All Other Miscellaneous Wood Product Manufacturing (321999)

• Pop'd Wright dba Pop'd Wright Kettle Corn; Mesa; Julie A Wright; Mobile Food Services (722330)

• Fusion Sign & Design LLC; Casa Grande; Danitza Rivero; Electrical Contractors And Other Wiring Installation Contractors (238210)

• Desert Legacy Haulers LLC; Mesa; Dennis Palmer; Other Waste Collection (562119)

• Arizona Crispy; Chandler; Dmitry Padrubny; Meat And Meat Product Merchant Wholesalers (424470)

• AZ New Homes; Gilbert; Ejay Harvey; New Single-Family Housing Construction (Except For-Sale Builders) (236115)

• Rd Ervin LLC dba Chick-Fil-A Power And Mckellips; Mesa; Kim Robilotto; Mobile Food Services (722330)

• Grgich Hills Cellar dba Grgich Hills Estate; St. Helena, California; Shannon Willson; Wineries (312130)

• American Framers LLC; Tempe; Sue Ellen Chouinard; Other Foundation, Structure, And Building Exterior Contractors (238190).

• The Peppered Rose LLC; Queen Creek; Tami Lombardi; All Other Miscellaneous Retailers (459999)

• DLC Resources Inc.; Phoenix; John Holbert; Landscaping Services (561730)

• Soda Tease Beverage Co. LLC dba Soda Tease Beverage Co.; Mesa; Alicia Muhlhauser; Mobile Food Services (722330)

• Clear Online Video LLC; Gilbert; Stjepan Alaupovic; Motion Picture And Video Production (512110)

• Impact Sign And Graphics LLC; Phoenix; Shawn Ocoyne; Other Commercial Equipment Merchant Wholesalers (423440)

• Starklin Hills LLC dba Starklin Hills; San Tan Valley; Jessica Starkovich; Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, And Perfume Retailers (456120).

• Colliers Engineering And Design Inc.; Holmdel, New Jersey; Alaura Ayers; Engineering Services (541330)

• Hobbs Masonry Construction LLC; Tempe; Jason Hobbs; Masonry Contractors (238140)

• Nex Gen Enterprises LLC; Apache Junction; Zee Virani; Other Gasoline Stations (457120)

• Bespoke By Custom Styches dba Nmbl Vault; Apache Junction; Sharon Uhlig; Cut And Sew Apparel Manufacturing (Except Contractors) (315250)

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Chandler • February 24, 2026 • Sun Lakes Country Club

Peoria • March 26, 2026 • Westbrook Village

Sun City West • April 22, 2026 • SCW Foundation

Sun City • May 4, 2026 • Sundial Rec Center

Fountain Hills • July 7, 2026 • Fountain Hills Community Center

Surprise • August 18, 2026 • The Colonnade

Sun City • September 23, 2026 • Sundial Recreation Center

Sun City West • October 28, 2026 • SCW Foundation Center

Mesa • November 13, 2026 • Mesa Marketplace Swap Meet

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The Apache Junction Senior Expo included a range of products and services related to retirement and improved style of living. (Independent Newsmedia, Richard H. Dyer)

Expo

- From page 8

that really sticks out to me," she said.

Her husband, Dennis, also enjoyed attending the senior expo and learning about earplugs.

"I did learn something. I heard something this morning about induction-bone earplugs. Instead of earplugs they are on the bone ... and yet the sound comes through your ears," he said. "I'm really conscious about hearing because I've been wearing earplugs since I was 20 years old and I had my ears checked just recently and I still have perfect hearing. So hearing protection is important."

The Apache Junction Senior Expo included a range of products and services related to retirement and improved style of living, including: Abrazo Funeral Home, Amazing Dental, Apache Junction Health Center, Apex Home Repair Remodeling, Archwell Health, Arizona Relay Service, Art of Drawers, AudioNova, Ayers Insurance Agency of

AZ, Banner Goldfield Medical Center, Cap Tel Outreach, Centerwell, Consumer Cellular, Dr. Chris Allen/Desert Medical Associates, Ellsworth Home Services, Encompass Health-East Valley, For Energy, Heaven's Medical, Home Concepts Custom Remodeling, Hospice of the Valley, Humana, Impact Med Solutions, Lifetime Home Remodeling, Midwestern University Body Donation Program, Miracle Ear, Oak Street Health, Renewal By Andersen, SCAN Health, Semper Fi Heating & Cooling, Smart Cremation, Stressless Remodeling, Trial Sphere Clinical Research, United Healthcare, WellCare, Western Bank and Zippity Split Plumbing.

For information on future senior expos, call 623-972-6101, email AZads@iniusa.org or go to yourvalley.net/events.

Richard H. Dyer can be reached at rdyer@iniusa.org, or on X @rhdyer. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AsOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines, <https://www.yourvalley.net/civility-checklist/>.

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The live jousting tournaments are one of the festival's most popular attractions. (Independent News-media, Arianna Grainey)

Festival

- From page 18

Merchants hawk their wares, selling everything from clothing to custom ceramics. Demonstrations display skills of blacksmithing, jewelry making, glassblowing, leather work and pottery throwing. Over 200 artisans are housed in the market

lanes filled with whimsical storybook shops.

There are 16 open-air stages where you can listen to raucous music and roaring comedy. On or off the stage you are bound to rub shoulders with delightful characters.

A variety of food and drink is available to satisfy your appetite; bread bowls, stews, steak-on-a-stake, roasted chicken and much more.

ARIZONA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

What: The 38th Annual Arizona Renaissance Festival and Artisan Marketplace, a 16-stage theater, an outdoor whimsical village, a 50-acre circus, an arts & crafts fair, a jousting tournament, and a feast – all rolled into one nonstop, daylong adventure.

Where: Festival site is east of Apache Junction on U.S. Highway 60, at 12601 E. U.S. Highway 60, Gold Canyon, 85115

When: Nine consecutive weekends (Saturdays, Sundays and Presidents' Day Monday) from Jan. 31 to March 29. The festival runs from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., rain or shine.

Tickets: Available online at www.Arizona.RenFestInfo.com or at Bashas' and Food City throughout the state. Children under 4 are always free. Tickets purchased at the gate are \$36 for adults (plus tax and fees) children 5-12 are \$24 (plus tax and fees). Parking: Free courtesy of Bashas' and Food City

More information: www.Arizona.RenFestInfo.com

EDUCATION

20 AJHS drama students heading to NYC in March

By Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Twenty Apache Junction High School drama students are to travel to New York City for spring break to attend Broadway theater performances and workshops.

The Apache Junction Unified School District governing board recently voted 4-0 on a consent agenda with other items to approve the March 13-19 travel. Board member Judy Williamson was absent.

The cost is \$1,500 per student, which includes registration, transportation, lodging and meals, according to a written request to travel form from Paul Lanphear, drama teacher.

The students are "to attend theatrical performances and workshops with working theatrical performers. Students will attend professional performances to see how they could use the skills they have developed for the future," he wrote on the form.

The students will also tour theaters and the

main attractions of New York during the trip on spring break, Lanphear wrote in a separate letter to the governing board.

"We have decided to organize the trip ourselves so that we can save on the costs. If we were to go through a field trip company the cost would be \$2,800 to \$4,000 a student," he said.

The itinerary includes:

- 9 a.m. Manhattan bus tour, and 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. plays on March 14;
- 9:30 a.m. Broadway tour and workshop, and 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. plays on March 15;
- 10 a.m. One World Trade Center building and 9/11 Memorial, noon Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island ferry from Battery Park, and 7 p.m. play on March 16.
- 8 a.m. St. Patrick's Day parade, 11 a.m. Museum of Modern Art, 7 p.m. play March 17;
- 11 a.m. Radio City Music Hall, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. plays March 18;
- 9 a.m. tour or workshop, flight home March 19.



The 9/11 Memorial in New York City is a tribute of remembrance, honoring the 2,977 people killed in the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center site, near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and at the Pentagon, as well as the six people killed in the World Trade Center bombing on Feb. 26, 1993, it states at <https://www.911memorial.org>. (Metro Creative)



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NEIGHBORS

Gold Canyon resident among Fresh Start's inaugural Legacy Luminaries



Janet Kizziar (Fresh Start Women's Foundation)

Fresh Start Women's Foundation recently recognized Dr. Janet Kizziar of Gold Canyon as part of its inaugural class of Legacy Luminaries.

The organization's highest leadership honor recognizes the extraordinary contributions of the organization's most impactful board members and champions, it states in a release.

The distinction honors long-term vision, service and an enduring impact on Fresh Start's mission. The name reflects the combination of "legacy" – a lasting influence — and "luminary" — a guiding light. Kizziar has embodied this spirit throughout her more than three decades of service, it states in the release.

As a founding board member and nationally recognized psychologist, Kizziar helped establish Fresh Start's

mentoring program, connecting women with mentors to support their personal and professional goals. She has long championed the staff through annual appreciation efforts and personal encouragement, fostering a culture of care and compassion that remains central to the organization's mission.

"These incredible leaders have helped empower and lift up generations of women," Kim McWaters, president and CEO of Fresh Start Women's Foundation, said in the release. "Their influence shaped our mission. Their wisdom guided us through change. And their unwavering belief in our future made what once seemed impossible, possible."

To learn more about Fresh Start Women's Foundation, go to www.freshstartwomen.org.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

AJPD to host Citizens Police Academy

The Apache Junction Police Department is accepting applications for its Citizens Police Academy, an eight-week program designed to give community members an inside look at how the department operates.

Classes will be held 6-8:30 p.m. Wednesdays between April 1 and May 20. The program is free, open to adults 18 and older and space is limited.

Participants will receive an overview of many areas of law enforcement, including:

- Patrol operations and tactics
- Traffic enforcement and DUI investigations
- Use of force and less-lethal op-

tions

- Body-worn cameras and accountability
- Criminal investigations and crime scene processing
- Property and evidence management
- Special units including SWAT, K-9, motors, bikes and drones
- Dispatch, records and internal processes
- Community engagement, special events, and recruitment

For full program details and to apply, visit the Citizens Police Academy at <https://www.apachejunctionaz.gov/1224/Citizens-Police-Academy>.

‘The HeART of AJUSD’ showcases student creativity

Apache Junction Unified School District invites families and community members to attend The HeART of AJUSD, the district’s annual student art show, 5-7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 12.

It will be held at Apache Junction High School’s humanities building, 2525 S. Ironwood Drive in Apache Junction.

The HeART of AJUSD features student artwork from every school across the district, highlighting creative expression from elementary through high school. The exhibit showcases a wide range of artistic styles, media and student perspectives, reflecting the talent and imagination of AJUSD students, it states

in a release.

In addition to the student art displays, each AJUSD school will host a showcase table highlighting programs, projects and experiences that reflect the unique identity of its campus. Community partners will also be present, sharing resources and programs that support students, families and education in Apache Junction.

The HeART of AJUSD is free and open to the public. Families, staff and community members are encouraged to attend and experience the creativity and student-centered learning happening across AJUSD.

For information, go to: <https://www.ajusd.org/heartofajusd>.

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