



Community

Cave Creek to purchase two new vehicles to replace aging ones; **6**

CAVE CREEK/CAREFREE INDEPENDENT

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Arts

Cave Creek Museum Fun Day presents Meet a Miner Day; **14**



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Cave Creek mayor gives positive report at State of Town address

By Jeff Wendt
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Cave Creek Mayor Robert Morris gave residents a positive report during the State of the Town address Thursday at the Desert Foothills Library in Cave Creek.

"I'm happy to report we have about \$30 million in the bank as reserves, and it's a good thing we have that," Morris said to begin the speech. "That's a very high number, probably more than we need, but we have some things going on that we're going to use that money at some point. That \$30 million is driven by sales taxes and especially those construction taxes."

Morris added that more funds will become available during the next 18 months.

"We're going to make the last payment on most of the bonds that we used originally to buy the Desert Hills and the Cave Creek Water Co., and then revamp them to put them into service, and that's going to give us a real boost in cash flow that we'll be able to do things with," Morris said.



Cave Creek Town Mayor Robert Morris delivers the State of the Town address Feb. 5, 2026 at the Desert Foothills Library in Cave Creek. (Independent Newsmedia/Jeff Wendt)

Plans have been put in place during recent council meetings to use some funding to initiate the purchase of 4,005 acres of open space to the west and north of the town around the Spur Cross Recreation Area.

"Last year, we put a placeholder in, because originally we were planning on having an election to borrow money to buy the 4,005 acres there,

but our ad hoc committee has come up with a lot of ideas," Morris said. "We have \$2.5 million on hand. We have volunteers who are going to raise a lot of money, and we're going to find a way to get that done."

"We found partners in the Desert Foothills Land Trust, the county and even the state is interested because

• See **Address** on page **6**

Cave Creek Unified approves reduction in force rubric

By Maya McFall
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Cave Creek Unified School District's governing board approved a rubric during the Feb. 10 board meeting aimed at ways to cut staffing amid declining enrollment rates and an estimated \$1 million loss of funding.

The district remains in three high-risk categories for school district financial risk: weighted student counts, capital to maintenance and operations transfers, and spend versus revenue, according to an Arizona Auditor General Report.

The budget decline's main factor is based on student funding and the difference between the number of graduating students and incoming kindergarteners. While the 2025

• See **RIF** on page **6**

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BENEFIT

Carefree: Desert Foothills Land Trust marks 35 years with dinner

The Desert Foothills Land Trust will mark its 35th anniversary with a fundraising dinner 5 – 8 p.m., Wednesday, April 22 at the Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion, 101 Easy St. The celebration honors more than three decades of conservation achievement, including the protection of over 1,100 acres of Sonoran Desert.

“For 35 years, DFLT has been at the forefront of preserving the natural beauty and ecological treasures of our desert,” Patrick McWhortor, interim president of Desert Foothills Land Trust said. “This anniversary isn’t just about looking back at what we’ve accomplished. It’s about celebrating with our community and looking forward to the conservation work still ahead.”

The celebration will feature a seated dinner prepared by Chef Tony Rea’s Creation in Cuisine, known for culi-



(Submitted Photo/Metro Creative Graphics)

nary experiences that highlight local flavors. Throughout the evening, the Gedalife Trio will provide live musical entertainment. A silent auction will offer attendees the opportunity to bid

on works from local artists, along with other items.

Between courses, guests will hear stories about DFLT’s conservation impact across three decades, from the first

protected parcels to recent acquisitions that have preserved wildlife corridors and desert landscapes. These firsthand accounts will showcase how community support has translated into tangible environmental protection throughout the Sonoran Desert foothills.

McWhortor emphasized that the organization’s success over 35 years has been driven by the commitment of conservation-minded community members.

“Your presence and support make our work possible,” he said. “Together, we’re preserving these lands for generations to come, and we’re just getting started.”

Individual tickets are \$250 each, with sponsorship opportunities available. Reservations are requested by April 7, and can be made online at dflt.org/35th.

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COUNCIL

Cave Creek to purchase two new vehicles to replace aging ones

By Jeff Wendt
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Cave Creek Town Council authorized the purchase of two new vehicles during its Feb. 17 meeting.

The council authorized purchases of a new 2027 International HV607 4,000 Gallon water truck from RWC Group for \$211,062.74 and a 2027 International HV607 SBA Roll-off Dumptruck from RWC Group for \$218,571.74

“Good evening, mayor and council, we’re here to spend some money on things we need,” Public Works Director Hal Marron opened his presentation.

The 4,000 gallon water truck is used to provide dust control, flush sewer lines, apply soil stabilizer to unpaved roads and other uses, according to town officials.

The current truck is 26 years old and is incurring large amounts of money to maintain the vehicle’s use. Over the last eight years, the town has incurred over \$17,000 in repairs in order to keep the vehicle operational, officials said.

“We have two water trucks,” Marron said.

“One is in fairly good condition, it’s about four years old. This other one is a little older than that, and I think the mayor said it leaks like a sieve at one point.

“It was parked in the back parking lot, and I think you made a comment about how much it leaks,” Marron continued.

“Anyway, we’d like to replace it, and we are using a state contract to do it.”

Councilmember Cynthia Driskell



Cave Creek is replacing this 1999 water truck with a new one for \$211,062.74. (Courtesy of the Town of Cave Creek)



This dump truck, which is 17 years old, will be replaced with a new 2027 model for \$218,571.74. (Courtesy of the Town of Cave Creek)

asked Marron how often the truck gets used.

“The water trucks are used pretty much if not on a daily basis, at least four times a week,” Marron said. “Anytime we do any of the dust mitigation, we use the water trucks for that.

“When we do our maintenance of the shoulders, as far as our weed application, we use the water trucks because it’s required to keep the dust down,” Marron added. “So they’re used quite often. And then obviously when we’re ever doing a construction project, a grading of roads or anything else, we have the water trucks

out there.”

The roll-off dump truck, which is 17 years old, is used for all roadway trimming projects as well as various other projects within the town as a roll-off dumpster/dump truck.

During the past five years, this truck has begun to show its age and has cost more than \$12,000 in repairs to keep it operational.

“The problem we have with this current one is that it was a smaller unit and it had a proprietary container that was attached to it,” Marron said.

“And so we’ve spent probably as much money repairing the container as we do on the truck itself, and the truck is in need of other mechanical repairs.”

Driskell again asked of the frequency of use of the vehicle.

“It’s weekly,” Deputy Public Works Director Tyler Thurman said. “During the growing season, it’s daily. It’s every day pretty much, but then, you know, sometimes when stuff slows down, it is usually weekly.”

NONPROFIT

Carefree retreat center hires new director of development

Spirit in the Desert Retreat Center recently announced the appointment of Rika Beckley as its new director of development.

Beckley brings three decades of experience in nonprofit development, fundraising and communications, working across higher education, social services, the arts and faith-based organizations.



Rika Beckley

In her new role, Beckley will oversee donor relations, campaign planning, grants and community engagement for Spirit in the Desert, a Carefree-based retreat center serving groups and nonprofits from across the country.

“Spirit in the Desert has a remarkable history and a strong sense of place in this community,” Beckley said. “I’m honored to join the team and to help build the relationships and resources that will support its mission well into the future.”

The 26-room retreat center, founded in 1997, is open to people of all backgrounds. Set on six and a half acres of landscaped Sonoran Desert, the campus includes chapels, meeting spaces, a labyrinth, walking trails and a dining room designed for shared meals in a setting created for reflection and transformation.



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FROM THE COVER

RIF

• From page 1

graduating class of Cactus Shadows High School held 368 students, the incoming kindergartner class is a total of 163 students.

This 200-student loss results in about a \$1 million reduction in revenue each year, according to Dr. Ryan Pletnick, assistant superintendent of fiscal and business operations.

To offset these losses, Pletnick suggested during the Jan. 27 meeting that the district review all employee vacancies and avoid unnecessary hiring.

Board member Jackie Ulmer mentioned looking into the possibility of closing another school to help with the financial loss, although she expressed concerns the situation could put unwanted pressure on a new superintendent.

Board President Janet Greer-Busbee agreed but said the district should continue to be transparent about its challenges.

"In fairness to the situation, I think we should be given, you know, the



The Cave Creek Unified School District met Feb. 10 to approve a rubric aimed at cutting staff amid declining enrollment rates. (Independent Newsmedia/Maya McFall)

good the bad, and the ugly as far as choices and different scenarios," she said. "So, whether it's reduction in staff or if it's a consideration of closing a school, all of those scenarios should be brought forward so that we can make authentic, transparent decisions."

Although the idea of closing another school did not come up during the Feb. 10 board meeting, the board approved a reduction in force rubric

presented by Dr. Frank Hendricsen, assistant superintendent of human resources.

The rubric, according to the district, "ensures an objective, policy-aligned process for staffing reductions based on district needs, not tenure or seniority. Approval establishes a clear, equitable approach."

The council did not say how many positions would be eliminated.

According to the district's website, 248 teachers and 279 classified staff are employed, with a total employee count of 527.

Because Arizona does not use traditional tenure, Hendricsen said, the district will make staffing cuts based on merit and qualifications over years of experience. Part of this rubric includes certification, advanced degrees, a separate evaluation conducted by school principals, and overall teaching experience.

"Although it doesn't allow for tenure or continuing teachers to get a guarantee," Pletnick said, "it's those teachers that have been adding to the profession, that have been adding to this district, that have a wealth of experience and advanced degrees of advanced training, they will naturally stand out above a teacher who's going to be more of a novice teacher that doesn't have that experience."

Board meetings take place on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month and begin at 6:00pm. They are held at 33016 N. 60th St, Scottsdale, unless otherwise indicated.

FROM THE COVER

Address

• From page 1

this is prime desert land and it ties together the town to Spur Cross and it ties together the county park on the other side of town by the rodeo grounds," Morris added. "It ties that into it, too. So, it is a dynamite project."

Another key point of Morris's speech was the water crisis the town is facing.

While Morris stressed that the town has at least a 10-year reserve supply available, he stressed conservation as a key effort to get the town to preserve more than having to go to

outside sources.

"Conservation is the cheapest water there is," Morris said. "Why go out and desalinate, which is the most expensive water you can get?"

Morris offered his own water use as an example.

"Last month, I only used 3,800 gallons of water, the lowest I've ever used and was using the my360 project that we have now, where you can see your water bill, and you can see your water consumption on an hourly basis, which is wonderful for troubleshooting," Morris said. "So, if you see it went up when your pool started to fill or you can go out and see how much water you're using when your irrigation turned on. That's a really

big one."

Morris mentioned the Harquahala Valley and the Bartlett Dam projects as possible future endeavors to explore for more water to the town, but could not get too much into their projects because of nondisclosure agreements with the projects.

The town is also looking at selling the rights to Desert Hills Water. The town has received bids on the water system, and will be going over those in the near future to possibly bring to council for future action.

Morris said he is most proud of getting a fire department together in town without the use of any property taxes.

"Most proud of probably the fire

department and no property tax," Morris said. "I mean, that was a lift, and there was a lot of disagreement on that. There were people in town that wanted a property tax, powerful people, and I fought against it four times."

This was Morris's last state of the town address, as he announced last month his intention not to run for mayor for another term.

Morris was asked if it was surreal giving his final state of the town address.

"Yeah, I mean, yeah," Morris said. "I've left many jobs before, so it's fun. This is worth it, interacting with the people in the community, and that is a fun calling job."

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Carefree council reviews audit, public participation plan

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Town of Carefree held its monthly town council meeting Feb. 3 to provide an audit report from the past fiscal year and present on the public participation plan zoning code update.

At the beginning of the meeting, Carefree Mayor John Crane announced they have received a “healthy response” for the soon-to-be-open town administrator position. Gary Neiss will be retiring effective the first week of March. The next step in the process is to conduct final interviews, which will happen over the week of Feb. 9.

“If all goes well, we should have identified a candidate next week,” Crane said. “That’s per the schedule we announced when we embarked upon this.”

He also said the state legislature is reviewing the dates for the primary election that was set to take place the first week of July. There are three spots on the town council up for election along with the position of mayor. Crane said the League of Arizona Cities and Towns told the council this will be sorted out by Friday, Feb. 13.

Those interested in running for an open spot should pick up a packet at the town hall.

The meeting then transitioned into the Town’s financial situation. Lupita



Matt Klyszeiko, associate vice president at Michael Baker International, presents on the proposed Public Participation Plan. (Submitted Photo/Town of Carefree)

Martinez, CPA principal at CLAConnect, presented the audit results performed for the past fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2025.

As of June 30, the town had \$38.6 million in assets and \$2 million in liabilities. The Town’s net worth of \$36.6 million has increased from \$29 million in 2022.

However, not all of this is liquid. According to Martinez, \$16.1 million is invested in capital while \$20 million is unrestricted money.

After her presentation, Matt Klyszeiko, associate vice president at Michael Baker International, then presented on the proposed Public Participation Plan for the Town of Carefree.

Klyszeiko said it’s important to update zoning ordinances for multiple reasons, including the need to maintain

consistency with new state and federal laws. The general plan update process has a state statute requiring a public participation plan be included.

“Often, you’re focused on correcting or addressing one particular issue and how that edit might affect other parts of the zoning code aren’t necessarily all accounted for at the time a particular text amendment is made,” he said. “What this update does is allow us to take another look at some of the procedures or conditions there in the code that might be absent or contradict something and update those.”

He presented four goals for how they will approach public outreach:

- ♦ Goal 1 — Accessible: Communicate the zoning code update process clearly to residents, businesses and stakeholders.

- ♦ Goal 2 — Inclusive: Engage the community through diverse channels to gather meaningful input.

- ♦ Goal 3 — Transparent: Foster trust by maintaining openness and responsiveness.

- ♦ Goal 4 — Continuous: Deliver timely, consistent and clear messaging.

“If we achieve those goals, we feel that it is the best recipe for success in terms of everybody being comfortable with how a decision was made and what the ultimate reason for those edits are and moving it forward to hopefully an acceptable adoption process,” Klyszeiko said.

The public will be informed via multiple platforms, including a mailing list, announcements, social media and pop-ups. Residents will be consulted via surveys and work sessions.

The proposition passed the council with unanimous support.

For more information on this project, contact Town of Carefree Planning Director and Zoning Administrator Stacey Bridge-Denzak at stacey@carefree.org or 480-488-3686.

The next town council meeting is 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 3, in the Town Council Chambers, 33 Easy St.

Reporter Zev Black can be reached at zblack@iniusa.org. 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.

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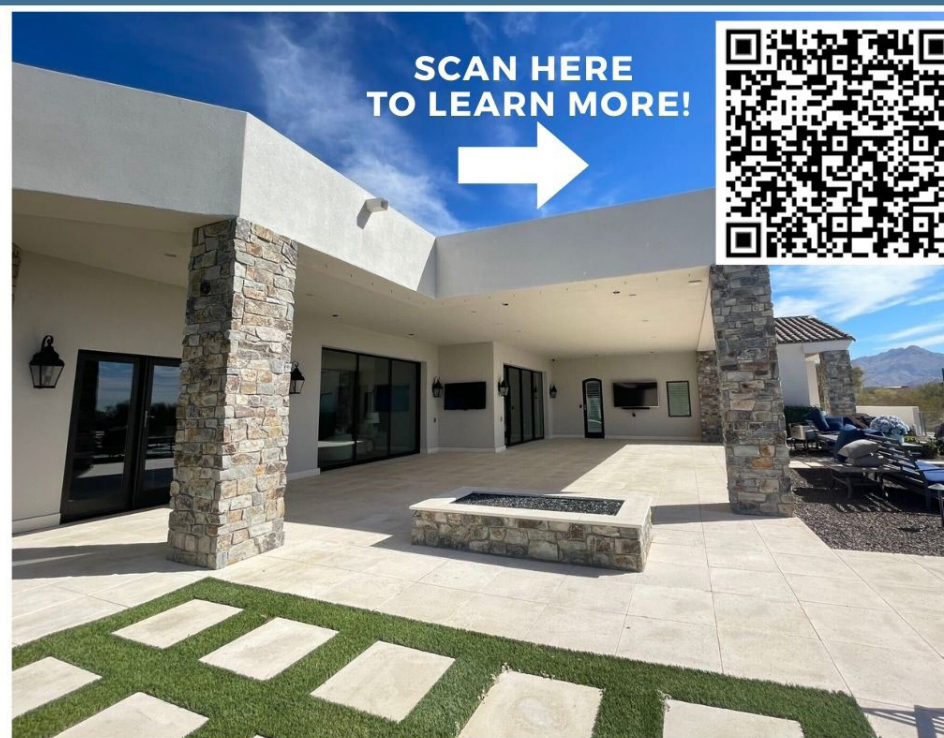
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GUEST COMMENTARY

In search of birds and beans

By Jim White and Don Senneville

We have families who are bird migration followers. We decided to look into Arizona towns, the names of which start with the letter W. Last year we did B's.

So we all traveled to Winslow to see an Eagle, and stood there forever, on the corner. Winkelman proved to not be the home of the Red Crested Winkel but did have a population of 295 people and one coffee shop. Wickenburg was mistaken for Wickenbirds, which do not exist, and finally to Why, which lived up to its name (there really is an Arizona town with that name). The closest espresso machine is at Kaffeehaus in Rocky Point. Maybe Ajo, but doubtful.

When we made the trek to Willcox (Arizona's Napa Valley), checking out the coffee shop circuit there was difficult. (We concluded that there isn't a circuit.) But the Dos Cabezas Coffee Co. is worth a visit, if one happens to be in Willcox. They offer an incredible array of coffee drinks, most with chocolate. A good place to caffeinate up for the early morning bird watch.

Speaking of the birds, Don appeared to develop a near-obsession with the sandhill cranes who winter around Willcox — all 30,000 to 40,000 of them. They fly down from Wisconsin and other northern areas in the US and Canada. They're the oldest kind of bird there is on earth, dating from the Pleistocene era (think woolly mammoths, sabre tooth tigers). So, after millions of years' research, the cranes discovered Willcox. Nice work!

Maybe it was all the grapes. Regardless, the cranes can be seen by the hundreds, maybe thousands, in



Nooks and Grannies can be found on the back streets of Cave Creek. (Courtesy of Jim White)

loose formation in the sky in early mornings when they fly out, and early evenings when they return. In the evening, they appear to blanket the whole sky. It's fairly clear that coffee wasn't the draw. Not so for the birds in our two towns. One of our favorite birds here are the Snowbirds. They can be seen all over our Coffee Row. Several were spotted at the Hampton Inn.

Coffee Row has even attracted the interest of our very own reporter for the Independent. That would be journalist Jeffrey Wendt, who made The Village Coffee Shop and Creperie his office over coffee and crepes while reporting on the 25th Anniversary of the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area. The good taste of the peach crepes was also reported.

We at The CUP recommended this oasis, as we often enjoy the



space to finalize our next article. The owner, Marina, has created an environment that feels French-y with award-winning crepes and ROC2 coffee. Our local reporter's next coffee experience may be Local Jonny's. He must have heard of the cozy fireplace, strong wi-fi and perfect breakfast dishes. Many locals use Jonny's for gatherings, meetings, and music. Classic coffee

and upbeat clientele make this a perfect place to do your job online while eating a muffin. If this is too energizing for you, try the "monks booth" at Janey's Coffee Shop. A small two person space, three-feet wide and very conducive to completing deep thoughts that require focus and good coffee.

These are but just a few of the enticing coffee options in our very own Coffee Row. There are 14 coffee shops between The Wagon Wheel and the Seed Cafe at Cirvana. Hopefully Jeffrey will eventually try them all.

Next month we are reporting on the "back alleys of Coffee Row." These cultural gems represent the local personality and are quite creative.

If you have coffee questions or tips, write to Jim and Don at The CUP, c/o jwendt@iniusa.org or AZNews@iniusa.org.

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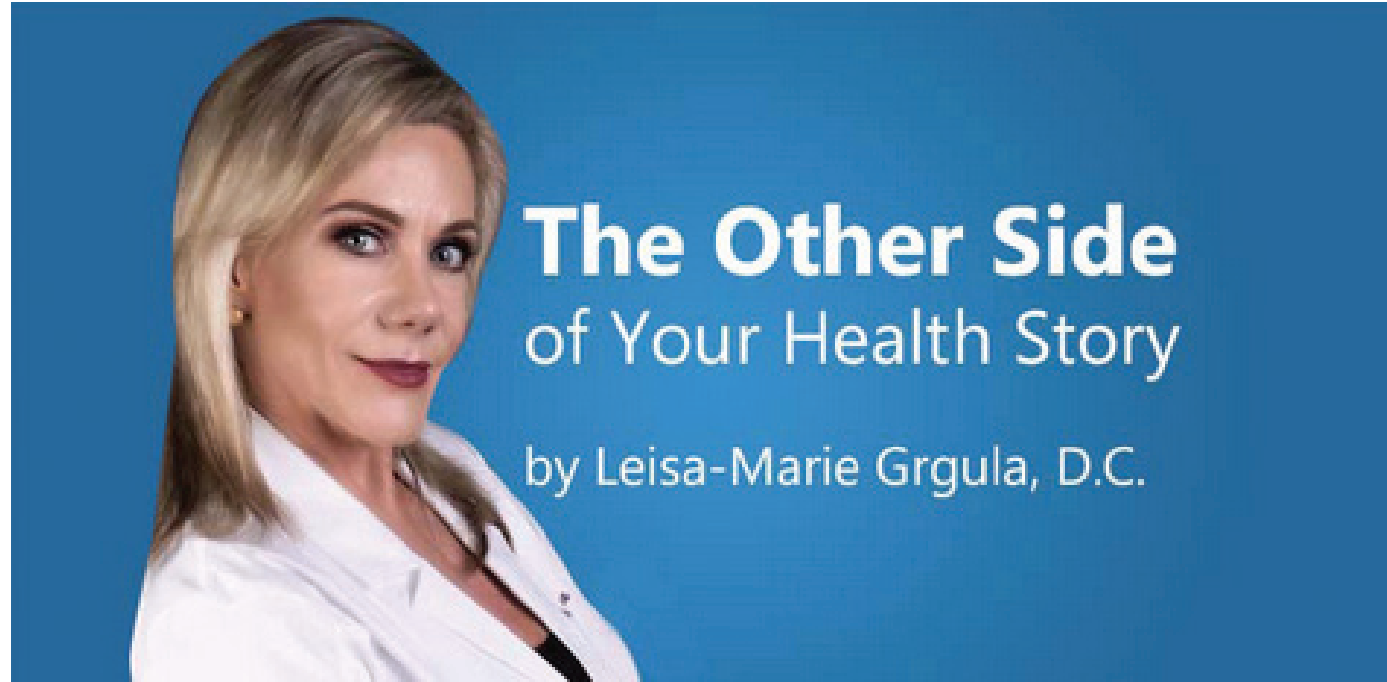
Asthma, allergies, & other lung issues in Arizona. It's not if, it's when

Yes, Arizona is a tough state for lung issues. The dry air, dust, and extreme temperatures allow inflammatory conditions to thrive in our lungs. Some people have already had inflammatory lung conditions, and some develop them within a few years of living here. As a physician, it's frustrating knowing that there are usually only therapies that merely manage these conditions, and very few that actually diminish and reduce them to a level of not only comfort, but actual healing of the affected tissues.

Most every patient with lung conditions knows about steroidal treatments, albuterol inhalers, and medications. These are, in many cases, designed for emergency use, and not necessarily for chronic daily use. The challenge for patients here in Arizona, is that they end up using albuterol inhalers daily to just maintain a comfort of living with healthy breathing. This can lead to over use, and cause severe side effects, including rapid or irregular heartbeat, tremors, headaches, dizziness, low potassium levels, and sometimes it can lead to fatal asthma attacks. Overuse also causes increased inflammation in the airways, and that is what the drug was intended to reduce.

So how can inflammation of the airways be reduced safely and naturally?

Regenerative medicine, including HCT, formally known as stem cells, offers a great way to reduce the inflammation in the lungs, and allow the patient to heal safely, and promote healthy breathing. It does not involve injections either. There are a couple of different delivery



methods that are very effective. These methods are specifically prescribed depending on the diagnosis of each patient's condition. At Accurate Care Medical Wellness Center, I have a team of medical professionals who are specifically trained in these techniques. Our results speak for themselves, as we've been able to help patients with breathing issues get their lives back. They can exercise without fear of not getting the air they need or depending on drugs to do so.

So how long does this take to work?

In our office, we see patients who feel results as early as the next morning. One recent case in particular, was a man in his 70's who had gotten Covid a month before coming in for treatment. He had developed what is known as, "Razor Blade Pneumonia" in another state. It is referred to that,

because when someone who has it tries to swallow, it feels like swallowing razor blades. He then developed double pneumonia, or pneumonia in both lungs.

He had been a patient in our office and called to get a regenerative medicine treatment for his condition. He still had difficulty breathing from the double pneumonia and seemed to be developing scar tissue in his lungs. We started his treatment, and by the next morning, he reported that his breathing was almost back to normal! He was very grateful and was surprised that he felt better so fast. The regenerative treatment he received in our office was starting to break up the scar tissue in his, lungs, down regulating the inflammation, and opening up his airways so he could breathe much easier. We were all pleased with his quick recovery.

If you, or anyone you know suffers from a chronic lung condition, please call my office for a complimentary consultation. We will take a history of your condition and find the best method of treatment possible to help reduce your symptoms quickly, and determine if you qualify for treatments that keep you in the game of life without stressful downtime, while keeping up with your grandkids!

For any questions regarding my articles, or if you have a request for a certain subject for me to write about, please email me.

DrLeisa@CaringPainRelief.com or call my office.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

Springtime — ‘Died and Gone to Heaven’

By Mayor John Crane

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

While “Died and Gone to Heaven” may be a cliché, that implied supreme bliss and perfection awaits in Carefree for residents and guests alike. March is an ideal month to get out and enjoy our unique blend of cultural richness and natural beauty in a small-town setting.

Explore Carefree’s meandering, uniquely named streets on a bike rented from Grind & Gears on Easy Street. Enjoy a morning of Carefree Yoga on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion. Or, find balance, peace and strength in the serene Carefree Desert Gardens through Qigong and Tai Chi on Thursday mornings.

Adding to the enjoyment, the Town of Carefree has assembled a full schedule of special March and events and activities. There is something for everyone.

• Cars! Cars! Cars! Two great events for car enthusiasts!

All Porche Grand Display 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Sunday, March 1 at Carefree Town Center. Come out with friends and enjoy a day of seeing Porches. Relax in one of Carefree’s several restaurants for break-

fast or lunch.

Corvettes & Coffee 8-10 a.m., Sunday, March 1. Mingle with Corvette enthusiasts as they showcase their cars, share their passion and enjoy some coffee together with Black Mountain as a backdrop.

• Carefree Farmers’ Market 9 a.m.-1 p.m. every Friday in the Sanderson Lincoln Pavilion and Carefree Desert Gardens. There is no better setting to find fresh, local, seasonal produce, herbs, flowers, value added foods, fresh baked goods, natural meats, cheeses and seafood as well as a selection of local arts and crafts.

• Carefree Desert Gardens Seminar Series features a stellar program designed to bring your garden to life March 14, “From Garden to Table: Growing Herbs” by certified master gardener Maureen Tonn. The seminar will begin at 9:30 am in the Carefree Town Council Chambers, 33 Easy Street.

• Third Thursday Art Walk 4 p.m.-7 p.m. Thursday, March 19. Enjoy Carefree’s diverse galleries, happy hours, dining, and music throughout downtown Carefree.

• Sonoran Safari 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, March 21. This Carefree



Mayor John Crane (Submitted photo)

Park event features first time tours of the 50-acre State Trust Land just south of SkyRanch Airport on Cave Creek Road.

Details are available at carefreepark.org/events.

• Carefree Bourbon & Cigar Fes-

tival, March 20-22. Enjoy a cigar and a drink and music at the Stick Golf & Cigar Lounge located at the corner of Cave Creek Road and Hum Road. Details can be found at carefreebourbon-cigarfestival.com/.

• The 31st Annual Spring Carefree Fine Arts & Wine Festival is 10 a.m.-5 p.m. March 20-27, daily within our town center is noted for its rigorous jury, producing a festival unequaled in quality. Featuring fine wine, live entertainment and over 130 juried artists, this is a must visit event.

For those with a more adventuresome spirit, spring in Carefree is a time of desert flowers and an ideal time to explore and enjoy desert surroundings. Nearby trails and beautiful vistas await. Take in Bartlett Lake — a relaxing 20 mile drive through beautiful Sonoran Desert. Or simply sit back and take in the mountain vistas and catch the blooms in the Carefree Desert Gardens.

Whenever I think of March in Carefree, I think it cannot get any better than this. I must have died and gone to heaven!

Editor’s note: John Crane is mayor of the Town of Carefree.



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Memberships



GUEST COMMENTARY

Spring brings events, rodeos, and wildfire preparedness

By Robert Morris
CAVE CREEK MAYOR

March always reminds me of three important activities in Cave Creek: Cave Creek Rodeo Days, green waste drop-off, and the start of wildfire season.

Cave Creek Rodeo Days is part of our Western heritage in Cave Creek. The Town is celebrating its 40th anniversary of incorporation, and the logo design featuring a cowboy hat reflects our community's Western spirit. The Rodeo has been around before we officially became a Town in 1986. The CCR is celebrating its 49th year, and I know the stands will be full for all four performances.

The Rodeo is a great start for great events in Cave Creek. There is something for everybody to enjoy this spring, with art fairs, farmers markets,

hiking, mountain, and road biking, and, of course, Bike Week in April.

Cleaning around your property to remove invasive weeds, dead shrubbery and trees, and trimming low-hanging limbs doesn't sound like a lot of fun, but it is one of the most important activities you can do this time of year to protect your property from wildfire. The Town is holding two brush drop-off events for Cave Creek residents on March 21 and again on April 18 at the Town's Water Ranch. The free event is from 8 a.m. to noon both days at 4300 E. Carefree Hwy.

And finally, we are coming out of the warmest February in our state's history. With the rains we had this winter, our deserts are blooming and green — right now. Soon, the warm temperatures will increase the chance



Mayor Robert Morris (Submitted photo)

of wildfires. The Town will soon enter Stage 1 Fire Restrictions, which will remain in effect until October 1 due to the high wildfire risk. As a reminder, during Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions, if you are responsible for causing a fire or using a motor vehicle in a flooded area, you will be

liable for the expenses of any emergency response.

I encourage you to follow the Town's website and social media pages for updates and information on fire danger and flash-flooding periods.

And don't forget, the Town utilizes an app called CodeRed to keep residents informed in the event of an emergency, such as a wildfire or flood. In the event of a fire or flood, the CodeRed emergency telephone notification service will alert those registered with a recorded message about the emergency and what actions you should take to ensure your safety. You will find more information and registration for CodeRed at www.cavecreekaz.gov/codered. If you registered with our CodeRed system, now is the time to ensure your information is up to date.

Holy Week At Desert Hills Presbyterian Church

Palm Sunday Cantata

9:00 a.m.*

Kids classes for preschool-grade 8
10:30 a.m.

Maundy Thursday

7:00 p.m.*

Good Friday

7:00 p.m.*

Easter Sunday

6:30 a.m. Sunrise

8:00 a.m.

9:30 a.m.

Kids classes for preschool-grade 8
11:00 a.m.

*in-person and livestream



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STAGECOACH VILLAGE FINE ART & WINE FESTIVAL

March 20-22
Stagecoach Village,
Cave Creek

SAN TAN VILLAGE ART & WINE FESTIVAL

March 28-29
San Tan Village, Gilbert

MOTHER'S DAY FINE ART & WINE FESTIVAL

May 9-10
Downtown Prescott

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ART THOUGHTS



(MetroCreative Connection)

Art makes you HAPPY!

By Judy Bruce
SPECIAL FOR INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

Several weeks ago, I purchased a fabulous book "How Art Can Make You Happy," by Bridget Watson Payne at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

The shows on exhibit are very interesting, as are those at the Phoenix Art Museum, where we especially enjoyed the magnificent

craftsmanship and creativity exhibited by Japanese female ceramic artists! The pieces were thrilling! Both museums are worth the trip! Art is worth the time because art can bring happiness to your life!

Art is not always happy, but if you engage with looking at art, I promise, as Bridget says, "with its potent brew of visual pleasure,

• See **Bruce** on page 15

Bruce

• From page 14

intellectual rigor, myriad meanings and unexpected world-view, art will make our lives profoundly enriched and yes, happier!”

I have always known that art is magical. Studies show that our motor cortex is stimulated when we look at or work on art. The motor cortex controls body movement, so that when you view art, your body does feel it. Every fiber of your being, your senses, intellect, emotions, and physical body, responds, zinging like a bolt of lightning. I love it when that happens to me!

One study found that after surgery, people experienced reduced stress and pain — and a faster recovery — when looking at landscapes. Many studies and reports from artists in our own Sonoran Arts League tell us that art heals, relieves pain, and helps one see the realities of the world, of other people, and of oneself.

Seeing, looking, and tuning into the glories of reality, natural and manmade, does increase your happiness quotient.

Really looking at the desert skies, sunsets, bees and birds, and even puppies in the park can make you happy. Looking at the art someone creates allows you to see the beauty the person creates, as well as the beauty of the world as she/he perceives it. This fosters empathy.

George Eliot, the writer, stated, “The cultivation of empathy is our true and proper work!” How can that make us happy? Empathy is one of the greatest sources of deep human happiness (as opposed to eating a Hershey Bar or drinking a Coke, which brings fast, but fleeting happiness). ART is a wellspring of empathy! When you look at a piece of art, you are seeing the artist’s reality. Art is personal and subjective.

Only you can know whether a work of art speaks to you. Trust your taste, but challenge yourself with new and sometimes unsettling art.

In this day and age, we are all in a near-constant state of profound overwhelmedness, as Bridget calls it. Technology and politics are eating up our time and stressing our lives. Art can take us out of the hamster wheel our brains seem to be on and bring us to our better selves, our happier and more alive selves. Not every piece of art will evoke strong feelings, give you chills, or make you see things in a different way, but even if it happens once in a hundred times, those magical feelings make it worth all the time spent viewing art. Magical feelings = happiness!

Making and showing art allows for even stronger, happier feelings. If we are in a class or at an artist’s reception, we are socializing and making connections. Art making forces us to problem-solve using creativity and luscious art supplies to create a world, no matter what style or medium of art. Art allows you to see, heals, makes you happy, enables socialization, and keeps you human. Creating art is a form of meditation. I know when I am in my studio, the world falls away and time disappears. I breathe deeper and slower, and although my artwork takes months to complete, every second, even the frustrating ones, makes me happy! It is the perfect stress reliever. It will make you happy, too. Join us at the Sonoran Arts League Studio for a class or attend one of our many receptions to experience the magic.

Art makes us HAPPY by forcing us to see the world and the world of others, allowing us to make connections, humanizing us in an age of increasing stress and technology, giving us purpose, fostering creativity, and empathy. Do remember “You Gotta Have Art!”

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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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HAPPENINGS

Carefree Farmer's Market

When: 9 a.m.-1 p.m., every Friday, Oct-May.

Where: Carefree Farmers Market, 1 Sundial Circle, Carefree

What: Visitors will find fresh, local, seasonal produce, herbs, flowers, value-added foods, fresh baked goods, natural meats and seafood. Enjoy a unique selection of local arts and crafts. This is a great way to support local farmers and give back to the community.

Info: arizonacommunityfarmersmarket.com

High Street Arts Festival

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday & Sunday, March 7-8

Where: 5415 E. High Street, Phoenix

What: The High Street Arts Festival brings fine art, food, wine, and live entertainment to High Street in an outdoor, walkable setting. This new event transforms the area into a community-focused arts destination. The festival features more than 100 artists and craftsmen offering original artwork and handcrafted goods. Live entertainment from local musicians and performers takes place throughout the event, creating a relaxed, lively atmosphere.

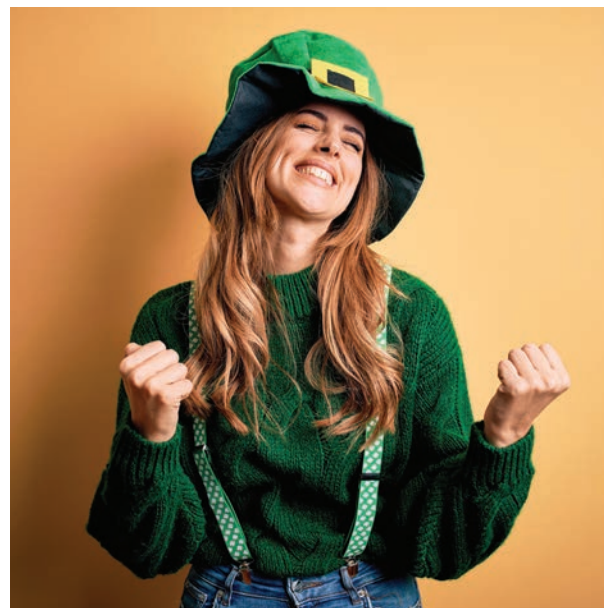
Info: vermillionpromotions.com/event/high-street-arts-festival/

Aging With Dignity: Foothills Caring Corp

When: 10 a.m.-11 a.m., Wednesday, March 18

Where: Carefree Town Council Chambers, 33 Easy St, Carefree

What: Aging with Dignity is designed for individuals, caregivers, families, and community members navigating the realities of aging. Through meaningful topics, these presentations offer practical guidance, thoughtful conversation,



(Metro Creative Connection)

and trusted information to help plan ahead, feel supported and remain connected.

Info: foothillscaringcorps.com/upcoming-events/

Stagecoach Village Fine Art & Wine Festival

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday through Sunday, March 20-22

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

What: 16th Annual Stagecoach Village Fine Art and Wine Festival. Located in the heart of the affluent communities surrounding Carefree and Cave Creek, just minutes from North Scottsdale. Featuring over 100 jury selected Fine Artists exhibiting wide variety of media and subject matter, Wine Tasting and Craft Beer, Gourmet Eateries, and live musical Entertainment.

Info: stagecoachvillagecc.com/event/stagecoach-village-fine-art-wine-festival/

Block Party Series: Back To The 80's

When: 7 p.m.-9 p.m., Thursday, March 26

Where: District Stage, 21001 N Tatum Blvd, Phoenix

What: Block Party Series takes over The District Stage on select Thursdays this year at Desert Ridge Marketplace. At this free ticketed event, enjoy high-energy themed DJ beats, dancing with friends, inspired DIY crafts, and more exciting surprises for all ages! Back to the 80's will include 80's themed photo ops, live DJ spinning 80's classics, best dressed giveaways, and more.

Info: shopdesertridge.com/event/blockparty1/

Mountain View Pub St. Patrick's Day Celebration

When: 7 a.m.-10 p.m., Tuesday, March 17

Where: Mountain View Pub, 7033 E. Cave Creek Rd, Cave Creek

What: A day filled with families, fun and Irish tributes. Live music by Danny Walls & the Canyon Walls Band at 11 a.m. followed by Dirty Yachtin' Soundrels at 3:30 p.m. and Kevin Shephard throughout the day. Bag Pipers, Irish Dancers and Leprechauns to round out the shenanigans!

Info: mountainviewpub.pub/cave-creek-stage-coach-village-mountain-view-pub-events

Cave Creek Rodeo Days Parade

When: 9 a.m., Saturday, March 21

Where: Cave Creek Rd, Cave Creek

What: The Cave Creek Rodeo Days Parade celebrates the town's Western Heritage through community support. Embracing a family-oriented entertainment focus, the parade exclusively revolves around our American Western Heritage theme. This lively procession along Cave Creek

Sponsored Content

In 30 Minutes I Had a Plan for My Shoulder Pain that Didn't Require Surgery or Pills

**By Shoulder Pain Expert,
Dr. Matthew Hernandez**

ETHOS INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

"I was losing sleep. I couldn't get comfortable at night and would wake up constantly. That was the most frustrating part. Everything I was told to do was not helping... the pain was only getting worse."

Tim, 46, came to us after exhausting every option outside of surgery. A competitive volleyball player, energetic entrepreneur, and father to two boys, Tim took pride in his active lifestyle and was determined to find a solution for his shoulder pain.

Ice packs and heat compresses were no longer helpful, and relying on pain-pills was not an option he wanted to take.

He committed to physical therapy for several weeks with little impact, tried dry needling and cortisone injections without success, and was ultimately told by multiple doctors to stop all activity that aggravated his arm. Tim had done everything his insurance allowed but was still stuck at square one.

WHAT THE OTHER DOCTORS MISSED...

Tim had fallen into what we call "The Gap" — where insurance-based care cycles with no end in sight, surgery isn't an option, and waiting for the pain to get worse seems like the only choice. Most providers only look for what they know how to treat. But our comprehensive 'Deep Dive' approach and expertise allowed us to bridge that gap for Tim.

Using a detailed pain profile, 32-point shoulder inspection, MSK ultrasound scan, and diagnostic injection, we were able to confirm Tim's SC Joint injury and quickly develop a targeted treatment plan to heal the damaged tissue.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION, NO SURGERY OR PILLS

In just 4 weeks, the pain improved significantly, allowing Tim to regain his range of motion, sleep soundly at night, and return to the sport he loves:

"My body is performing better than before, and I have resumed playing volleyball — something I didn't think I would ever be able to do again! If you're tired of the 'just hope for the best' from many in the medical field, and want a complete set of options,

Ethos Integrative Medicine is the place to go."

YOUR NEXT STEP: THE DEEP DIVE FOR A PAIN-FREE SHOULDER

You're one step away from a pain-free shoulder, too! Imagine being able to comfortably sleep in your side again, play catch with your kid, or put on a t-shirt without pain...

Call 480-573-6171 to schedule your Deep Dive with our specialists at Ethos Integrative Medicine and scan the QR

code to access our free report, "Shoulder SOS: The Expert Guide to Decoding Your Pain."



EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM OF A PAIN-FREE SHOULDER:

- 1. Ethos Pain Profile:** Identifying the specific characteristics of your pain is the first step to pinpointing exactly where it's coming from.
- 2. 32-Point Shoulder Inspection:** We thoroughly inspect the movements causing pain, taking us one step closer to eliminating your discomfort.
- 3. Precision Shoulder Scan:** Our advanced in-office MSK ultrasound scan provides a detailed, real-time view of your shoulder's structures.
- 4. Ethos Pain Map:** A diagnostic injection to confirm the source of pain.
- 5. Easy-To-Understand Explanation:** No complex terms — Just an honest breakdown of your diagnosis, and a personalized strategy to achieve relief.
- 6. Leave You Better Promise:** If by the end of the visit you do not have a better understanding of your pain or what your options are moving forward we will give you a full refund on your visit.

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Events

• From page 16

Road features horseback riders, floats, unique automobiles, rodeo royalty, bands, and more, infusing the town with a spirited Western atmosphere.

Info: Cavecreekrodeo.com/parade/

16th Fitech Fuel Injection Spring Nationals

When: 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday & Saturday, March 13-14

Where: Westworld of Scottsdale, 16601 N Pima Rd, Scottsdale

What: Now a two-day show featuring over 2,500 of the southwest's coolest 1999 and older hot rods, muscle cars, customs, trick trucks, and more. Live music entertainment, model car show, and Builder's Choice Awards selected by Squeeg's Kustoms. Free family fun zone features the Auto World model car make.

Info: Good-guys.com/sn-spectator

Phoenix Symphony

When: 11 a.m., Friday March 13. 7:30 p.m., Saturday, March 14. 2 p.m., Sunday, March 15

Where: Phoenix Symphony Hall, 225 E Adams, Phoenix

What: Phoenix-born violinist Richard Lin returns to perform Tchaikovsky's beloved Violin Concerto. Symphony Tacoma Music Director Sarah Ioannides conducts a springtime celebration of young love in Selections from Prokofiev's ballet Romeo & Juliet and the brief, impressionistic D'un matin de printemps (Of a Spring Morning) by Lili Boulanger.

Info: Phoenix-az.events/tickets/phoenix-symphony/

Smokey Robinson Up Close — Hits And More

When: 7:30 p.m., Wednesday & Thursday, March 18-19

Where: Musical Instrument Museum, 4725 E Mayo Blvd, Phoenix

What: Once pronounced by Bob Dylan as America's "greatest living poet," beloved icon and

acclaimed singer-songwriter Smokey Robinson's career spans more than four decades of hits. 2025 marked the 50th anniversary of Robinson's 1975 breakthrough album, A Quiet Storm, and he continues to thrill audiences around the world.

Info: Mim.org/events/smokey-robinson/2026-03-18/

Scottsdale Jazz Festival Premier Party

When: 6 p.m.-10 p.m., Saturday, April 4

Where: Westin Kierland Resort & Spa, 6902 E Greenvay Pkwy, Scottsdale

What: This outdoor evening event features live jazz performances. Guests will enjoy an energetic atmosphere under the stars in one of Scottsdale's premier resort settings. The experience includes a New Orleans-inspired dinner buffet and a curated Scotch sampling from The Westin's Scotch Library. Guests are invited to dine, dance, and immerse themselves in live music in an elevated outdoor environment.

Info: Kierlandcommons.com/Events/Details/579707

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The Time Is Now to Save Carefree's Open Space

By Carefree Park, Board of Directors

"While Carefree benefits from a robust portfolio of open space, much of this land is not accessible to the general public. During public outreach, residents routinely expressed a strong desire to improve upon this condition through acquisition of more accessible open space and/or enhancing accessibility to existing open space."

The preceding is a powerful message found within the *Open Space & Environmental Stewardship* section of the Carefree General Plan. During the development of the Carefree General Plan, Carefree residents spoke clearly and consistently. In November 2024, Carefree voters approved the plan and voiced a shared priority: Preserving open space **must remain central to Carefree's identity and future.**

What is Carefree Park and how does it fit in?

Carefree Park is a nonprofit organization made up of Carefree residents who are committed to advancing these goals as well. Specifically, our focus is a 48-acre parcel of pristine undeveloped Arizona State Land Trust property at the southeast corner of Mule Train Road and Cave Creek Road.

This land – **Carefree's last remaining 48-acres of accessible Sonoran Desert** – is

home to hundreds of mature saguaros, native vegetation, and thriving wildlife habitat.

Our goal is to establish the land as Carefree's only publicly accessible nature preserve, with walking paths open for all to enjoy, and to protect it for future generations.

That vision is not abstract. It is about protecting real land, real Sonoran Desert, and the quality of life that defines Carefree.

Today, that vision is at risk

These 48-acres of pristine desert – directly adjacent to new development – are now at a critical tipping point. Once this land is sold and built upon, it is gone forever. No future plan, no good intention, can bring it back. If Carefree truly values the priorities residents articulated in the General Plan, the moment to act is now.

Carefree Park exists to help make that community vision a reality, but we cannot do it alone. Preserving this land requires leadership, urgency, and community-wide commitment. Delay favors developers. Action favors Carefree.

We urge the Town of Carefree and its residents to step forward – now – while this opportunity still exists. Open space is not just scenery. It is our legacy.

Come see for yourself

Anyone who would like to experience the beauty of this magnificent piece of the Sonoran Desert can come see it for themselves later this month.

On Saturday morning, March 21st, you are invited to join a guided tour of the 48-acres.

You will walk the land and see for yourself exactly why it is worth preserving for future generations. Space is limited. Reservations are required.

Come join us at the Sonoran Safari. Attendees are kindly requested to register in advance at carefreepark.org/events

Now is the time for Carefree and the surrounding communities to come together. If this opportunity is lost, it is lost forever. The funding gap may be substantial, but so is our community's capacity to achieve a great result.

Respectfully,
The Board Members of Carefree Park
Wendy Mattes, President
Ariane Buser, Vice President
Janice Castro, Secretary
Jo Gemmill, Board Member at Large
Gene Ullrich, Director of Communication

For more information visit carefreepark.org.



**CAREFREE
PARK**

Join us! **Sonoran Safari**
Saturday, March 21st | 10am-12pm

Come join us at the Sonoran Safari. Attendees are kindly requested to register in advance at carefreepark.org/events or scan the QR code.



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Chaz Lee of Six Gun Entertainment, right, will headline the Meet a Miner Day at the Cave Creek Museum. (Courtesy of Fran Booth)

Cave Creek Museum Fun Day presents Meet a Miner Day

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Cave Creek Museum, in conjunction with Kiwanis Family Fun Day, presents Meet a Miner Day at the museum.

The event takes place March 7 from 10 a.m.-noon at the Cave Creek Museum, located at 6140 East Skyline Dr.

"Immerse yourself in the day of the life of a miner, blacksmith and other characters from Cave Creek's 1800s gold mining era," said Cave Creek Museum educator Tamsin Wolff. "Try your hand at gold panning, experience what children in the gold camp did for fun, and watch demonstrations in the blacksmith shop, where iron tools were made onsite for the mines. Costumed interpreters will guide your family through the historic mining campus and tell stories of the gold-fueled days of the American West."

Chaz Lee of Six Gun Entertainment

will be headlining the event. Lee's experience in American drama, improvisational theater, scene study and script analysis. Lee also has experience as a stunt professional, designed stage combat and is recognized for his poetry, song lyrics and short story and screenplay writing.

This free program is made possible by the financial support of the Kiwanis Club of Carefree. Registration is limited and required at cavecreekmuseum.org.

The 55-year-old museum's mission is to preserve the artifacts of the prehistory, history, culture and legacy of the Cave Creek Mining District and the Cave Creek/Carefree foothills area through education, research and interpretive exhibits. Cave Creek Museum is open from October through May. Reach the museum at 480-488-2764 or at cavecreekmuseum.org.

BENEFIT



People gather at Harold's Corral for a recent fundraising event for the Cave Creek Museum. (Courtesy of Fran Booth)

Cave Creek Museum to host 16th annual Miners Dinner fundraiser

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Cave Creek Museum will host the 16th annual Miners Dinner on March 10 from 5-7 p.m. at Harold's Corral, located at 6895 East Cave Creek Road.

The event celebrates the history and the Cave Creek community. The theme for this year's event is "Staking a New Claim."

The event honors the museum's past and future plans. Along with dinner, the event will feature a silent auction, a balloon pop, the ol' miner, western characters, the beer burro and a bake sale among other activities.

"We commemorate the hard work and passion that makes this one of the Cave Creek Museum's finest events of the season," said Cave Creek Museum, Executive Director JoAnn Stuckey.

Check-in for the event begins at 4:30 p.m. In addition, guests will enjoy local favorite musician Kevin Causey. Causey also will serve as Master of Ceremonies. Bob Boze Bell will join the fun. Bell has published more than 12 books on legendary Old West characters like

Billy the Kid, Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday. In addition, he co-wrote and published "Hellraisers & Trailblazers: The Real Women of The Wild West." Bell will sell his books and artwork, which features local landscapes like Elephant Butte and The Seven Sisters.

Poncho the beer burro's appearance is courtesy of Cave Creek Beer Burro, voted best party burros by Phoenix Magazine in 2024.

Harold's Corral is serving as the official sponsor of the event.

Dinner tickets can be purchased online at cavecreekmuseum.org or at the museum, located at 6140 East Skyline Drive. The cost is \$100 per person. Seating is limited, so reserve early.

The 55-year-old museum's mission is to preserve the artifacts of the prehistory, history, culture and legacy of the Cave Creek Mining District and the Cave Creek/Carefree foothills area through education, research, and interpretive exhibits. For information, contact the museum at 480-488-2764. The museum is open from October through May.

Celebrating our Heritage



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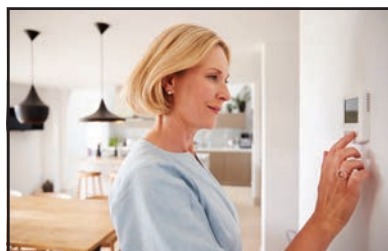
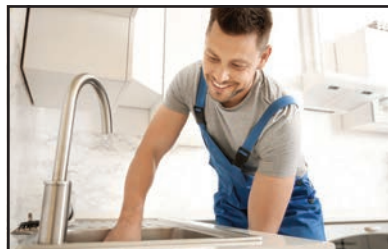
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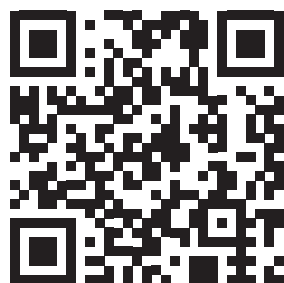
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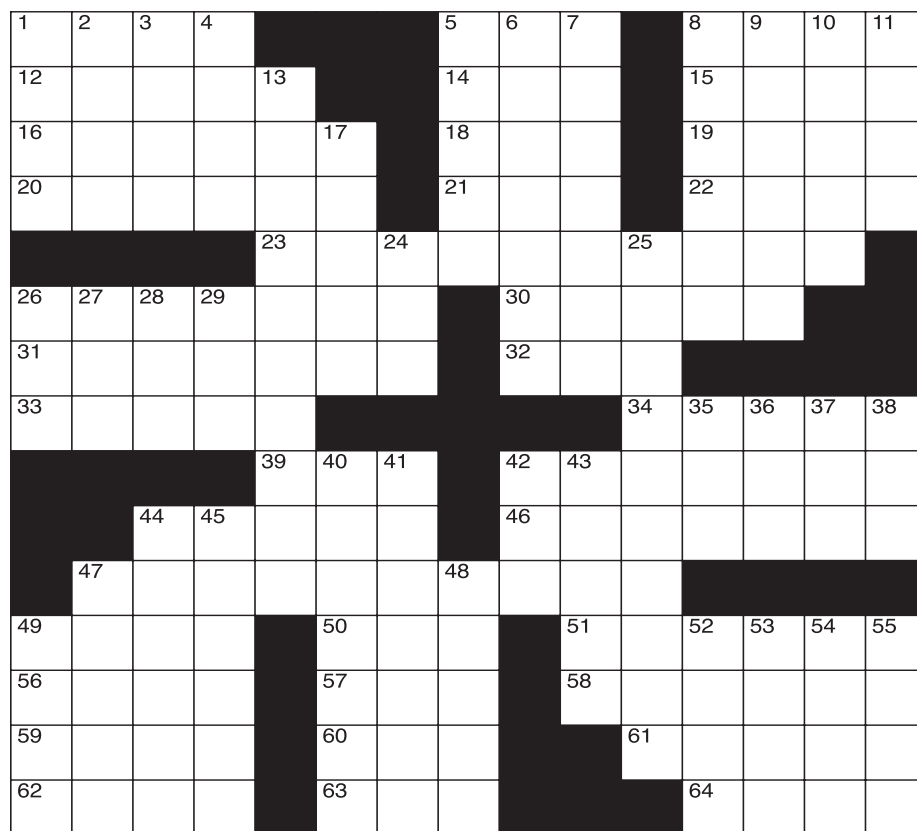
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Unit of dry measure
5. One who defies authority
8. Social media giant
12. Render holy
14. "Much ___ about nothing"
15. Computer manufacturer
16. Creed
18. Immoral act
19. Mountain pass
20. Witness
21. Don't know when yet
22. Elected officials
23. Corrupt tendencies
26. Popular adult beverage
30. Made a mistake
31. Morally correct
32. Type of whale
33. Portable conical tent
34. Native people of the Congo
39. More (Spanish)
42. Classroom implements
44. Cognizant of
46. One who tells
47. Free from bondage
49. Thick piece of something
50. Containing two adjacent

nitrogen atoms

51. Removed from the record
56. Legendary singer Turner
57. Broke up the earth
58. Hunting expedition
59. Contributes
60. Unit of work or energy
61. Wreckage on the sea bed
62. Affirmative! (slang)
63. Witness
64. Scrape (Archaic)

CLUES DOWN

1. "___ and flows"
2. Humble request for help
3. A position of leadership
4. Continent
5. Adherent of a particular religion
6. Things that can be eaten
7. Self-governing Netherlands territory
8. Long-tailed crow
9. Repeated
10. Bluish greens
11. Humanities
13. Someone who serves in the

armed forces

17. Labor (Spanish)
24. Zero
25. Shared by involving three parties
26. Queens ballplayer
27. Consumed
28. Rest here please
29. Men's fashion accessory
35. American time
36. Sound unit
37. They ___
38. Soviet Socialist Republic
40. Places to play video games
41. A sudden attack of illness
42. When you hope to arrive
43. Charges
44. Actress Seyfried
45. A tributary of the Ohio River
47. Omit when speaking
48. Armored fish
49. Remain
52. From a distance
53. Adventure story
54. Geological times
55. Eat dinner

SOLUTION ON PAGE 27

SUDOKU BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES

5	9			6		7		
	3			9				
	6					8		
4			1					8
					4	1		2
		8		7			6	
								6
7					5			
1	8			4	3	5		

Level: Advanced

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SOLUTION ON PAGE 27

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TRANSPORTATION

Cave Creek shows interest in regional transit system, partnering with Carefree

By Jeff Wendt

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Cave Creek Town Council gave its preliminary approval to the Desert Foothills Transit System to look into a pilot program creating a free transit system to run in Cave Creek and Carefree during its Feb. 18 meeting.

The system is not looking for funding from either of the towns, but is looking for “in-kind” services from both. For example, Cave Creek would be responsible for housing the transit units off hours, and Carefree would be responsible for signs throughout the transit system.

The route is planned to have 16 stops and can be extended when special events, such as the Cave Creek Rodeo, take place. The route could be altered when an event such as Bike Week in April creates travel issues through the restaurants and shops in the area. The transit route could change to a U-shape on both sides to not clog up the middle of the area.

“This is a unique opportunity to provide something that can hopefully drive tourism to the town, but can also help with just moving the town assets around and getting people to



Desert Foothills Transit System board members Cameron Kuniej, left, and Max Anderson present the concept of a regional transit system to the Cave Creek Town Council on Feb. 17. (Independent News-media/Jeff Wendt)

the different places and the different restaurants and shops that we have available in Carefree and Cave Creek,” said Cameron Kuniej, transit system board director.

The system is planning to apply for grants for the purchase of the two air-conditioned buses. Each buss would hold about 25 passengers and would be ADA compliant vehicles.

The system’s goal is to be self-sufficient through advertising sales for the buses, which would pay for the costs incurred by the buses, such as gas and maintenance of the vehicles.

Mayor Robert Morris and staff members met with members of the transit system in December to gauge their interest, and the members have also met with Carefree Mayor John Crane. The transit system board members still need to meet with the Carefree Town Council to gauge their interest in the project.

The system will need either Cave Creek or Carefree to sign off on an intergovernmental agreement to access grant funds the Arizona Department of Transportation have available.

“So the time line to launch on

the project if we get approval is obviously the review and approvals, then the next step would be the vehicle acquisition,” Kuniej said. “We do have to build out the vehicles, so there’s a time line there and as that’s happening, we’d be looking to move into operational setup, route, and then to route finalization and stop designation, obviously being subject to change throughout the process, and eventually a soft launch, and then monitoring, and hopefully some feedback from the towns and from the town councils to one, make sure we’re doing a good job, and two, make sure the town is getting the use out of the idea here.”

“I think it’s pretty clear that the council has an interest in this, but again I think that there’s more answers that they’re (the transit system) looking for before locking in,” Town Manager Grady Miller said. “A lot of this won’t happen or occur until after the grant has been applied for. And that’s the first major step, but they wanted to ascertain your general interest level in this first.

“So, I think staff’s got a pretty good idea of where to go from here,” Miller concluded.

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