

Cell phones

Battle over tower ends in victory for connectivity; **4**



INDEPENDENT

Dining Out Local

Peoria spots offer coupons, including Grande Pizza and The Links; **23**

June/July 2026 Volume 28 Issue 9

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Snapshot shows Peoria homelessness down 20%

Point-in-Time count tallies significantly less unsheltered individuals this year

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Homelessness is down 20% in Peoria this year, according to Maricopa Association of Government's annual Point-in-Time count.

The decrease is part of the unsheltered count, which means the individuals were on the streets or other places not meant for human habitation. This could include sleeping in parks, cars, or other places.

Volunteers fanned out across the city and the rest of the county on Jan. 26 to count those experiencing homelessness and found there were 76 unsheltered individuals living in Peoria at that time. There were 95 individuals living in Peoria during the 2025 count.

• See **Homeless** on page **26**



Propping up Peoria's past for America's 250th

Peoria is celebrating the country's semiquincentennial with a time capsule (center) that will be sealed for decades to come. Peoria Library Services Manager Nathaniel Washburn and Arts, Culture & Library Services Director Marylou Stephens show off some of the items that will be placed in the capsule later this month, which will include an issue of the Peoria Independent. To learn more about the capsule that will be opened on the country's 300th anniversary, see pages 18-20. (Independent Newsmedia/Philip Haldiman)

Police take new e-bike ordinance language to the streets

Officers focus on enforcement and education efforts

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Peoria Police Department has been bringing the city's updated e-bike ordinance to the public on a "balanced approach of education, enforcement, and community engagement," said spokesperson William Kennedy.

"Our goal is to improve safety for riders, pedestrians, and motorists while helping the community better understand the rules and expectations surrounding e-bike use," he said.

Peoria updated its city code

• See **E-Bikes** on page **15**

See Frank May's monthly real estate article in the center of Upper Westsider



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ON YOURVALLEY.NET**City moves \$3.4M
for power line into
Innovation Corridor**

An APS extension line is being built to provide power to the Peoria Innovation Core.

Council recently approved a budget transfer of \$3.4 million to fund the project.

The APS extension line was budgeted at \$6 million, but the actual design and construction costs totaled \$9.4 million. Construction began in March and is expected to be completed in August.

Read the full story: <https://tinyurl.com/528y5mtx>.

**Police warn of scam
involving officer imposter**

The Peoria Police Department is warning residents about a person impersonating an officer who attempts to scam local businesses out of money.

The caller has identified himself as "Lt. John Lockly" and falsely claimed that businesses were being audited due to counterfeit bills, according to a police department release.

"The caller instructed employees to remove cash from registers, count the money while remaining on the phone, and then travel to various locations to transfer funds through CashApp and prepaid cards," the release stated. "In one case, when an employee began questioning the caller, he threatened to send officers to detain her."

The Peoria Police Department stated it will never call a person or business and direct them to withdraw, transfer, deposit or send money in any form.

Read the full story: <https://shorturl.at/W9Ryp>.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Battle over cell phone tower ends in victory for connectivity

Council approves appeal for location in Vistancia

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The need for wireless connectivity has won in a battle over a controversial cell phone tower in north Peoria.

Peoria City Council unanimously reversed a recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission to deny the construction of the cell phone tower.

The applicant for the planned tower in Vistancia filed an appeal, which the council approved by a 7-0 vote June 2, allowing construction to move forward.

Additionally, staff found the appeal to be meritorious and recommended the reversal of the denial and to approve the facility with conditions.

The facility required an approved conditional-use permit for the 70-foot tall wireless communications facility, planned to be located within the Foothills Center Recreation Facility 31642 N. Westland Rd.

Councilor Matt Bullock, who represents the area where the cell phone tower is going, said the growing community of Vistancia has only one cell phone tower and it is at Mountain Vista Clubhouse in a different part of the master-planned community.

The applicant is asking for the same thing at Foothills Center Recreation Facility, he said.

"Cell service was something that was bad back in 2021, and we need to do something for it," Bullock said.

On May 7, city staff recommended approval of the permit to the planning commission, but the board denied the application in a 3-1 vote, with three

LEARN MORE ONLINE

For more information on this subject, visit yourvalley.net/peoria-independent/.

The cell phone tower will be located at the Foothills Center Recreation Facility, 31642 N. Westland Road. . (Courtesy city of Peoria)



members absent. Commissioners recognized the strong need for service in the area, but also said there were potentially better locations for a cell phone tower in the area.

"These homeowners bought homes with view fencing next to a premiere community amenity. I just don't see this as an appropriate land use at that location," Commissioner Tony Feiter, who voted for denial of the tower, said at the May 7 meeting. "With that said, I know we need this, but I empathize with the homeowners that back to this thing because they did not buy next to a vacant lot with unknown

uses, they bought next to a community amenity."

Since the planning commission's decision, the city received more than 170 letters in support of the tower and 11 in opposition.

Supporters said there are severe gaps in telecommunications service and public safety communications needs. Opposition cited visual, property and health related impacts, as well as the desire to relocate the tower.

Councilor Mike Finn said he looked at the opposition and support for the facility, and the thing that

• See **Tower** on page 14



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STUDENTS

Budding veterinarians get real world experience through contest

North Peoria veterinary clinic hosted event

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Budding young veterinary students descended on the Vistancia Animal Hospital May 26 in north Peoria to get hands-on experience in the field as part of the “Why I Want to Be a Veterinarian” essay contest.

The event was a partnership with the Compassion Pet Hospital and West-MEC that allowed students to work on veterinary case studies with help from professionals in the field.

West-MEC, or Western Maricopa Education Center, is a public career and technical education school district with locations throughout the Valley,

including two soon in Peoria.

Nearly 30 students participated, most of them West-MEC veterinary science students.

West-MEC officials said throughout the day, students were divided into seven groups each working on a case study that concluded with a surgical need, allowing students to apply critical thinking, teamwork, and clinical decision-making skills in realistic veterinary scenarios.

Brandeice Garza, West-MEC veterinary science instructor, said the demand for veterinary medicine is high and clinics are always understaffed.

Veterinarians topped the list of Indeed’s “Best Jobs for 2025,” with a median annual salary of \$139,999 and

• See **Veterinarians** on page 7



West-MEC veterinary science instructor Brandeice Garza (middle) teaches veterinary students about blood draws at Vistancia Animal Hospital. (Independent Newsmedia/Philip Haldiman)

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Veterinarians

• From page 6

1,065 job postings per 1 million total jobs, reflecting a 124% growth in job share from 2021, according to the job search engine.

Garza said the West-MEC curriculum includes lab work and other foundational skills, but partnering with clinics like Vistancia Animal Hospital brings in real-world experience with real animals that takes it to the next level.

“If we can get kids engaged at a young age and start getting those skills trained then we can get them into the field,” she said. “So once the kids have mastered all those baseline skill sets, that’s when we like to send them out to clinics.”

The event concluded with an awards ceremony recognizing the winners of the essay contest.

West-MEC student Makayla Cas-

telo, 17, earned the top honor and received a \$500 cash prize.

Castelo said after graduating from West-MEC, she wants to get her doctorate from University of Arizona and become a professional veterinary technician.

“I entered the essay contest because I wanted to learn more about what it really takes to become a veterinarian one day,” Castelo said. “This experience taught me that even small things, like taking care of an animal’s teeth, can have a huge impact on their overall health. It made me even more excited about my future in veterinary medicine.”

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@inusua.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@inusua.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our [Civil-](#)

ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Timeline of a scandal: How PUSD sexual misconduct allegations have spiraled

The public saga of Centennial High School teachers Haley Beck and Angela Burlaka dates back nearly a year, with allegations of their misconduct said to be a topic of conversation among students and staff even before then.

The public first learned of the news last August when the teachers were put on administrative leave and parents were told they were being investigated by Peoria Police. But the public didn’t get a real glimpse into Beck and Burlaka’s relationship with a former Centennial football player until police released its investigative reports last December.

The fate of Beck and Burlaka remain up in the air, and police

continue to investigate potential mandated reporting violations at Centennial. For a bird’s eye view of the saga over nearly the last year, go here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n6v7jz5>

Police serve warrant seeking more documents

The Peoria Unified School District was served with a search warrant for multiple documents related to the investigation of Haley Beck and Angela Burlaka, two teachers who are alleged to have committed sexual misconduct with a former student.

District staff has provided available hard-copy materials, including Beck’s statement of charges, miscellaneous notes, the redacted police report, as well as Burlaka’s employee file.



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NEW BOOK

Peoria resident says he was abducted by aliens



Finkle tell his story in 'The Unseen Path'

By Noah Flug
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Robert Finkle says he was abducted by aliens 50 years ago. Now, the Peoria resident and author is sharing the story publicly for the first time in his new book, "The Unseen Path," released April 22.

It was the summer of 1972 in Williamsburg, Pennsylvania, and Finkle, who at this point was in his early '20s, was looking forward to watching a movie with his sister, Dolly. He ran to the store to grab snacks, unaware, he says, that his life was about to change forever.

When he returned home, Finkle said he looked down the yard and saw a floating disc in the sky. Finkle says he yelled to Dolly, who told him to stay away from it. But rather than feeling afraid, Finkle said he felt drawn to the object.

After approaching the alleged hovering object, Finkle said he felt electricity surge through his body before slowly lifting off the ground. The next thing he remembered, he said, he was lying flat on a table unable to move, surrounded by darkness and five reptilian "beings" the size of humans but with slit eyes and scales.

Finkle said the beings communicated with him through telepathy and studied him for several hours.

"I remember I said, 'Why me?' and all I could hear was, 'Why not you?'" Finkle said. After hours of what Finkle described as rough and painful experimentation, he said he woke up back in his yard to the smell of his sister making dinner.

Finkle said he asked his sister, who has since died, what had happened, but that neither she nor anyone else at the table said anything. "We kind of just looked at each other," Finkle said. "It was something that we couldn't fathom really."

For the next 50 years, Finkle said he did not speak publicly about his alleged encounter because he feared being labeled crazy or attention-seeking.

• See **Finkle** on page 13

Robert Finkle says he was abducted by aliens 50 years ago. For the first time, he's ready to tell his story with new book. (Submitted photo/Robert Finkle)

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SPORTS

The 2026 All West Valley Preps baseball team

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

This is the 13th year West Valley Preps has announced honors for the best baseball players it covers in the Northwest Valley. The player can be on the team for his secondary position. This year, we have added a third team. Last year, we added a fourth pitcher to each team.

Here is the 2026 All West Valley Preps baseball team:

First Team

C – Conner Hillier (Junior) Northwest Christian

1B – Boeden Forquer (Junior) Paradise Honors

2B – Maxton Weaver (Senior) Deer Valley

SS – Cameron Davidson (Senior) Willow Canyon

3B – Mattox Murray (Sophomore) Canyon View

OF – Brent Sollars (Senior) O'Connor

OF – Brady Perrin (Senior) Millennium

OF – Joshua Vargas (Junior) Estrella Foothills

UT – Abram Sherrin (Senior) Liberty

P – Tommy Pascanu (Senior) O'Connor

P – Lane Stilwell (Junior) Ironwood

P – Mikey Stortz (Sophomore) Millennium

P – Ethan Dinnell (Senior) Sunrise Mountain

Second Team

C – Tank Castillo (Sophomore) Mountain Ridge

1B – Blake Baehr (Senior) Centennial

2B – Juan Cuen (Sophomore) Millennium

SS – Carter Neville (Junior) Mountain Ridge

3B – Troy Tewers (Sophomore) Liberty

OF – Tyler Carr (Senior) Deer Valley

OF – Marley Chancey (Senior) Liberty

OF – Alec Schaeffer (Junior) Estrella Foothills

• See **Baseball** on page 11

At left, Sunrise Mountain senior pitcher Ethan Dinnell delivers a pitch against Willow Canyon April 29 in a 5A baseball play-in game April 29. Dinnell is a first team all West Valley Preps pitcher. (For Independent Newsmedia/Courtesy Kevin French)

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Baseball

• From page 10

UT – Raven Anderson (Junior) Cactus
P – Tyson Hood (Sophomore) Canyon View
P – Matthew Del Carlo (Senior) O'Connor
P – Noah Rodriguez (Junior) Paradise Honors;
P – Finn Simms (Senior) Northwest Christian

Third Team

C – Ethan Patrick (Senior) Willow Canyon
1B – Chase Fillman (Sophomore) Millennium
2B – Bobby Villa III (Junior) Liberty
SS – Brandon Newkirk (Senior) Sunrise Mountain
3B – Clayton Sheets. (Junior) O'Connor
OF – Logan Guilford (Senior) Sunrise Mountain

OF – Jamarian Johnson (Junior) Dysart
OF – Parker Schmidt (Senior) ALA-West Foothills
UT – Ricardo Yuriar (Junior) Canyon View
P – Ryan McAfee (Junior) Shadow Ridge
P – Jaeden Parks (Senior) Liberty
P – Michael Wax (Junior) Estrella Foothills
P – Xavier Escontrias (Senior) Centennial

Player of the year

Tommy Pascanu, O'Connor
First runner-up: Abram Sherrin, Liberty
Second runner-up: Max Weaver, Deer Valley

Coach of the year

Jeff Baumgatner, O'Connor
First runner-up: Jon Williams, Centennial
Second runner-up: James Lofton, Paradise Honors

ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Girls basketball teams make coaching changes

The following local schools hired new girls basketball coaches:

- ♦ Liberty - Hired of Jami Johnson on April 30. Johnson coach Prescott High last year.
- ♦ Centennial - Hired of Penny Fossman on April 17, but Prescott High announced the hire of Fossman as its new coach, replacing Johnson.
- ♦ O'Connor — Hired of Leah Dasovich April 28. Dasovich most recently coached at Minnetonka High School in Minnesota.

Recent grads choose college sports programs

Athletes from the area have signed

a letter of intent to play their sport in college since May 1:

- ♦ Riley Andersen, Sunrise Mountain boys soccer, midfielder, Phoenix College
- ♦ Kaliyahna Baldwin, Mountain Ridge flag football, wide receiver, Arizona Christian
- ♦ Julian Henao, Glendale Prep track. sprinter, Paradise Valley Community College
- ♦ Alexis Lara, Centennial girls volleyball, right side, Scottsdale Community College
- ♦ Cameron Mailloux Mountain Ridge flag football, defensive back, Wingate (N.C.).
- ♦ Talan Sprouse, Glendale Prep boys basketball, guard, Benedictine (Mesa).

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Why Men Often Become Our Biggest Advocates

By Jenna Meyer
Executive Director, Sierra Winds

It's usually the wife who calls first. She's been thinking about this for a while. She's done some research, maybe driven by a few times, and talked to a friend who made a similar move. He's going along with the tour because she asked him to. He's pleasant. He shakes hands. But he's already decided this isn't for him.

I've learned to read that look. And I've also learned what usually happens next.

There's something about men of this generation where the idea of moving somewhere that takes care of things can feel like giving something up. They were the ones who built careers, raised families, fixed what broke and handled what needed handling. I understand that. I genuinely do.

There's a lot wrapped up in being the person who manages things.

What I try to do when I sense that resistance is just let them walk around, because what I've noticed is, the men who dig in the hardest at the beginning tend to dig in the most once they're here. The ones who came in with their arms crossed end up on the resident council. They start a men's group. They're the first ones in the dining room and the last ones to leave game night. They become the guys that newer residents find when they're trying to figure out how things work.

When I ask them about it, they usually say some version of the same thing: that they didn't realize how much energy they'd been spending just keeping up with a house and the lawn and the repairs and the errands. When all of that falls away, there's room for something else.



Jenna Meyer

June is Men's Health Month, and a lot of the conversation this time of year focuses on physical health, like check-ups, screenings and staying active. All of that matters, of course, but what I see every day is that connection and purpose do just as much for a man's

health as any of that. Having somewhere to show up and people who notice when you aren't at dinner.

What I've found is that men often underestimate how much of that they were missing and how much lighter life feels when it's simply part of where you live.

The other thing I've noticed is that once a man settles in here, he tends to go all in. He joins things. He organizes things. He becomes the person newer residents turn to when they're finding their footing. That's part of the culture of this place that your presence matters, that there's always something worth doing.

The men who move here laugh more. They sleep better. They have more to say at dinner. I still love it when a couple comes back for a second tour, and he's the one leading the way.

“

The people are wonderful, and there's always something to do. It's an absolutely beautiful place to live.



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Finkle

• From page 8

But the experience haunted him. By that point, Finkle said he'd already endured a difficult life. He described growing up with an alcoholic father and living in extreme poverty and loneliness, which caused him to be depressed. He said the unexplainable trauma of what he experienced would have pushed him over the edge if not for his wife, Jan, whom he met many years later.

"When I married Jan, I was pretty much ready to kill myself," Finkle said. "I just struggled so much with everything, she kind of was a savior in my life." Decades later, the couple moved to Arizona to be closer to Jan's family. But despite the time and distance that had passed, Finkle said he still thought about the encounter every

day.

Unable to make sense of what happened to him all those years ago, he said the experience continued to fill him with dread.

Desperate to move on, Finkle said he underwent a hypnotic regression, which he credits with helping him confront what happened that day.

He said he hopes his book, and speaking publicly will inspire others with similar experiences to come forward or at least help them feel less alone.

"I can only imagine how many more people like me there are right now feeling depressed," Finkle said. "I just need to close this. I know, I know I was taken."

"The Unseen Path" is Finkle's second book. His first, "The King of Business: Power Has A Price," was inspired by his late brother-in-law, Scott. Both books are available online on Amazon.

Notable quotes from American presidents

Americans will celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States throughout 2026. Many a notable leader has influenced the country in its 250-year history, and the following are some notable quotes from American presidents over the course of the nation's history.

♦ "If we can but prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them, they must become happy." **Thomas Jefferson, 1802**

♦ "Peace is the best time for improvement and preparation of every kind; it is in peace that our commerce flourishes most, that taxes are most easily paid, and that the revenue is

most productive." - **James Monroe, 1817**

♦ "Officeholders are the agents of the people, not their masters." - **Grover Cleveland, 1886**

♦ "In the history of mankind, many republics have risen, have flourished for a less or greater time, and then have fallen because their citizens lost the power of governing themselves and thereby governing their state; and in no way has this loss of power been so often and so clearly shown as in the tendency to turn the government into a government primarily for the benefit of one class instead of a government for the benefit of the people as a whole." - **Theodore Roosevelt, 1903**

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Tower

• From page 4

stuck out to him was the public safety aspect.

“We’ve had dropped 911 calls and people that can’t make that emergency services call,” he said. “To not have access to emergency services and be able to call 911, in my mind, is not acceptable, and it has to get fixed.”

In the appeal, applicant Declan

Murphy of Coal Creek Consulting on behalf of Tower Asset Group LLC and Verizon, said the application fully meets all the city’s objective criteria for the conditional-use permit.

The appeal asserted the decision by the commission “was unsupported by substantial evidence in the record, inconsistent with the applicable zoning criteria, contrary to established precedent, and inconsistent with applicable federal law governing local regulations of wire-

less telecommunications facilities under the Telecommunications Act of 1996.”

Among other things, the appeal contends the facility addresses a documented and existing “gap” in wireless coverage and network reliability within the surrounding community; the proposed location was carefully selected based on technical, engineering, and radio frequency propagation requirements; and the application complied with applicable zoning and development standards, the appeal said.

HAVE AN OPINION ON THIS ISSUE?

Want to get in on the conversation? Send your letters to AZOpinions@iniusa.org.

“The proposed facility represents a necessary public utility infrastructure improvement that serves the health, safety, and general welfare of the community by improving wireless reliability, emergency communications capability, and overall network service,” according to the appeal.

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@iniusa.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. 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 [Civil-ity Guidelines](#).

Deanna Elaine Jones



Deanna, 88, died April 21, 2026. Born in Pontiac, MI on April 6, 1938. Mother of two children. A Sun City resident for 29 years. A retired Michigan school teacher for 30 years. She was in Habitat for

Humanity several years. Work on electrical wiring of homes. In Sun City Handicaps group in exercise class, for years. Deanna was helpful to people who were handicapped. She would go out of her way to help people.



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PEORIA POLICE DEPARTMENT E-BIKE DETAIL

Electric Bike (E-Bike)

- Under 750 watts, up to 28 mph



Motor Driven Cycle

- 1-5 horsepower, can go more than 60 mph
- Not allowed on Peoria streets or sidewalks
- Must have license to drive (motorcycle endorsed)
- Must have insurance and registration



Electric Motorcycle

- More than 5 horsepower
- Considered a motor vehicle and must have registration & insurance
- Must have license to drive (motorcycle endorsed)
- Must have insurance and registration



73 Stops Made
46 Warnings Issued
18 Total Citations Issued

9 Residents provided awareness/
educational information
6 E-Bikes Confiscated
2 Arrests Made

This graphic outlines the recent efforts of e-bike enforcement by police. (Courtesy Peoria Police)

E-Bikes

- From page 1

regarding electric bikes, electric stand-up scooters and motor-driven cycles in April.

The new language modernized the code by incorporating regulations for such vehicles, including the addition of clear definitions for these vehicle types, as well as the establishment of operational restrictions and safety equipment requirements.

A new regulation is that e-bikes

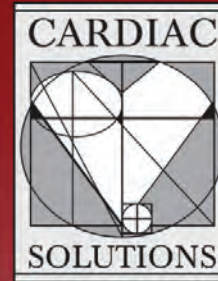
and e-scooters may not be ridden in city parks.

Police have been reminding youth under 16 years old it is illegal to operate a motor-driven cycle, and that violations will be enforced.

Kennedy said as part of the recent enforcement and education efforts, officers conducted 73 stops related to e-bike and traffic safety concerns.

During those contacts, he said officers issued 46 warnings, 18 civil citations, and two criminal citations.

- See **E-Bikes** on page 16



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E-SCOOTERS

An E-scooter is a device that weighs less than 75 pounds, has two or three wheels and a floor-board on which a person may stand while riding, and is powered by an electric motor or human power, or both. It has a maximum speed of 20 mph with or without human propulsion on a paved level surface.

- It must be used like a pedestrian — following pedestrian rules — and can be ridden on private property, sidewalks and crosswalks. No registration or insurance is required.

- Requires a helmet under the age of 18.

Source: City of Peoria

E-Bikes

- From page 15

Officers also conducted nine educational contacts, taking the opportunity to speak directly with riders and families about safe riding practices and applicable laws.

Enforcement efforts also resulted in two arrests and the clearance of several violations that directly impacted community safety.

Kennedy said many riders are not aware of the laws or potential dangers associated with unsafe riding behaviors.

The focus is not solely on enforcement, but on preventing injuries and promoting safe, responsible use of e-bikes throughout Peoria, he said.

“That is why education remains a key component of our efforts. We want riders to enjoy e-bikes responsibly while helping ensure everyone can safely share our roadways, sidewalks, and trails,” Kennedy said. “We will continue to monitor compliance, engage with the community, and address violations when nec-

E-BIKES

E-bikes are bicycles or tricycles equipped with an electric motor. They have the same rights and responsibilities as regular bicycles. No license, registration, or insurance is required. They are not considered “vehicles” under state law. They are divided into three classes.

- Class 1: Motor assists only while pedaling and stops helping at 20 mph.

- Class 2: Motor can propel the bike without pedaling and stops at 20 mph.

- Class 3: Motor assists only while pedaling and stops at 28 mph. If a motor is modified to go over 28 mph, license, registration, and insurance is required.

- At night, e-bicycles must have a white front light and a red rear reflector, and the bike must have a working brake.

- Allowed on bicycle and multiuse paths unless prohibited by posted signs.

- Under the age of 18, must wear a helmet

LEARN MORE ONLINE

For more information on this subject, visit yourvalley.net/peoria-independent/.

essary.”

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@iniusa.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. 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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AMERICA@250

Preserving the past and present for future Peorians

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

America has come a long way, baby.

Of course, that's what all the celebrating will be about when the United States rings in its 250th anniversary on July 4.

One way the city of Peoria is honoring its past and present for this party is by creating a time capsule that will give residents years from now a snapshot of today.

Peoria Library Services Manager Nathaniel Washburn said the capsule has been sealed, wrapped and will be put on display at the city's main library in July. The plan is to open it for the country's 300th anniversary in 2076.

It is important celebrate the time you live in, but also celebrate where Peoria is as a city, and Washburn said this project has provided the opportunity for that.

The time capsule is the brain child of the city's historic preservation commission.

"The commission has been awesome. They have been so involved and worked really hard to make this an important project to be a part of, and we're really excited to see it come to fruition," Washburn said.

Contents of the time capsule will include historic books about Peoria, a



Peoria Library Services Manager Nathaniel Washburn and Arts, Culture & Library Services Director Marylou Stephens with a number of the items that will be placed in a time capsule celebrating the country's 250th birthday. (Independent Newsmedia/Philip Haldiman)

commemorative Peoria coin, historical documents about the city, a picture of the current city council, local restaurant menus and a recent issue of the Peoria Independent, among other items.

Washburn said there was a lot of conversation about wanting to be inclusive and not just focusing on one particular part of the city, so they settled on items that spoke to what is going on right now in Peoria.

He also said they steered away from digital items.

"For an iPhone, it probably wouldn't be chargeable after 50 years and it probably wouldn't turn on," he said. "We wanted to stay away from the digital aspect because you just don't know where we are going to be in 50 years. For example, if we put a floppy disk in there, you'd have to work really hard to find a floppy disk reader. So we stayed with

tangible stuff that you can touch and look at."

He added only a finite number of items will fit in the time capsule, which is no more than two feet on all sides.

"Time capsules are difficult because everybody has an opinion. Everybody wants to be represented, and you want to do your best to represent all the different areas of the city," he said.

After a stint in the library this summer, the time capsule will likely take a journey to the old schoolhouse that is currently being renovated downtown, where it likely will be displayed for 50 years until it is opened for the country's 300th anniversary in 2076.

"We want to keep it relevant, so that it's not forgotten," Washburn said. "The goal is over the next 50 years to have people talking about it, and then as you get closer to 2076, 'Oh wow, I can't wait to see what's in this.' So we want to have it out over the years, or at the very least a picture of it on display."

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@iniusa.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. 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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Take in the celebration at Lake Pleasant on third of July

Pleasant Harbor at Lake Pleasant will host its annual Celebrate America fireworks show on Friday, July 3. This event is home to the annual firework show, as well as food trucks, free kids' activities and live music.

Gates open at 5 p.m. with fireworks at 9 p.m. and activities running through 10:30 p.m. Presale parking admission is \$30 per vehicle and \$35 for vehicles with watercraft. The day of the event, admission for vehicles is \$35 and \$40 for vehicles with watercraft. Coolers and lawn chairs are welcome. Canopies are allowed until sunset, then must be taken down. Tickets can be purchased online at pleasantharbor.com or at the lake on the day of the event.

There are a limited number of dry camping sites available for the 3rd of July celebration weekend. Dry camping sites are \$45 per day with a 3-night minimum purchase. Sites can be booked by phone at 623-235-6140.

Pleasant Harbor is a full-service marina that features Dillon's Bayou restaurant and Pleasant Harbor Waterpark, a large inflatable playground. Pleasant Harbor is also home to an RV Resort with 254 full hook-up sites, 60 partial hook-ups and unlimited dry camping sites.

For more information about the Lake Pleasant fireworks show or Pleasant Harbor, visit pleasantharbor.com or call Pleasant Harbor events at 623-203-5173.

The entrance is located off Care-free Highway and 87th Ave., 8708 W. Harbor Boulevard.

City celebrates America 250 with Fourth of July festival

This Independence Day, the city of Peoria is turning the Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., into one of Arizona's biggest Fourth of July celebrations.

Enjoy live music, family attractions, VIP experiences and, the city is touting, one of the state's largest fireworks display at this year's All-American Festival on Saturday, July 4.

The free festival runs 5-9 p.m. with fireworks immediately following the evening concert lineup.

Festivalgoers can look forward to:

- Skydiver performance landing in the stadium;

- Live roller derby action;

- Roaming entertainers and interactive performances throughout the venue;

- Inflatable bounce houses and family fun zones;

- Giant yard games and activities for all ages;

- A variety of local food trucks;

- Two upgraded VIP experiences inside the stadium.

The event kicks off with In Color Band, delivering high-energy boot-stomping country music. They will be followed by an interactive dueling pianos show before nationally recognized rock band Cowboy Mouth takes the stage to headline the celebration.

The event will conclude with what organizers are calling the largest fireworks display in Arizona, a show choreographed to music that will light up the night sky in a patriotic finale.

VIP tickets, event information, and festival updates are available at peoriaaz.gov/specialevents.



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Did you know?
Americans will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States in July 2026, and the word "semiquincentennial" may come up in conversation during those celebrations.

Some people may not be familiar with the term and what it means. A semiquincentennial is the 250th anniversary of something. It breaks down to "half" of a "quincentennial," which is 500 years. Synonyms may include sestercentennial, bisquicentennial or quartermillennial. Each term refers to a period of 250 years. It's a rather large word for a simple meaning, but people are bound to hear more of it as 2026 goes on and Independence Day is celebrated on July 4.

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Word Search Answers on Page 30

Presidential Films and Shows ZIG ZAG FIND



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A	M	Y	I	U	A	O	T	H	U	N	P	T	S	A	M
M	E	C	N	Q	A	S	L	T	E	L	O	R	G	F	T
O	G	L	J	N	A	B	W	S	P	N	C	O	E	R	T
N	H	P	O	A	M	D	E	S	I	I	L	A	S	X	V
E	O	Q	H	D	S	S	M	O	H	D	V	B	N	M	Z
G	S	U	J	E	O	K	Y	T	R	R	B	F	E	Q	X
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S	R	O	L	O	C	Y	R	A	K	O	P	L	Q	F	W
I	Z	S	A	S	E	X	O	M	I	R	P	R	T	T	K

The letters of the movies or TV shows with an American presidential theme are hidden below. They are connected by tiles on top, below, right, or left, but not diagonally. Find them all.

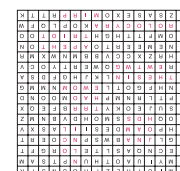
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COMMUNITY NEWS

Police conduct task force, 170 speed citations issued

Peoria Police took part June 10 in a West Valley speed task force that resulted in 266 contacts within the city.

Police officers from across the West Valley partnered to address speeding and other hazardous driving behaviors that they say continue to be a concern.

The enforcement effort resulted in:

- 169 civil speed citations;
- 13 criminal speed citations;
- 11 distracted driving citations;
- 62 other traffic citations;
- 55 warnings.

Police said speeding and distracted driving remain leading factors in serious and fatal crashes. The enforcement efforts are in response to community requests, according to a release from Peoria police.

Peoria restaurant expands with franchising

After more than 13 years of serving the West Valley, Peoria favorite Haymaker is officially expanding through franchising.

The local restaurant brand released it seeks qualified franchise partners throughout Arizona as it begins the next chapter of growth for the home-grown concept known for its oversized portions, all-day dining menu and nostalgic neighborhood atmosphere.

Founded by restaurateur Joey Lucidi with just \$110 in his pocket at opening, Haymaker has grown into four Valley locations in north Peoria, Goodyear, Buckeye and south Peoria, a news release states. Today, the restaurants collectively serve more than 10,000 guests each week and more than a half million guests per year, a press release states. The restaurants serve breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Residents considering Deer Valley Unified recall election

Residents — and at least one fellow sitting governing board member — are considering initiating a recall effort to unseat Kim Fisher of the Deer Valley Unified School District.

Fisher two weeks ago sparked local and national outrage when, during a contentious conversation in an open meeting, she did a Nazi salute and said “heil heil.” In the governing board’s first meeting since, June 9, Fisher offered a five-minute explanation that did little to quell the public’s outcry. Read the full story on YourValley.net.

Residents picketed outside the meeting, demanding Fisher resign as did a group of nearly 20 public speakers during the meeting, including members of the local Jewish community. A fellow board member, Steve Bottfeld, is Jewish.

“I’m here tonight to talk for myself,

our fellow Jewish teachers, our Jewish administration, our Jewish families and community members, and our esteemed board member and local representative of the tribe, and fellow mensch, Mr. Bottfeld, and most importantly, our Jewish students and all the other minority families and students that were alienated by the inexcusable incident that took place at the last board meeting,” Aaron Arnold, a teacher at Barry Goldwater High School, within the district, said from the podium.

Applications, forms, and additional recall information are available at <https://schoolsop.org/recall-elections>.

The Superintendent’s Office reports that 23,004 valid signatures are required to trigger a recall election in the Deer Valley Unified School District. Per state law, the office calculates the number of signatures required based on most recent general election data.

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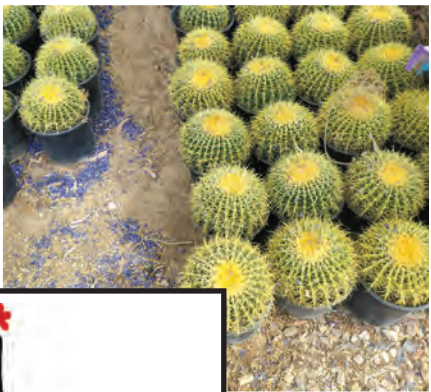
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Peoria business becomes beacon of hope

Happy Honu serves up shave ice and a prayer

By Noah Flug
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

When Desmond Martin was a child playing on the warm beaches of his home in Hale'iwa, Hawaii, there was nothing he enjoyed more than a refreshing cup of shave ice.

Now, decades later and more than 2,000 miles away, Martin, or "Uncle Dez," as he calls himself, is serving up the Hawaiian staple right here in Peoria.

Martin owns and operates Happy Honu Shave Ice, 8976 W. Union Hills Dr, Suite 104. He and his family are there Tuesday through Sunday, whipping up bowls of the iconic frozen dessert topped with sweet condensed milk and a layer of ice cream.

"It was a family thing for us to try and launch here in the Valley," Martin

said. "I wanted to bring shave ice to the hottest place on earth."

Happy Honu has been dishing out shave ice in Arizona for more than a decade, and Martin calls it a dream come true. But running a small business isn't easy, and he's had to fight to keep that dream alive.

Martin first went into business in 2016 when he saw a food trailer for sale on Craigslist. After more than four years working in the information technology department at Dignity Health, he decided to chase his dream of owning a shave ice stand.

The trailer was in good condition, with a hut-like design reminiscent of a bungalow. Martin made the seller an offer, and Happy Honu was born.

The next step was to remodel the trailer, so Martin and his family got to work.

"We started buying a bunch of shav-

ers. I started kitting up the trailer and pretty soon we were just rolling on parking lots here and there," Martin said.

But Martin was unfamiliar with the city's ordinances regarding food trailers in parking lots, and eventually code enforcement shut them down. Just as they started to get back on their feet, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

"We had to pivot," Martin said. "Everybody's doing the grab-and-go, six-foot distance rule, mask up and all that, and people were just sick of being quarantined at home."

Looking for a way to drum up business, Martin began joining neighborhood Facebook groups in the areas where he parked his trailer. He would message the groups with his setup time and invite people to come get shave ice.

"At first I thought I was going to have to shut it down," Martin said. "I thought we're going back to our corpo-

rate jobs, you know."

But the fear didn't last long. Happy Honu started picking up steam in the community, and soon people were lining up for shave ice.

"They were like 'How do we get you any day of the week?'" Martin said. "And I started thinking about it, and I was like, okay, I guess the only way that we could do that is open a shop."

After a few more years of serving out of the trailer, Martin secured a storefront in Peoria in 2024.

Since then, business hasn't exactly been smooth. Thin profit margins and seasonality — not a lot of people crave shave ice in the winter — have forced Happy Honu to scale back its employees.

Martin says it can be scary sometimes, but that for him it isn't about the money — it's about connecting with customers.



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PROFILE



Above, Peoria residents Lanti, Nare, Steve and Dishe and, right photo, Steve and Blerona are some of the friendly faces at Grande Pizza. (Independent News-media/Charlene Bisson)

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Address: 8996 W. Union Hills Drive, Peoria

Hours: Closed Monday; 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday

Family: Stevie, Dishe, Blerona, Nare, Lanti, Chris (delivery), Jeta (No. 1 cousin)

How long have you been in business: Since 1979

What sets your business apart from other pizza shops: A mom-and-pop shop and the environment we create with customers. Steve, the owner, likes to joke with the customers.

What food would you recommend readers should try: If you ask Steve, he'll tell you anchovies. If you ask the girls, it's buffalo chicken or white pizza.

What sells the most: Grande pizza special (similar to a supreme) and wings.

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Homeless

• From page 1

The count results are a “snapshot” and will be used to help the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development support homeless assistance programs and allocate resources.

Neighborhood & Human Services Director Kelli Kincaid said the city remains committed to continuing partnerships and strategies that support both individuals in need and the broader community.

She said that over the past several years the city and its community partners have worked to increase available shelter and transitional housing opportunities in the region, including additional beds and support services. Kincaid added that the work has also included collaborating closely with nonprofit providers, regional partners, law enforcement, behavioral health organizations, and outreach teams to engage individuals more consistently and connect them to available resources before situations become more critical.

These collaborative efforts may be contributing factors reflected in this year’s unsheltered Point-in-Time count numbers, Kincaid said.

“While the Point-in-Time count is only a one-day snapshot and can fluctuate year to year based on a variety of factors, the city of Peoria has continued to focus on expanding re-



A Maricopa Association of Governments volunteer speaks to a homeless person during the annual Point-in-Time count Jan. 26. Homelessness is down 20% in Peoria this year, according to Maricopa Association of Government’s annual Point-in-Time count. (Maricopa Association of Governments)

sources, strengthening partnerships, and increasing outreach efforts aimed at connecting individuals experiencing homelessness with services and shelter options,” she said. “That said, we also recognize that homelessness remains a complex regional issue, and a single-year decrease does not necessarily indicate a long-term trend.”

Across the county

The Maricopa County Association of Governments on May 18 released the results of the 2026 Point-in-Time Homelessness Count, which were nearly unchanged county-wide year over year.

“Flat numbers in a growing region are themselves a meaningful sign,” a MAG release stated. “As the Mar-

copa region’s population continues to climb, holding the overall count steady and reducing the unsheltered population demonstrates important progress.”

The changes from 2025 to 2026 showed the total PIT count was down less than 1%, the unsheltered count decreased 12%, and the sheltered count rose 14%.

In Phoenix, the count went down from 3,761 in 2025 to 3,248 in the unsheltered category this year.

“The most encouraging part of this year’s count is that more people are sheltered,” said Tim Burch, co-chair of the Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care and Tempe’s director of community health and human services. “When someone is in shelter,

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

These are the Point-in-Time tallies over the years in Peoria, 2014-26.

2014: 13

2015: 30

2016: 31

2017: 22

2018: 38

2019: 78

2020: 83

2021: N/A

2022: 115

2023: 92

2024: 82

2025: 95

2026: 76

Source: Maricopa Association of Governments

HAVE AN OPINION ON THIS ISSUE?

Want to get in on the conversation? Send your letters to AZOpinions@iniusa.org.

they’re connected to services and case management, and that’s how people move out of homelessness. That’s the direction we want to keep moving.”

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@iniusa.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. 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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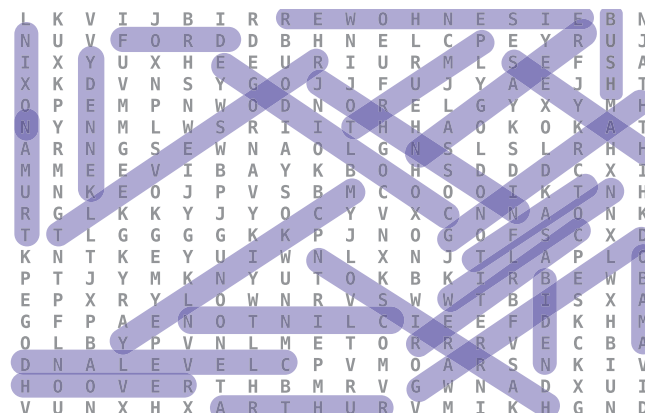
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UPPER WESTSIDER

Business News of Peoria and North Phoenix

JUNE/JULY 2026

Vol. 7 • No. 6

Paving a path at The Trailhead

READ STORY ON
PAGE 2

The heavy hitters line up at The Trailhead marquee, off the northeast corner of 83rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road: Crust Simply Italian owner Michael Merendino, AZ Vitality and Wellness owner Melynda Fenn, Sparrow Executive Chef Schuyler Estes, with Jennifer Stumph and Tiffany Jordan, of the Pederson Group Inc. (Independent Newsmedia/Philip Haldiman)



VISIT US AT [MYHYPERLOCALNEWS.COM](https://myhyperlocalnews.com)

Once a complex patchwork of parcels, destination on the hill has come a long way

By Philip Haldiman
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The 40-acre Trailhead is now a destination on the hill for Peoria residents to gather, eat and shop. But it's come a long way since its days as a vacant patch of dirt at the emerging intersection of 83rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road.

The Pederson Group began developing the project more than eight years ago, originating as a five-parcel assemblage with complex negotiations. That dovetailed into construction challenges and pandemic difficulties.

But Pederson Group President Jeff Manelis said eventually the \$100 million project took off, attracting "best-in-class" businesses serving a rapidly growing Peoria community that has been ready and waiting for the amenities.

The 140,000 square feet of retail is



Jeff Manelis

anchored by a 63,000-square-foot Safeway.

Most recently, Life Path Church, Crust Simply Italian and Chick-fil-A have opened.

Projects currently in process are a new Flower Child location and Honor

Health facility planning to open later this year, an AZ credit Union scheduled to open in August, and a 336-unit luxury apartment complex under construction.

All the current units have been filled, and the draw appears to be real, because even if a tenant leaves, another is quick to take up the space, as when Negranti Creamery moved out

after a residency of about six months and Chicago-based Petersen's Ice Cream and Cafe moved in, not skipping a beat.

With only two pads left to develop, Manelis says the future is bright for The Trailhead.

"We knew that four corners was just down road, so there was a need for a little smaller format shopping center," he said. "With COVID, it was on and off again, so it was unknown what the demand would be (for retail) after that. But in 2022, we really got going."

The Safeway opened October 2024, and then Chick-fil-A opened in May with interior seating, a play area and a drive-thru that can handle up to 45 cars.

"Everyone was very motivated for Chick-fil-A," he said. "When you get a Chick-fil-A, it really takes center, and it's doing very well. ... Then three

months ago Flower Child closed, which was the frosting on the cake. Also promised were quality neighborhood sit-down restaurants that were delivered with Jinya Ramen Bar, Sparrow and Crust."

Manelis says he has been getting interest on one undeveloped pad, and the Pederson Group are in negotiations for the other, which is 8,000 square feet.

"We can't speak yet that about it," he said. "But we are saving the last pad for hopefully a nice sit down restaurant."

Senior News Editor Philip Haldiman can be reached at phaldiman@iniusa.org, or on X @philiphaldiman. 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](#).

BUSINESS NEWS IN BRIEF

Planning department reviewing data center

A proposal for a data center at 75th Avenue and Butler Drive is being reviewed by Peoria's Planning and Zoning Department.

Panning Director Chris Jacques said Aligned Data Centers Propco has submitted plans for dual two-story data center buildings totaling about 916,000 square feet on 95 acres at the southwest corner of the intersection, with a future phase extending toward Northern Avenue.

The property is 1,500 feet from the nearest residential. It is zoned light industrial and legacy place planned-area development, both of which allow data centers as a permitted use. Officials say the property has

held industrial zoning for decades, and as a permitted use, it will not come forward for a public hearing.

The facility would be near existing industrial facilities such as the Frito-Lay manufacturing plant and a Trader Joe's distribution center.

The application was submitted in March and has completed its first review cycle. Once approved, the applicant may submit construction plans for review, Jacques said.

There are no other data centers currently in the pipeline, Jacques added.

Read the full story: <https://tinyurl.com/3d5y5ft9>

Peoria unveils new fleet maintenance building

The city of Peoria celebrated the

opening of its new fleet maintenance building on June 2 with a ribbon cutting attended by Mayor Jason Beck, city council members and city leadership.

The new 44,340-square-foot facility will serve as a central maintenance hub for much of the city's public fleet, which includes 1,082 vehicles and pieces of equipment. The fleet maintenance team plays an essential role in keeping city vehicles safe, reliable and ready to support services residents depend on every day.

The new building replaces a facility that was about 40 years old and no longer met the needs of the growing fleet operation. Mechanics had outgrown the space and often worked outside in Arizona's extreme heat,

changing tires and servicing vehicles in difficult summer conditions.

Read the full story: <https://tinyurl.com/2ctznw5>

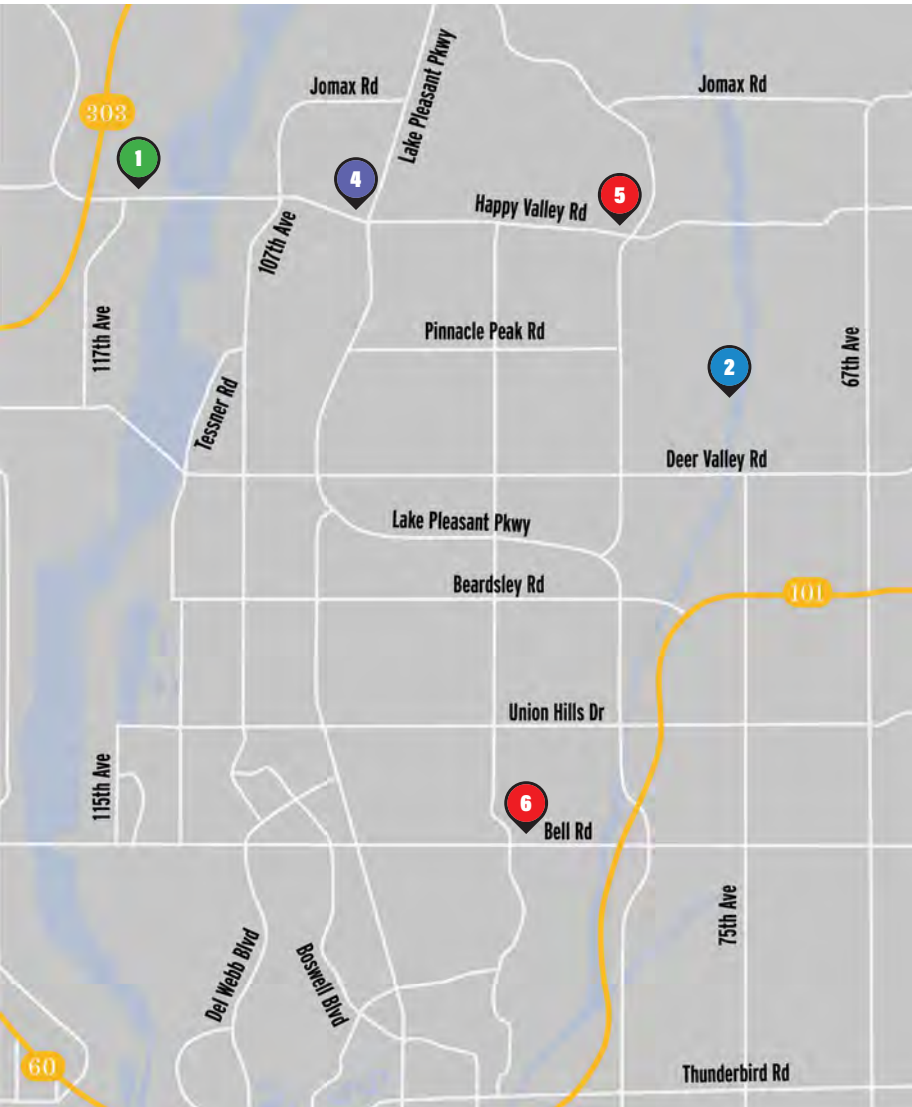
Peoria to host tax class

Peoria business owners may make sense of their business taxes at a free Business Tax Workshop 9 a.m.-noon, Thursday, June 18 in the Pine Room at Peoria City Hall, 8401 W. Monroe St.

The city is partnering with the Arizona Department of Revenue to help local businesses better understand tax requirements, ask questions and gain useful information to support long-term success.

Learn more and sign up at www.peoriaaz.info/biztax.

BUSINESS MOVES



PLANNING

1 A proposed marijuana dispensary named Trulieve Dispensary Happy Valley is going through the permitting process with Maricopa County. The proposed location is on a county island within the city of Peoria near Happy Valley Road and 115th Avenue. Because it is within the county, the city of Peoria will not be involved. For more information, go to maricopa.gov/797/Planning-Development.

NOW OPEN

2 Arrowhead area children now have a new soccer option. KidsUnit-ed, a youth soccer development center, is now open in the northwest Valley at 75th Avenue and Rose Garden Lane. The business offers seven different year-round early development soccer programs for children ages 1.5 to 9 years old. The programs are created by top professionally trained coaches to guide children to become healthy, active, and self-confident individuals both

on and off the field, their website states. For more information, visit kidsunit-ed.com.

3 The new 4,094-square-foot clinic Denova Collaborative Health 13128 N. 94th Dr., Ste. 202, is now open. The facility will serve the community with primary care, mental health services, therapy, psychiatry, and wellness support all in one place. The facility includes six primary care exam rooms and four psychiatry and therapy rooms. Patients can access in-person and virtual appointments now. The Peoria clinic is staffed by a multidisciplinary team of providers serving a wide range of patient needs and age groups. For more information about the clinic or to schedule an appointment, visit denova.com or call 602-230-7373. (location is off map)

ONE YEAR

4 Nothing Bundt Cakes is celebrating one year at Four Corners, 24681 N Lake Pleasant Pkwy #102. The popular bakery chain specializes in customizable, handcrafted bundt cakes known for their moist texture and signature cream cheese frosting. Founded in 1997, the business has grown to hundreds of locations nationwide, offering a variety of sizes and flavors for many occasion.

COMING SOON

5 A new location of First Watch is planned for Phase 2 of 83 Marketplace at 83rd Avenue and Happy Valley Road. First Watch follows its Daytime Dining concept, serving made-to-order breakfast, brunch and lunch using fresh ingredients guided by its "Follow the Sun" culinary philosophy which includes chef-driven menus that rotate multiple times per



NOTHING BUNDT CAKES



MARSHALL'S

year to feature the highest-quality flavors at their peak, according to their website. Fan favorites include fresh juices like the Kale Tonic, as well as Lemon Ricotta Pancakes, Quinoa Power Bowl and signature Million Dollar Bacon.

6 A new Marshalls location is planned for Arrowhead Marketplace at the northeast corner of 83rd Avenue and Bell Road. It will replace the former OfficeMax space near the Trader Joe's. The off-price department store chain owned by The TJX Companies will bring to the area brand-name apparel, footwear, home decor, and beauty products at prices up to 60% below regular department store prices.

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REAL ESTATE

A Steady Month in 85383, and What I'm Watching Next

Every month I sit down with the numbers, and every month I remind myself of the same thing: one number never tells the whole story. This month is a good example.

Across the entire MLS, the average sales price increased 3.55%. Here in 85383, the average sales price dipped 1.21%, landing at \$760,936. At first glance, you might read that as the Valley moving up while our area slips. I read it differently, and here is why.

If you remember last month's article, 85383 had the highest sale of the year close at \$4,720,000. A sale like that pulls the monthly average up in a big way. When a sale like that is in one month's numbers and not the next, you would normally expect the average to swing down hard the following month, even if typical homes are selling for about the same as before. Instead, our average dipped just over one percent. To me, that says the everyday market in 85383, the homes most of us actually own and buy, is holding steady. That is a quiet kind of strength, and it does not always show up in a headline.

After 25 years of selling homes in this Valley, through the boom of 2005, the crash of 2008, the frenzy of 2020 and 2021, and now this market, I have learned that single-month swings rarely mean what they appear

to mean. What matters is the pattern over several months, and what is happening on the ground.

So here is what I am seeing on the ground.

Sales activity slowed noticeably around the beginning of May. For a few weeks, things were quiet. Then, right around the end of May, the phone started ringing again. Showings picked up. Buyers who had been sitting on the sidelines started circling back. I am hopeful that momentum carries through the summer, because that kind of shift usually shows up in the closed numbers a month or two later.

The other thing I am watching closely, as always, is interest rates. Rates are still sitting on the higher side of where they have been over the past nine months, and the recent jobs report came in stronger than anticipated. That matters because strong economic news tends to keep rates from falling. Buyers feel that directly in their monthly payment, and the monthly payment is what most buyers are really shopping with, whether they say it that way or not.

Looking ahead, we typically see a seasonal slowdown around August and September. That is normal for our market and nothing to panic

over. Like a lot of you, I am hoping the second half of the year brings some good news on rates, the broader economy, and the world in general. Any meaningful drop in rates would bring a wave of waiting buyers back into the market quickly. I have seen it happen before, and the buyers who were prepared moved faster than the ones who waited for the news to feel comfortable.

What does all of this mean for you?

If you are thinking about selling, the takeaway is that demand in 85383 and most of Peoria, is still real, but it is selective. A steady average does not mean every home sells. The homes that are doing well are the ones priced in line with today's competition, in good condition, and presented properly from day one. Your home is not an average. What matters is what homes like yours, in your neighborhood, in your condition, are actually selling for right now, and that picture can change month to month, sometimes street to street.

If you are thinking about buying, the seasonal slowdown ahead may work in your favor. Sellers who are on the market in late summer tend to be more motivated, and you may find more room to negotiate than you would in the spring.

And here is something I tell people all the time: the folks who end up netting the most when they sell are usually the ones who call me six to twelve months before they are ready, not six days before they want a sign in the yard. That early conversation costs nothing, and it gives us time to talk about which improvements are actually worth doing, which ones are not, and how to time things in your favor.

Even if a move is nowhere on your radar, I am always happy to tell you what your home would likely sell for in today's market. Most people just like knowing. And if you ever have a question about the market you would like answered, send it my way. I may even feature it in a future article.

Call or text me anytime at (623) 203-1800. No pressure, just a straight answer from someone who has been watching this market for 25 years.



Frank May grew up in the Valley, graduating from Northwest Christian School and Northern Arizona University. He is a real estate agent

and has been helping both buyers and sellers for over 25 years. He has been a Dave Ramsey, RamseyTrusted/Endorsed Local Provider (ELP) since 2003.

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★★★★★ M

"We were referred to Frank by our realtor in Flagstaff. We were looking for a home for our daughter who is attending school in Phoenix. Being from Flagstaff we were unfamiliar with a lot of the areas, Frank was very open about us looking in safe neighborhoods. He was very patient with our crazy searches, I think we broke his record for most home showings in one day. We finally found a house and the buying process went very well. His whole team was great to work with. Frank went above and beyond for us as a realtor, and has become a friend in the process."



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HAPPENINGS

Spanish Conversation Group

When: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, June 18
Where: Sunrise Mountain Library, 21109 N. 98th Ave., Peoria
About: Come practice speaking Spanish with other learners and native speakers in a casual, fun environment on the third Thursday of every month. All levels welcome. For adults and youth ages 10+ (youth must be accompanied by an adult). Email caun-derhillaz@gmail.com for info.

Beer and Brats Sunset Music Cruise

When: 6:30 p.m. Saturday, June 20
Where: Pleasant Harbor Marina, 8708 W. Harbor Blvd., Peoria
About: Enjoy a relaxing, 105-minute sunset cruise featuring live music. Snack on a brat with grilled onions, grilled peppers, sauerkraut and sauces. Local craft beers available for purchase.

Master Gardeners

When: 11:30 a.m. Saturday, June 20
Where: Sunrise Mountain Library, 21109 N. 98th Ave., Peoria
About: Master Gardener volunteers will be available to answer desert gardening questions, including but not limited to plant selection, irrigation, fertilization, pruning techniques, pest management and problem diagnosis the third Saturday of each month. You can bring plant material or insect specimens for ID and advice.

Desert Dreams FC

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, June 20
Where: Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria
About: Peoria's Women's Premier



Desert Dreams FC hosts home matches in late June and July at Peoria Sports Complex. Matches start at 7 p.m. (Photo provided by Desert Dreams F.C.)

Soccer League club, Desert Dreams FC, hosts Sol.

Lake Pleasant Monday Clean-Up Crew

When: 6 a.m. Monday, June 22
Where: Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown
About: Lake Pleasant has a Monday clean-up crew. Residents available on any Monday can join in picking up litter along the shoreline.

Richie Darling

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 23
Where: Cross Eyed Cricket, 28615 N. El Mirage Road, Peoria

About: Longtime Valley musician performs live songs from rock to blues to country.

Kayak Class

When: 8 a.m. Saturday, June 27
Where: Biscuit Tank at Ben Avery Shooting Facility, 4044 W. Black Canyon Blvd., Phoenix
About: There will be a classroom session followed by putting theory into practice – actually paddling a kayak on the water. This course is designed to equip paddlers with basic skills to get from point A to point B successfully, understand the legal responsibilities that come with getting on the water, and what to do in emergency situations.

Desert Dreams FC

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, June 27
Where: Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria
About: Peoria's Women's Premier Soccer League club, Desert Dreams FC, hosts Arsenal.

Lake Pleasant Monday Clean-Up Crew

When: 6 a.m. Monday, June 29
Where: Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown
About: Lake Pleasant has a Monday clean-up crew. Residents available on any Monday can join in picking up litter along the shoreline.

Josh Roy

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday, June 30
Where: Cross Eyed Cricket, 28615 N. El Mirage Road, Peoria

About: Valley-born musician calls 90s country music his influence.

Celebrate America '26

When: 5 p.m. Friday, July 3
Where: Pleasant Harbor at Lake Pleasant, 8708 W. Harbor Blvd., Peoria
About: Annual July 3rd Fireworks Celebration along the shores of Lake Pleasant. Food trucks, novelty vendors, kids' activities, live music.

Lake Pleasant Monday Clean-Up Crew

When: 6 a.m. Monday, July 6
Where: Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown
About: Lake Pleasant has a Monday clean-up crew. Residents available on any Monday can join in picking up litter along the shoreline.

Richie Darling

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 7
Where: Cross Eyed Cricket, 28615 N. El Mirage Road, Peoria
About: Longtime Valley musician performs live songs from rock to blues to country.

"Avenue Q"

When: 7 p.m. Thursday, July 9
Where: Arizona Broadway Theatre, 7701 W. Paradise Lane, Peoria
About: This irreverent and heart-warming Tony Award-winning musical blends puppetry with live actors to tell the story of finding one's purpose. Runs through July 19.

Happenings

• From page B6

Kayak Class

When: 8 a.m. Saturday, July 11
Where: Biscuit Tank at Ben Avery Shooting Facility, 4044 W. Black Canyon Blvd., Phoenix
About: There will be a classroom session followed by putting theory into practice – actually paddling a kayak on the water. This course is designed to equip paddlers with basic skills to get from point A to point B successfully, understand the legal responsibilities that come with getting on the water, and what to do in emergency situations.

Desert Dreams FC

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, July 11
Where: Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria
About: Peoria's Women's Premier Soccer League club, Desert Dreams FC, hosts Desert Surf.

New Romantics Book Club

When: 6 p.m. Monday, July 13
Where: Sunrise Mountain Library, 21109 N. 98th Ave., Peoria
About: A book club devoted to romance books takes place the second Monday of every month. The June 8 discussion will be about "We Met Like This" by Kasie West. Email Payten.McGinn@peoriaaz.gov for more info.

Lake Pleasant Monday Clean-Up Crew

When: 6 a.m. Monday, July 13
Where: Lake Pleasant Regional Park, 41835 N. Castle Hot Springs Road, Morristown
About: Lake Pleasant has a Monday clean-up crew.

"Garth Live!," A Tribute to Garth Brooks

When: 7:30 p.m. Monday, July 13
Where: Arizona Broadway Theatre,

7701 W. Paradise Lane, Peoria
About: Tribute to the music of Garth Brooks featuring Drew Baloh, who has an uncanny resemblance to the country music icon. This production is a tribute to some of the greatest music produced in the 90s country era.

Josh Roy

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday, July 14
Where: Cross Eyed Cricket, 28615 N. El Mirage Road, Peoria
About: Valley-born musician calls 90s country music his influence.

Spanish Conversation Group

When: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 16
Where: Sunrise Mountain Library, 21109 N. 98th Ave., Peoria
About: Come practice speaking Spanish with other learners and native speakers in a casual, fun environment on the third Thursday of every month. All levels welcome. For adults and youth ages 10+

(youth must be accompanied by an adult). Email caunderhillaz@gmail.com for info.

Master Gardeners

When: 11:30 a.m. Saturday, July 18
Where: Sunrise Mountain Library, 21109 N. 98th Ave., Peoria
About: Master Gardener volunteers will be available to answer desert gardening questions, including but not limited to plant selection, irrigation, fertilization, pruning techniques, pest management and problem diagnosis the third Saturday of each month. You can bring plant material or insect specimens for ID and advice.

Desert Dreams FC

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, July 18
Where: Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria
About: Peoria's Women's Premier Soccer League club, Desert Dreams FC, hosts Rovers.



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

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

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