



Sports

Women's softball team returns from nationals: **20**



INDEPENDENT

Clubs

Club partners with restaurant for July promotion; **6**



July 15, 2026 Volume 66 Issue 28 Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Sun City resident: Phoenix tethering ban reflects 'common sense'

By Zev Black, Jennifer Jimenez and Mark Carlisle
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Phoenix City Council recently made it illegal to tether a dog outdoors on private property in any weather — not just extreme weather — unless it is being directly supervised by its owner.

Kate Sivoletta, founder of the nonprofit Poverty's Pets, spoke before the city council and said her group has advocated for this change for more than a decade.

She said Poverty's Pets once reported to the city they had seen a dog tethered in 99-degree heat. The response was that there was nothing the city could do because the temperature had not reached 100 yet.

"The dog's suffering did not change when the temperature changed one degree. Cruelty cannot be measured by temperature alone," Sivoletta said.

The previous ordinance, still in effect until July 17, bans tethering

• See **Dogs** on page 5



Sgt. Jerry Pertner, Capt. Arlene Kluizenaar, Master Sgt. Denis Aseltine and Sgt. Herb Blair pose after a flag retirement ceremony.
(Submitted Photo/Arlene Kluizenaar)

Small but mighty: Sun City Posse Color Guard carries pride

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

With just seven active members, the Sun City Posse Color Guard is a small unit with a large sense of purpose.

Denis Aseltine, leader of the group, has been a member for five years. He said he enjoys it because of the sense of patriotism he gets when presenting the colors.

"Keeping people thoughtful of the fact that we

live in the greatest country in the world," he said. "I like to present ourselves in the best light possible... It's representative of trying to be the best that we can be and showing respect for not only our fellow Posse members, but the community."

The color guard presents the colors before every Posse general meeting, and has also appeared at high school football games, NASCAR events and funerals.

• See **Guard** on page 5



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DINING

KFC expands with new Sun City restaurant

KFC is expanding in the Grand Canyon state with the opening of its newest restaurant in Sun City. The restaurant will officially open for business 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 8, at 10801 W. Grand Ave., near Plaza de Grande.

The restaurant is owned and operated by Pak Foods, LLC, a multi-unit, multi-brand operating group with locations across the southwest. Leadership team members Tanweer and Rehman Ahmed are spearheading operations in Sun City.

“We’re proud to officially bring KFC to the Sun City communi-

ty and create a convenient new destination for residents and visitors to enjoy the brand’s iconic menu offerings,” said Rehman. “Our team is committed to providing a welcoming experience and high-quality service for every guest who visits. We look forward to becoming part of the community and serving Sun City residents for years to come.”

To celebrate the opening, the restaurant will host a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 14, with the local chamber of commerce.

Visit kfc.com.



RESIDENTS REPAIR, RESTOCK LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

Nancy Wright, with Arrowhead-West Phoenix Pi Beta Phi Alumnae Club, and Susie Wolfe, of the Wickenburg Public Library, show off the newly restored and repainted Little Free Library. A summer storm caught and blew off the Library door, so the alumnae group fixed it up and restocked it with both children and adult books for the Wickenburg public to enjoy. (Submitted photo/Lolly Looman)



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Dogs

• From page 1

on private property only during extreme weather conditions, which are defined as the temperature being below 32 degrees or above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, during a heat advisory, or if a monsoon, hurricane, tropical storm, dust storm or tornado warning has been issued.

Barb Kelley, president of the Best Friends Dog Club in Sun City, does not tether her dogs for multiple reasons.

"I'm not a big fan of tethering regardless of the weather," she said. "We have our coyotes and it's not something I do with my dogs personally."

She believes it's too hot to tether a dog, adding that even if it's not extreme weather.

"I'd like to think that the people within our dog club and within Sun City have that common sense when it comes to their pets," she said. "I don't know about the general phoenix population with the people with the pit bulls and king cross and those dogs. They're not exactly house pets, so maybe that's something they need more education about or understanding that that's not the best treatment of an animal."

A Sun City West dog expert and award-winning trainer is also warning residents about the dangers of keeping dogs tethered.

Kristine Hayes Nibler, Balanced K9 of Arizona owner, said tethering a dog is definitely not an ideal way to leave a dog, especially outdoors and unsupervised.

Entanglement is an immediate danger and can easily wrap the chain or rope around trees, posts, lawn furniture or their own legs.

"If they panic and try to jump a fence while attached to a tether, it can result in severe injury or fatal strangulation," she said.

The constant pulling or sudden lunging against a tie-out can cause damage to the dog's trachea and neck, according to Hayes Nibler.

The ordinance also states any outdoor restraint must allow access to food, water, shade, dry ground and adequate shelter.

In Arizona, the extreme weather can cause dogs to quickly succumb to heat stroke or dehydration if the water bowl is tipped over, which she said is a common occurrence with dogs that are tethered or if the sun shifts and moves them out of the shade.

"One should never leave a dog outside in the extreme heat or without adequate sources of water and shade in a kennel or otherwise," said Hayes Nibler.

The ordinance also updates that a restraint cannot "unreasonably limit a dog's movement or cause distress." That in-

cludes safe and sanitary conditions and requiring access to each of the things listed in the paragraph above, as well as having a properly fitted collar.

The update to the ordinance also lowers the required minimum length of a restraint from 10 feet to six feet.

"The revised requirement is intended to emphasize appropriate use and supervision rather than long-term tethering," states a city news release on the topic.

Some may see this as government overreach, arguing that officials shouldn't dictate how people care for their own pets. But that isn't clear-cut.

"I do struggle sometimes with laws being made to control people that common sense should take care of but obviously doesn't always," Kelley said. "I don't know why anyone in Arizona would tether their dog... If you're a responsible dog owner, it shouldn't be a problem. But if you're irresponsible, then I guess they have to intervene. In reality, the people that are doing that are probably going to do it anyway."

Mayor Kate Gallego also said she was thinking of former Phoenix Mayor and Councilmember Thelda Williams, "a great animal lover" who died in 2023. This updates an ordinance she worked on during her time on council.

"Just thinking of her and the legacy that she left behind that we can continue to build and improve," Gallego said.

Guard

• From page 1

"Especially if the member or the deceased was a veteran, it's very respectful," Aseltine said. "We do it as professionally as we can to give respect to that person."

As an ex-military member, Aseltine said being part of the color is very important.

Another member, Mary Lou Harbaugh, said being in the color guard gives her a great sense of pride. She thinks it's one of the best things the Posse does.

Her favorite part of being in the group

is the flag presentation.

"It's just an inner feel good feeling," she said. "There's so much patriotism going on with the 250, the big birthday events. There were several color guards that would be at events all over the country. When I see that, it's like I know what that feels like. I'm part of a color guard."

Sarah Davis, a former color guard member, said her favorite part was carrying the American flag.

"We're proud of the Posse, but you take the select group of the color guard and we're very proud of that group," she said. "We get to go out and not only show our pride in the Posse, but we're showing our

pride in America."

Both Aseltine and Harbaugh enjoy the camaraderie of the group.

"It's a tight unit within the Posse," Aseltine said. "You have your board of governors, which changes yearly. But that board of governors, when they're together, they have that comradeship. Color guard is really no different. We just try to be more professional."

Harbaugh added the members "feed off of each other."

Individuals can request the color guard's appearance at events by visiting suncityposse.org/color-guard at least a month in advance.

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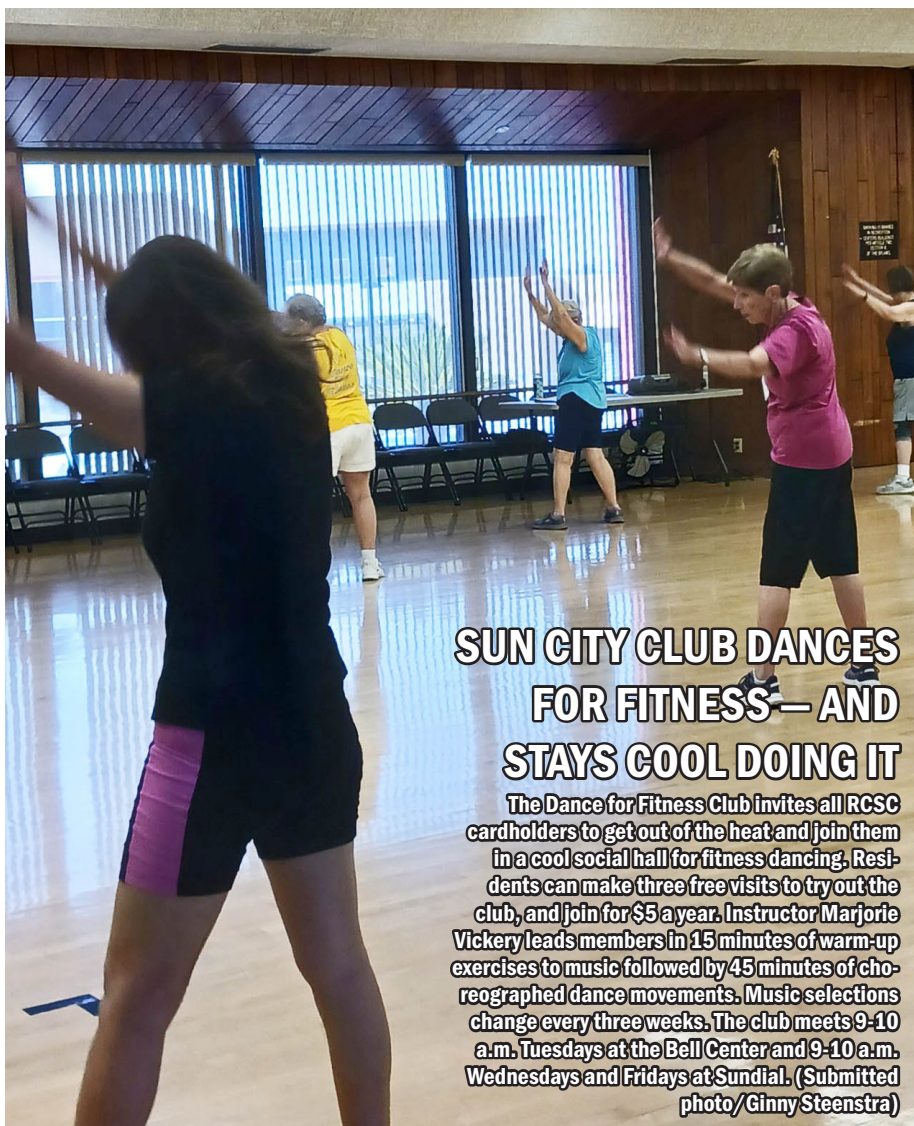


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SUN CITY CLUB PARTNERS WITH BENNY'S BURGERS FOR JULY PROMOTION

The Sun City club Step to the Music is having its summer fun promotion during the entire month of July. Join the club and exercise with licensed Zumba instructors in air-conditioned comfort. Also during July, the club is partnering with sponsor Benny's Burgers and BBQ to give away coupons for free ice cream cones or a three-piece order of potstickers. In addition, Step to the Music has purchased gift cards to Benny's for winners announced at the end of the month. Every time someone comes to a class they receive a ticket; they more they attend, the more chances they have to win. Visit SunCityAZ.org or look for the club on Facebook for more information. There are 11 regular Zumba classes and two Aqua Zumba classes. Pictured are John La, owner of Benny's Burgers and BBQ, and Step to the Music members Keith Harter and Sue Hetland. (Submitted photo/Cupid Grays)



SUN CITY CLUB DANCES FOR FITNESS— AND STAYS COOL DOING IT

The Dance for Fitness Club invites all RCSC cardholders to get out of the heat and join them in a cool social hall for fitness dancing. Residents can make three free visits to try out the club, and join for \$5 a year. Instructor Marjorie Vickery leads members in 15 minutes of warm-up exercises to music followed by 45 minutes of choreographed dance movements. Music selections change every three weeks. The club meets 9-10 a.m. Tuesdays at the Bell Center and 9-10 a.m. Wednesdays and Fridays at Sundial. (Submitted photo/Ginny Steenstra)

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center offers meals, pantry service

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center, 13049 N. 103rd Ave., offers in dining, to-go meals and food pantry services. The food pantry available at no cost 7-11 a.m. Tuesday-Thursday. The center staff recommends a suggested donation of \$5 (\$5 fee for under 60). Lunch is served at 11 a.m. at no cost for anyone over 60. Breakfast is served 6:30-8:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. Cost is \$5 for breakfast and is open to all.

To-go meals are now available daily for \$5/meal and are open to all. To-go meal distribution is 11 a.m.-noon Monday-Friday. The center also offers benefits reviews and information and referral services as well as many activities. Call 623-465-6000.

Menu

- **Wednesday, July 15** – Chicken and dumpplings, green beans, baby potatoes, roll, berries, butterscotch pudding
- **Thursday, July 16** – Veggie burger, beets, coleslaw, grain blend with rice, barley, and quinoa, apricots
- **Friday, July 17** – Pork chop in country gravy, roasted potatoes, Bermuda mix vegetables, roll, graham crackers, mixed fruit
- **Monday, July 20** – Spinach and cheese ravioli, asparagus, capri mix vegetables, roll, tropical fruit
- **Tuesday, July 21** – Grilled cheese sandwich, warm potato salad, five-way blend vegetables, banana, Lorna Doone cookie

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Independent Newsmedia office has new hours

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40 years of West Valley history captured in new photo exhibit

The West Valley Arts Council and Peoria Center for the Performing Arts are presenting “West Valley Retrospective,” a photography exhibition by photojournalist Jim Painter, running through July 26 at the Peoria Center for the Performing Arts, 10580 N. 83rd Drive.



(Metro Creative Graphics)

For more than 40 years, Painter has documented the people and places that have shaped the West Valley. Featuring a collection of black-and-white photographs, he has chronicled the region's evolution from vast agricultural landscapes into the thriving communities of today. “West Valley

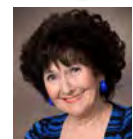
Retrospective” offers visitors a chance to experience that transformation through the eyes of someone who has been there to capture it all.

The West Valley Arts Council has operated for more than 50 years, organizing exhibitions, performances, education programs, and public art projects in Arizona's West Valley. More information is available at westvalleyarts.org.



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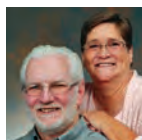
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By Jim Schmidt
MEDICARE AND YOU™

This isn't meant to scare you. It's meant to prepare you — so if this ever happens to you or someone you love, you'll know exactly what to do next.

Here's the good news, right up front: you have rights, and you have allies. I'm one of them.

What's Actually Happening

Federal investigators recently examined Medicare Advantage plans and found something troubling. Some of the largest insurers in the country have been denying care that seniors were legally entitled to receive — things like MRIs, CT scans, and rehabilitation therapy.

Denials for prior authorizations have climbed 56% in recent years. But here's what matters most: when people appealed a denial for skilled nursing care — the rehab stay that often follows a hip replacement, a stroke, or major surgery — those denials were overturned 95% of the time.

Read that again. Ninety-five percent! Nearly everyone who fought back, won.

This wasn't a case of a few honest mistakes. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found a clear pattern, pointing to three of the largest Medicare Advantage carriers in the country. If you'd like to know which ones, I'm happy to share that with you privately.

Why This Happens

Insurance companies must approve certain treatments before they'll pay for them — this is called "prior authorization". In theory, it ensures care is appropriate, as a safety net against abuse. In practice, it has too often become a way to slow things down or simply say no.

The bigger problem is that most people don't know they have the right to push back. When you're recovering from surgery, need an MRI or CT scan, or facing any health scare, you're not exactly in the mood for a paperwork fight. So many people accept the "no" because they don't know what to do and don't have a trusted advocate in their corner. They go without care, pay out of pocket, or are sent

home before they're really ready — leading to setbacks, repeat hospital stays, and lasting harm.

As this Medicare advocate puts it: "This isn't a paperwork problem. This is a care problem."

New Protections Starting This Year

Medicare has stepped in. Starting in 2026, new rules require:

- **Urgent requests:** insurers must respond within 72 hours
- **Standard requests:** insurers must respond within 7 days
- **Transparency:** plans must publicly report their approval, denial, and overturn rates

Will these rules change everything overnight? Time will tell. When denying care has been profitable, a deadline alone doesn't always shift behavior. That's exactly why knowing your rights matters so much.

Three Things to Remember

• **A denial is not the final word.** You have the right to appeal, and given the overturn rates, the odds are genuinely in your favor.

• **Bring your doctor into it.** Your physician can submit supporting documentation and, in many cases, speak directly with the insurer's medical reviewer — a doctor-to-doctor conversation called a "Peer-to-Peer" review that can make a real difference.

• **Ask questions before you enroll — or re-enroll.** Not every plan handles denials the same way.

A good Medicare advisor should be able to tell you which plans in your area have a track record of high denials, along with much more worth knowing, before you sign anything.

Be good to yourself — don't let this happen to you. You have more power than most people think. If you don't know who your broker is, if you signed up over the phone with a stranger (something I strongly discourage), or if your broker simply doesn't have the knowledge to protect you, it's your health, your finances, and your peace of mind on the line. Please seek out a trusted Medicare advisor, post haste.

Next Month's Article

Come August, I will be diving into the brand-new Medicare GLP-1 program, called the GLP-1 Bridge Program (Pen or Pill). For those eligible, besides incredible dollar savings, this points to weight loss, better long-term dietary choices, and just feeling good both inside and out. Naming just a few, it's a better you! Watch for this next month!

About Jim Schmidt

Jim Schmidt has been a trusted Medicare Authority, Advisor, and Advocate here in the Valley since 2006 — and has never charged a fee for his services. For any Medicare questions, including anything in this article, reach Jim directly at 480-296-3900 or JimSchmidt@MedicareAndYou.Reviews.

OPINION

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

Speak Up

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

Corrections

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

Reader unhappy with North Golf Course's decline

I purchased my home in Sun City 21 years ago, right on the North Golf Course. Although the house itself needed considerable improvement, I invested in upgrades over the years with the hope that these enhancements would increase its value.

The true reason I chose this property, however, was the breathtaking beauty of the North Course. The openness, the mature trees and the rolling stretches of lush green grass created a landscape that was genuinely extraordinary.

Over time, that beauty has steadily declined. This is not meant as a complaint, but rather an effort to understand why the North Course has become so noticeably inferior to the other eight courses in Sun City. I drive by them all of the time and they literally take your breath away.

To my knowledge, homeowners all pay the same recreation center fees, and the weather and watering conditions are identical across the community. I also see maintenance crews working regularly from my backyard, so it's clear the course receives attention.

Even so, many of the magnificent full-grown trees were removed — likely as a cost-saving measure — which has dramatically altered the character of the course.

In addition, the grass has lost its vibrant color and now appears pale compared to the other courses. The turf line, which once extended nearly to the homeowners' property boundaries, has receded by roughly 40 feet, leaving a wide, barren stretch that was never present before.

The charm, appeal and overall desirability of the North Course

LETTERS

**Please send your comments to
AzOpinions@iniusa.org.**

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are slowly diminishing. As golfers choose more attractive courses, the North Course's revenue will inevitably decline as well.

I would appreciate understanding why this has been allowed to happen.

Diane Skaff
SUN CITY

New Maricopa County option may speed early-ballot count

Many Arizona voters may not realize that Maricopa County has introduced a new option for returning early mail ballots that could significantly speed up the counting process.

If you receive an early ballot by mail, you can still return it by mail or at a secure drop box. However, beginning this election, you also have the option of taking your sealed ballot to a Vote Center, presenting a valid photo ID and having your identity verified onsite.

Before Election Day, a poll worker will verify your ID, stamp your sealed ballot envelope and place it in the secure ballot box. Because your identity has already been verified, election officials won't need to perform the usual signature verification later, allowing your ballot to move directly into tabulation after it reaches election headquarters.

On Election Day, voters who choose this option can go one step further. After checking in with photo

ID, they may remove their ballot from the affidavit envelope, deposit the envelope in a collection box and feed the ballot directly into a tabulator designed for early ballots. Their vote is counted along with all other Election Day ballots, eliminating the wait associated with post-election signature verification.

This new process is entirely optional, but it offers another secure way for voters who are willing to show ID in person to have their early ballots processed more quickly.

The official details are available from the Maricopa County Elections Department: New Voting Options for 2026, elections.maricopa.gov/news-and-information/elections-news/new-voting-options-2026.html.

General information about Arizona early voting is also available from the Arizona Secretary of State Early Voting page, azsos.gov/elections/voters/early-voting.

Annarose Lilly
SUN CITY

The author is chair of Arizona LD28 Democrats.

Homebuilders Association suit threatens our water allocations

"A race to the bottom of the aquifer," and "Water governance aligned with corporate interests."

The two quotations above are from the book, "Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains," by Lucas Bessire. It is available in the Sun City West Library as well as others in the Valley and online.

In his book, Bessire describes the depletion of the giant Ogallala Aquifer.

• See **Letters** on page 16



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POSSE



Sun City Posse Cmdr. Arlene Kluizenaar
addresses those attending the July monthly
meeting. (Independent Newsmedia/Zev Black)

Posse recognizes volunteer's 25,000 hours

By Zev Black

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Twenty-five thousand hours. That's how much time Sun City Posse Executive Officer Danny Moore has volunteered to the organization.

Moore, along with Betty Maznio for five years of service, was recognized at the group's monthly meeting July 7.

"We can't do all of that unless you guys are here and giving us the time," Posse Cmdr. Arlene Kluizenaar said. "Boy, do I so appreciate the amount of time and effort that everybody puts into this organization."

She added the Sun City Posse exists to look for things that are "out of order" in the community.

"We are here to look for things that are out of order, that are out of place, to help our citizens, to help our visitors so they feel safe and comfortable here in Sun City," she said.

Its members do that through the vacation watch program, daily drive-bys and general patrolling.

In June, the Posse performed 3,425 drive-bys to go along with 3,087 home vacation watches. In total, the group received 7,344 calls.

"We are there to show our citizens

that the Sun City Posse is still focused on making them feel safe and making them feel comfortable," Kluizenaar said. "That's what we're here for."

Towards the end of the meeting, the commander turned attention to the walls of the room, where the faces of past Posse commanders hang.

"Look at their faces," she said. "Look at the sincerity that you see as they're hanging up there."

Kluizenaar announced a change starting in August: the Posse's seven still-active past commanders will now rotate the duty of swearing in new members, a task traditionally handled by the current commander.

"I want to thank all seven of our past, still active commanders for their service to this organization and their help to me," she said. "I look forward to seeing a couple of them up here whenever we have somebody who needs to be sworn in."

The next general meeting is 9 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 4, at the Posse's headquarters, 10861 W. Sunland Drive.

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.

GYM

Broken gym machine sits unrepaired for weeks, Sun City resident says

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A broken gym machine at the Bell Recreation Center sat unrepaired for weeks. One resident says he still doesn't know the right way to report it.

Sun City resident and frequent gym user Randy England first noticed an antiseptic wipe had gotten pulled into one of the machine's bearings, disabling it.

While this doesn't ruin his gym routine, he is still frustrated about the situation.

"There's plenty of other machines there I can use, so it doesn't create a big hole in my routine," England said. "My frustration is two weeks, three weeks to have a machine down, why does it take two weeks and this is still broken?"

When he first noticed the broken machine, he notified a front desk worker who, according to England, said she would let someone know about it. Two weeks later, the "out of order" sign was still on the machine.

"I don't know who that someone is," England said. "I don't know if maybe I should've went to that person... Maybe there's some other protocol that could be in place that I just don't know about."

Mike Dirmyer, RCSC director of operations, stated in an email the RCSC has "an established work order process to address maintenance needs throughout our recreation centers."

He added that when equipment is reported, it is "documented, evalu-



(Metro Creative Graphics)

ated and prioritized based on safety, parts availability, repair complexity, and overall facility needs."

England said he feels the repairs typically take a long time.

"I pay fees to be able to use these rec centers," he said. "It's kind of discouraging to go to a rec center and see the same machine broken down two weeks later."

Dirmyer stated the RCSC tries to fix equipment as quickly as they can and that the RCSC recognizes the inconvenience delays can cause.

"We understand our Members rely on these amenities as part of their active lifestyle, and we appreciate their patience while our staff works through the repair process," he stated.

According to England, the machine was fixed on or prior to June 5.

He thinks it would be helpful if the RCSC sent out a note on what residents should do if they see broken equipment.

For more information, call 623-561-4600.

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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POLITICS

Horne, Yee debate experience, DEI

By Noah Flug

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A debate between Republican candidates for Arizona superintendent of public instruction turned combative as incumbent Tom Horne questioned challenger Kimberly Yee's education experience and accused her of serving on a diversity, equity and inclusion committee, a claim Yee emphatically denied.

The June 27 forum, hosted by the Sun City West Republican Club at Palm Ridge Recreation Center, highlighted broad agreement between the candidates on expanding school choice and opposing DEI initiatives. But disagreements over qualifications and each other's records dominated the discussion.

Horne argued his years leading the Arizona Department of Education make him uniquely qualified to contin-

ue in the role.

The incumbent highlighted what he described as accomplishments during his tenure, including expanding Empowerment Scholarship Account program enrollment from about 11,000 students to more than 104,000, increasing the number of school resource officers, expanding career and technical education and improving struggling schools through tutoring and school improvement programs.

"I've been fighting critical race theory since 2008," Horne said, adding that schools receiving certain state grants must pledge they will not teach critical race theory or DEI.

Yee, Arizona's state treasurer, countered that the state needs new leadership focused on improving student achievement while protecting educational choice.

Yee said she would strengthen accountability within the ESA program by modernizing its payment system to better prevent improper purchases while continuing to expand access for families.

She also called for schools to return to "phonics-based reading instruction," vocational education, home economics, shop classes and cursive writing while eliminating what she described as "woke indoctrination" in public education.

As an example, Yee recounted what she described as an incident involving an elected Washington Elementary School District governing board member "who believed she was a cat."

Yee told the audience the board member wore cat ears to meetings and said litter boxes were placed in schools because of the individual's beliefs, calling the situation "absolutely unacceptable."

She argued the story illustrated why state education leaders should push back against DEI initiatives and instruction related to gender identity.

The debate's sharpest exchange came when Horne alleged Yee had served on a DEI committee with the National Association of State Treasurers.

Yee rejected the accusation, telling the audience "Please don't believe the lies," and said a letter from the organization documents the committees on which she served. Horne responded that he had "irrefutable documentary evidence" supporting his claim.

For at least one attendee, the debate changed the race. Rich Hale said he arrived planning to vote for Horne but left convinced Yee had earned his support.

"She didn't back down," Hale said. "She held her own."



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We are storytellers for all generations. We don't shy away from recalling unjust practices affecting the underprivileged, but we'll also highlight the fortunate and the good in our neighborhoods. All stories should be shared with each other.

We stay in a profession that is often criticized, but we remain hopeful because we believe knowledge promotes a stronger democracy.

I am grateful that the First Amendment remains today.

James Madison had the foresight to craft the Bill of Rights, keeping the people our Founding Fathers fought for in mind for generations.

We work for a news organization founded on principles to support independent thinkers. I am thankful for our first CEO, Joe Smyth, for creating a journalistic trust that keeps the First Amendment in mind.

I'm excited for the future when I hear new journalist Zev Black get pumped for a story in Sun City, or read an in-depth development or City Council piece written by James Goldmeer, Allison Kotzbauer or Andrew Lwowski.

It's humbling to see INI long-timers Jeremy Carr, Richard Dyer, Richard Smith or Steve Stockmar, to name a few, continue our love for celebrating and connecting our communities year after year with political, business and neighborly news. We welcome Brittany Bowyer to our Central and North Valley teams to cover high school sports thanks to a grant from Report for America.

Journalism continues to shrink in America, but there are community changemakers, like yourselves, keeping us viable even today among all the noise of the internet.

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Letters

• From page 10

fer that underlies much of the U.S. Heartland. Specifically, he describes the effect of this depletion on his family homestead and nearby farms in Southwest Kansas.

I have referenced this book because I believe it is a forbearer of the future of Arizona's water if corporate interests are allowed to overrule scientific facts.

Consider the lawsuit brought against the Arizona Department of Water Resources by the Homebuilders Association of Central Arizona and supported by Steve Montenegro, speaker of the Arizona House and Warren Petersen, state Senate president.

This action is to force the ADWR to revise water allotment regulations for the Homebuilders Association to access water that is already allocated to others, including Sun City West. Think about it: our 100-year assured and adequate water supply may become a much smaller asset and may run out much sooner than projected if the Homebuilders Association is ultimately successful with the lawsuit.

When the water runs out in 30, 40 or 50 years from now, these corporate entities will be long gone and not around to help the homeowners and others with huge water restrictions, or no water at all.

Remember these names: Steve Montenegro and Warren Petersen, our elected officials siding with corporate profits over science.

David Hunter
SUN CITY WEST

I'm voting Katherine Haley for state treasurer

I am a concerned voter in Legislative District 28. This is in response to the "clip and save" advertisement in the July 8, 2026, issue (page 11) about who to vote for in the upcoming primary election.

As an informed precinct committeeman in LD28, I agree with every recommended selection except one. I am voting for Katherine Haley for state treasurer on July 21.

Katherine Haley is by far the best and most qualified candidate for the position.

Arizona citizens deserve better. Please vote for Katherine Haley.

John Matthews
SUN CITY

LD28 includes parts of Peoria, Phoenix, Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise.

Reader fears Heap is trying to help Trump control voters

Three major election issues were fought between the Republican Maricopa County Board of Supervisors and the Republican County Recorder.

Local Knights Council hosts water drive to support food bank



(Metro Creative Graphics)

Knights of Columbus Council 11809 will host its annual water drive supporting Valley View Community Food Bank 8 a.m.-noon Thursday, July 16, in the Our Lady of Lourdes Church parking lot, 19002 N. 128th Ave., and the Sun City West Foundation parking lot, at R.H. Johnson and Stardust boulevards. Monetary donations are also welcome.

Recorder Justin Heap appears to be trying to change voting in Maricopa County by seeking the authority to control ballot drop-off locations, IT systems and his employees removed a ballot scanner from the Maricopa County Tabulation and Election Center in Phoenix during the vote counting for the Tempe jurisdictional elections.

The Board of Supervisors wasn't willing to go along with Heap's power grab. He asked the Arizona Supreme Court to review the case and rule on it; the justices sided with him July 7. Board updates and statements regarding the Shared Services Agreement negotiations are found on the Maricopa County Election Duties Dispute page.

Our voting was checked and double-checked last election and voting was proven fraud-free.

I'm afraid that the concept of

creating doubt in our elections means Trump still plans to try to retain power.

He has created doubt in our elections, confusion in our government, distrust in one another, and he now owns our government agencies with the help of Musk's wallet.

He wants to control us completely, in my opinion. This is not just a personal fear. He already runs agencies like the Department of Justice, and his own personal lawyer during the Epstein era, Todd Blanche, is now acting attorney general of the U.S.

Anyone who does not believe these changes made by Trump are not designed for his personal power and financial gain can check out the attempt to mess up our own voting here in Maricopa County.

Lorie Lux
SUN CITY WEST

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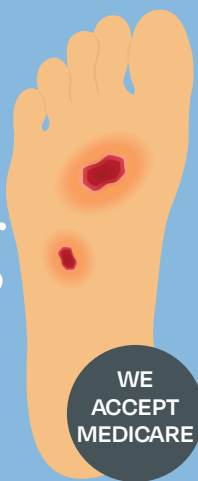
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NEIGHBORS

Resident keeps community moving, one small task at a time

Every community has someone who quietly holds things together, and at Sun City West Assisted Living and Memory Care, 13810 W. Sandridge Drive, that person is Jean King.

King is a member of our welcoming committee, but her role in daily life here goes well beyond that title. Each morning before exercise class, she sets up the circle of chairs and hands out the weights and bands so everyone's ready to go. After the morning walk, she's the one passing out water to her neighbors. She shows up to every activity on the calendar, and she's always the first to lend a hand to someone who needs it.

There's no fanfare in any of this. It's just King doing what she does, day after day, and making the community feel a little more like home because of it.

"Jean is a ray of sunshine in our community," said Carrie Kaye, director of engagement at Sun City West Assisted Living and Memory Care. "She's always pleasant and kind, and she genuinely loves help-



Jean King (Submitted photo/Peyton Reese)

ing others. Whether she's setting up chairs for morning exercise, handing out water after our walks, or simply showing up to support her neighbors at every activity, Jean shows us what it means to care for the people around you. She's a terrific helper, and we're grateful for her every single day."

Visit pegasuseniorliving.com/sun-city-west for more information.

Sun City church to host an adult vacation Bible school



(Metro Creative Graphics)

Willowbrook United Methodist Church, 19390 N. 99th Ave., invites the community to learn about different religious faith organizations. During the week of July 20-24, Willowbrook will host representatives from the Islamic, Orthodox, Sikh and LDS communities. Each session will be an hour in length, beginning at 9 a.m. when each presenter will share their group's history, theology and beliefs. There will be a time for questions and each gathering will conclude with refreshments. The schedule includes: Monday, July 20 — West Valley Islamic Center; Tuesday, July 21 — Christ the Savior Russian Orthodox Church; Wednesday, July 22 — Nishkamseva Sikh Temple; Thursday, July 23 — Sun City LDS Ward; Friday, July 24 — three pastors will be on a panel discussing how each of the different faiths are different and alike. Call 623-974-5637 for more information.

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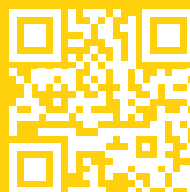
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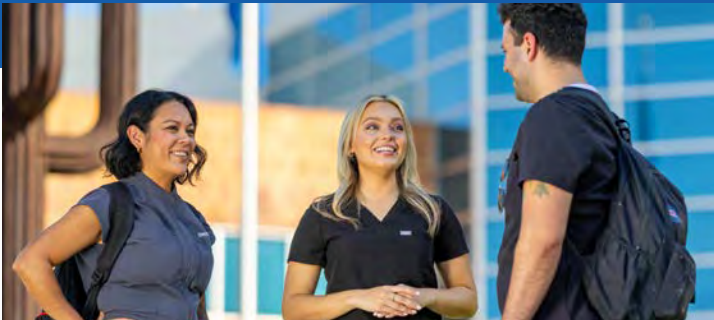
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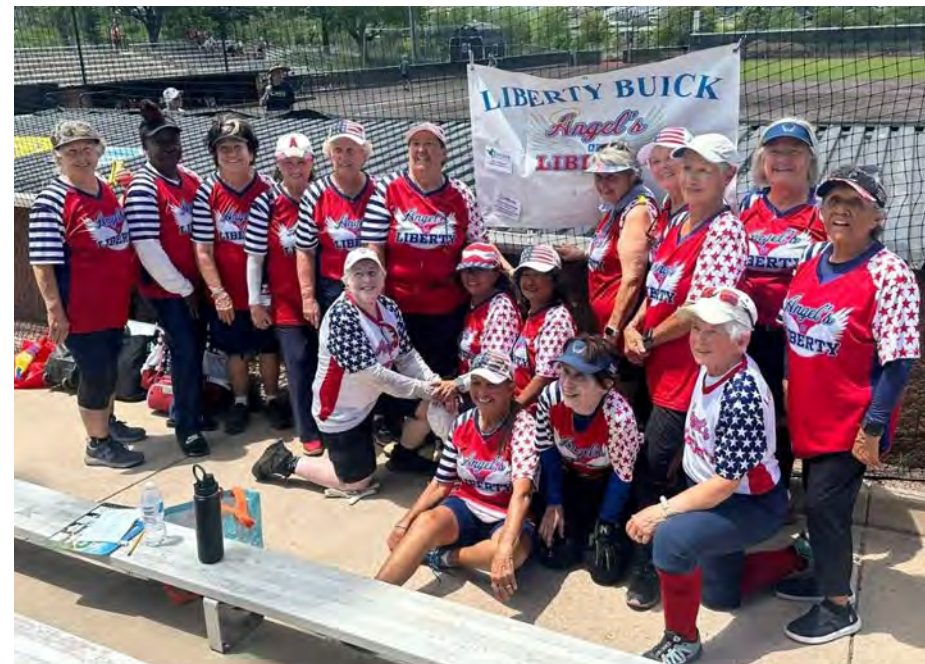


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SOFTBALL



The Sun Cities 75-plus women's travel softball team competed in the National Senior Softball Women's tournament. (Submitted photo/Vinnie Taibbi)

Senior women's travel softball team returns from nationals

Places second overall

By Jennifer Jimenez
and Zev Black

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Sun Cities 75 and older travel women's softball team returned from Colorado Springs after competing in the National Senior Softball Women's tournament.

The Angels of Liberty is sponsored by Liberty Buick in Peoria and Encore Hospice, who Sun City West resident, manager and player Bev Burger said makes it possible for these seniors to continue to travel and play together.

Burger said the team's top hitter is Christie Nunes.

"I work hard at it," Nunes said. "I try to do my best for the team."

She recently competed in the home run derby and took third place,

with seven home runs.

"It was fun to represent our team in the home run derby," she said. "They all came out to root me on. I think I did a good job entertaining and representing them."

Nunes, who has been playing for 50 years, said she's always loved the game.

"I'm just happy I can still play," she said. "It's the love of the game."

The Angels of Liberty were the number one seed in the tournament and sent 16 members of the team to the tournament.

During the tournament, the team played five games on the final day, three of which were played in a row.

"We beat two of the top teams and came in second and in the championship game against Grey Power from



Terry Atomi was in the "fastest to first" competition and finished second and Christie Nunes finished third in the home run derby. (Submitted photo/Vinnie Taibbi)

Softball

• From page 20

Canada, we were tied 15 all in the last inning," said Burger.

The other team scored the winning run, despite the Angels of Liberty fighting for the win.

The team included Burger, Nunes, Kathy Hawk, Lisa Taranto, Sylvia Salazar, Barb Siege, Pauline Robinson, Stella Varela, Evelyn Evans,

Mara Murphy, Janet Jones, Kat McComb, Susan Thompson, Nancy Boggs, Ina Bealer and Atomi.

More than two years ago, Burger formed the team and also manages approximately seven teams a year in Sun City West.

She also has a background in umpiring.

Burger continues to enjoy the game and being involved with the sport. She is proud of forming this senior women's team.

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Meals on Wheels in Sun City West forced to stop service

SERVICE

Organizer looking for a new contract option

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

At the start of June, Meals on Wheels Sun City West officials received a letter indicating 30 days later, food service would no longer be available.

Meals were prepared in the kitchen at Sun Health's Grandview Terrace in Sun City West.

Volunteer June Hell said her first priority is to Sun City West Meals on Wheels clients, but she had to start with confirming she received the notice and then prepared a letter for clients.

The last day of delivery was June 26.

"It is my intention to seek out another provider and that is not going to be easy because it has to be in a medical facility or a place where it is regularly inspected and has a dietitian," she explained.

Keeping the price at an affordable level is also a concern for Hell.

Previously this program offered two meals for \$10.50 for a hot and cold meal, which is very inexpensive, according to Hell. She has no expectations of being able to get that price again and even offered to pay more for the service to continue to Grandview Terrace.

"That did not seem to be a part of the equation, and they did not give me a reason," said Hell.

Sun Health officials did not respond to inquiries from the Sun City West Independent by press time.

Participation will play a key factor in locating a replacement. Hell said she is not certain how long it will take to locate facilities, prepare bids



Meals on Wheels in Sun City West will no longer be offered until a new food preparer can be found. (Independent Newsmedia/File photo)

and work out all the specifics, but she said Sun City West Meals on Wheels will reopen. Hell said this is a huge disappointment as she has done this work for more than 15 years, six days a week, and this has been offered since 1986. The partnership with Sun Health has existed for at least 16 years, she said.

Hell said the relationship has always been very good with Sun Health.

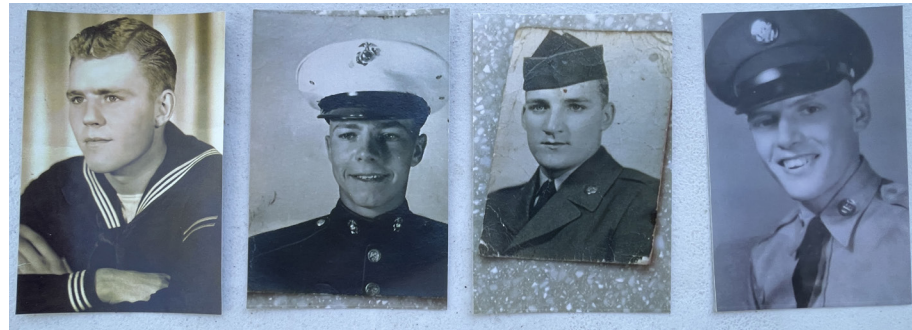
Everyone working with the program is a volunteer with about 50 in total, and Hell said it has been an honor to serve the residents of Sun City West.

"My worry is we are unable to meet the needs of the community," she said.

Sun City West Meals on Wheels is a 501(c)3 and accepts donations. Checks are accepted, made out to June Hell, 14951 W. Buttonwood Drive, Sun City West 85375.

Call 623-214-1032.

MILITARY



Martin Kowalkowski (Army), Bill Greene (Army), Clyde Greene (Marine Corps) and Gilbert Greene (Army). (Submitted photo/Joe Kowalkowski)

Sun City West resident honors several family members in the military

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As residents celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States, one individual in the community is using this time to reflect.

One night, Sun City West resident Joe Kowalkowski was having trouble sleeping and started to think about various family members who have served in the military and realized he had never taken note of the seven who joined the military.

"I cannot believe it did not dawn on me until I was in bed and realized what we had in our family," said Kowalkowski.

This is when he began the process of working on figuring out who served and which branch.

He said it is incredible to have so many members of his family in service and none were killed in action.

Kowalkowski said he joined the military after having challenging home conditions and said the military was the way to go, despite an ongoing war during at that time.

"This military gave all of us an opportunity and all of us did good in our lives," he said.

Kowalkowski said while serving in the military, he was just doing his job and while people refer to him as a hero does not agree.

He and his wife often look back, he said and think it is amazing to see how far they have come in life.

Kowalkowski was a staff sergeant in the Marine Corps and enlisted in 1960. He left for Vietnam in 1956 and then left there in 1967, before he was honorably discharged in March 1968. His daughter Kim Hees has a son, Kyle Hees who is a major in the Air Force. Joseph Paul Kowalkowski II was a sergeant and crew chief in the Army National Guard and is his son. His other son is Kevin Paul Kowalkowski was in the Marine Corps and discharged in 1987.

Other family members include Martin Kowalkowski (Army), Bill Greene (Army), Clyde Greene (Marine Corps) and Gilbert Greene (Navy).

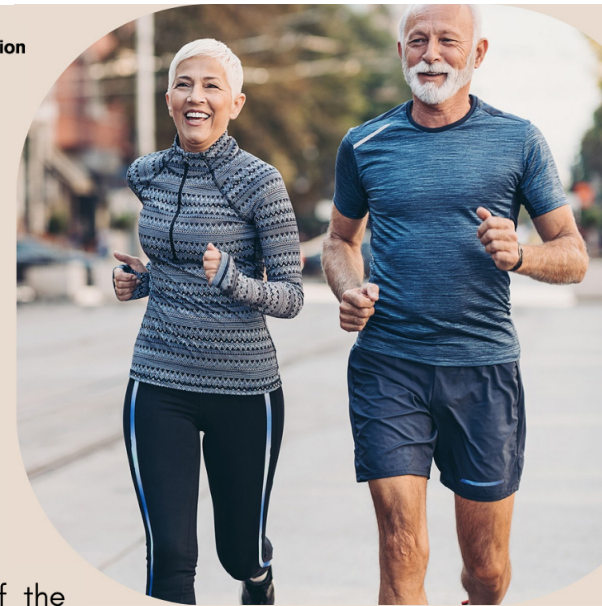
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ART

WHAM invites West Valley pet lovers to character drawing night

WHAM Community Art Center invites pet lovers of all ages to an evening of creativity during Pet Portrait Character Drawing Night 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 15, at 16560 N. Dysart Road.

Hosted by WHAM Teen Art Facilitator, teacher and artist Ashley Dooley, guests are invited to bring a favorite photo of a beloved pet — whether it's a dog, cat, horse, bird, turtle, fish, snake, lizard or any cherished companion — and learn how to create a whimsical character-style portrait. No drawing experience is necessary, and all art supplies will be provided.

Dooley will begin the evening with a live demonstration, sharing simple, step-by-step techniques that make it easy for artists to transform a favorite pet photo into an expressive character drawing. Participants will then create their own portraits with Dooley available throughout the evening to offer guidance, encouragement and creative tips.

After several years of inspiring WHAM's teen artists, Dooley wanted to open this special event to the entire West Valley community as part of WHAM's July celebration.

"As WHAM celebrates our nation throughout the month of July, we also celebrate the community that has supported us for more than 20 years," said Connie Whitlock, founder and executive director of WHAM. "Ashley has created a wonderful opportunity for people of all ages to come together through art, laughter, and



(Submitted photos/WHAM Community Art Center)



our shared love of animals. We look forward to welcoming both new and familiar faces for an evening of creativity and community."

The event is free, although donations are appreciated. Complimentary hot dogs, snacks and soft drinks will be available.

Visit WHAM-art.org.

POLICE REPORTS

Editor's Note: The following information is obtained from Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3. This column lists arrests, not convictions, unless otherwise stated. Arrested persons listed here who are later found not guilty are welcome to inform the Independent by calling 623-972-6101.

JUNE 18

- Trespassing was reported 12:22 a.m. in the 12800 block of North 113th Avenue.

JUNE 19

- A fraud or con game was reported 3:17 p.m. in the 10800 block of West El Capitan Circle.
- A fraud or con game was reported 2:27 p.m. in the 9600 block of West Lindgren Avenue.
- A burglary was reported 5:09 a.m. in the 13200 block of West Marble Drive.
- A burglar was reported 6:05 a.m. in the 13000 block of North 113th Avenue.

JUNE 20

- A fraud or con game was reported 3:12 p.m. in the 14800 block of West Horseman Lane.
- A stolen vehicle was reported 2:30 p.m. in the 13200 block of North 98th Avenue.
- A theft was reported 6:21 a.m. in the 11500 block of West Brown Street.

JUNE 21

- Criminal damage was reported 1:50 p.m. in the 10900 block of West Camelot Circle.
- Trespassing was reported 12:05 p.m. in the 12400 block of North 111th Avenue.

JUNE 22

- A traffic violation was reported 10:26 p.m. at the intersection of North 111th Avenue and West Michigan Avenue.
- A fight was reported 11:04 a.m. in the 1200 block of North 113th Avenue.
- A vehicle crash with no injuries was reported

- 11:06 a.m. at the intersection of West Meeker Boulevard and North Grand Avenue.
- A vehicle crash with no injuries was reported 9:43 a.m. at the intersection of North 103rd Avenue and West Thunderbird Boulevard.
- Trespassing was reported 8:16 a.m. in the 12600 block of North 113th Avenue.

JUNE 23

- A suspicious person was reported 7:13 p.m. at the intersection of West Oakmont Drive and North 107th Avenue.
- A theft was reported 3:53 p.m. in the 10000 block of West Royal Oak Road.
- Disorderly conduct was reported 12:57 p.m. at the intersection of West Santa Fe Drive and North 105th Avenue.
- Disorderly conduct was reported 11:25 a.m. in the 10600 block of West Peoria Avenue.
- An assault was reported 11:01 a.m. in the 10600 block of West Peoria Avenue.

- A fraud or con game was reported 8:45 a.m. in the 14500 block of West Antelope Drive.
- Criminal damage was reported 8:22 a.m. in the 10300 block of West Coggins Drive.

JUNE 24

- A stolen vehicle was reported 9:48 p.m. at the intersection of West Union Hills Drive and North 107th Avenue.
- An assault was reported 10:26 a.m. in the 15700 block of West Hatcher Road.
- Trespassing was reported 6 p.m. in the 10600 block of Northwest US60 Grand Avenue.
- A fraud or con game was reported 1:20 p.m. in the 13400 block of West Range Mule Drive.
- Trespassing was reported 11:53 a.m. in the 13600 block of North 99th Avenue.
- A vehicle crash with no injuries was reported 9:54 a.m. in the 11600 block of West Peoria Avenue.





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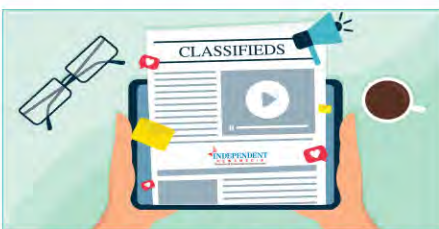


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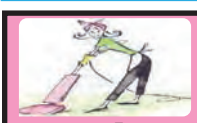
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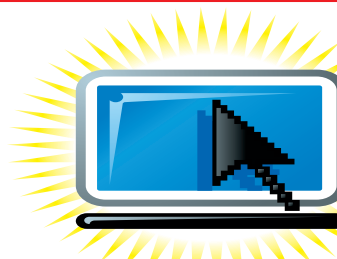
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Civility Checklist

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

- ☐ **Take the high road.** Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.
- ☐ **Be respectful.** Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment, and threats directed at another person — or that person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone's character or motives.
- ☐ **Be truthful.** Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes. When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.
- ☐ **Don't misrepresent.** Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.
- ☐ **Listen & learn.** It's both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don't agree with your own.
- ☐ **Look for common ground.** When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.
- ☐ **Respect privacy.** Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.
- ☐ **Set a good example.** Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it's OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.



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