



COMMUNITY NEWS

Police alarm monitoring program operates at deficit

Town spent \$50,000 on residential service in fiscal year 2025, according to police chief

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Paradise Valley Town Council will review the Police Department's residential alarm monitoring program later this year after the service operated at a deficit of approximately \$50,000 during fiscal year 2025, according to Police Chief Freeman Carney.

The future of the program will ultimately be decided by the Town Council. Carney wrote that the Police Department plans to evaluate the service this year before making recommendations to the council.

"That is a decision for the Town Council, which will study the program this year," he stated in an email.

Councilmember Scott Moore said during the June 22 Advisory Committee on Public Safety meeting that

• See **Deficit** on page 22

Area coach qualifies for major pro golf tournament

Sixth U.S. Open appearance

By Andrew Lwowski
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Paradise Valley Country Club professional teacher and Fountain Hills resident Jane Noble has qualified for the 2026 U.S. Women's Senior Open – a major tournament – after co-medaling and carding four over par (76) at The Wigwam qualifier on June 4.

The eighth U.S. Women's Senior Open will be held August 20-23 at Barton Hills Country Club in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Though it's Noble's sixth time qualifying for a U.S. Open (four times on the LPGA and second Seniors), its meaning hasn't faded. And it's one she credits to both her fitness journey and having a coachable mindset.

"...You have of have your 4:30 to 5:30 (a.m.) people that you see every day and just the encouragement that everybody gives...,," she said.

Kyle Tolis, general manager of Snap

• See **Golf** on page 20

Jane Noble qualified for her sixth U.S. Open with her husband, Gary, as her caddy. (Photo courtesy of Jane Noble)



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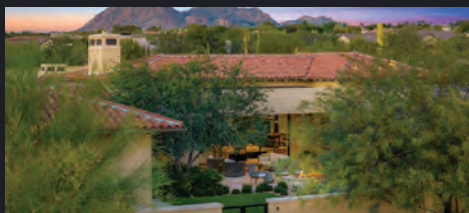
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TOGETHER IN THE DARKNESS? OR ALONE IN THE LIGHT?

BY GREG HAGUE

It's 110 degrees in Phoenix tonight, and I'm home alone.

The Diamondbacks aren't playing. There's no World Cup match. I've seen every movie I care to see and a few I didn't. So a man's mind starts to wander, and mine wandered toward a subject I've spent a lifetime trying to master. Love. The lasting kind. The kind that holds.

A word of warning. I'm no expert. Not in dating, not in marriage, not in whatever quiet science explains why two people stay when it would be easier to go. My qualifications run about as deep as a birdbath.

Just a long life, a decent pair of eyes, and the stubborn habit of paying attention. Take what follows for what it's worth, which might be nothing, or might be everything. I've never been sure which.

Here's the question I keep contemplating tonight.

Would you rather stand alone in the light, or beside the right person in the dark?

Imagine the finest round of golf of your life. The prettiest course on earth, not a cloud above you, not a soul around you, every putt dropping like it was ordered up special. And you're playing it entirely alone. Now imagine the opposite. Some cold and miserable stretch of road, everything going wrong at once, and beside you the one person you'd choose over all the others, the two of you half laughing at how bad it's gotten, figuring the way out together.

I'd rather be miserable with her than triumphant without her.

If you understood that sentence without my having to explain it, you already know everything I'm trying to say. The rest is details.



Now the part nobody warns you about. It cuts both ways. It isn't enough to find that person. You have to become that person. A man has to grow into someone worth standing beside when the road turns hard. A woman has to become someone a good man couldn't imagine facing the dark without. Two people, each quietly working to be worthy of the other, and neither one ever quite finished.

You don't win each other once, at some altar, in some photograph. You earn it again, together, every ordinary morning, and every challenging morning, right up to the end.

And what you build together is the whole point. Not who either of you is alone. What the two of you achieve in the same harness, pulling the same weight. The losses you endure and somehow outlast. The battles you had no business winning, and won anyway, because there were two of you and only one of everything else. And sometimes those battles aren't fair. You don't deserve to have to fight them. But life isn't fair, and with the right person beside you, the unfairness stops being the point.

Looking back, your most memorable adventures may be discomfort remembered with the right person.

The love stories that wreck me are not the ones that end with somebody walking away into a sunset. They end with neither person willing to be the one left behind. Two people who decided, somewhere along the way, that whatever came next they'd meet it the way they'd met everything else.

Together. Even the dark. Especially the dark.

I won't pretend any of this is easy. It's the hardest thing most of us will ever attempt. But look hard at what

comes easy in this life, then look at what turns out to be worth having, and notice how seldom those two lists share a name.

If life is about meaning, impact, legacy, making a difference, and I personally believe it is, then to achieve that with the right person at your side may be as close to a perfect life as any of us gets to touch.

So I'll leave you with the question I started with, the one I've been considering all evening while sitting here alone, looking forward to joining Teresa at our home in Sedona this weekend.

Would you rather stand alone in the light? Or beside the right person in the dark?

I know my answer. I've known it a long time.

The light was never the point. It was always about who's beside you when it finally goes out.

Greg Hague CEO, 72SOLD

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Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/3vzsn5j>

Arizona crime rates continue steady decline

Arizona has become a safer state during the past decade, with both violent and property crime steadily declining.

According to recent statewide data from usafacts.org, Arizona records about 422 violent crimes and 1,792 property crimes per 100,000 residents.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/4hkwt3y2>

Arizona AG settles lawsuit on requirements for state voucher program

Attorney General Kris Mayes is dropping her legal fight to require parents of children who get vouchers to document each purchase and how items are truly educational.

Mayes has agreed to settle a lawsuit brought by the Goldwater Institute that challenged her position that individual “supplemental” items bought by parents must be listed as required or recommended in a specific curriculum document before they can get reimbursed.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/492jwd93>

Area caregiver turns family experience into mission to help seniors

Family’s experience with caregiving inspired a decade-long career helping seniors

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Scottsdale resident Leigh Harris-Avril, a private duty certified nursing assistant at the Perfect Companion, has been serving seniors in the Paradise Valley area for over 10 years after she saw the impact senior caregivers can make for patients and their families.

The Perfect Companion provides in-home senior care services, including companionship, personal care and specialized support for older adults in the Valley.

When Harris-Avril’s own mother

• See **Caregiver** on page 18



Leigh Harris-Avril and her client Shirley at an assisted living community in the Valley. (Photo submitted by Leigh Harris-Avril)

CHILD STUDY

Arizona ranks 40th for overall child well-being in new study

By Jeff Wendt
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

According to a recent study, Arizona ranks 40th for overall child well-being.

The study, the “Kids Count Data Book” by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, shows a slight increase from last year’s ranking of 42nd.

In its 37th year of publication, the Kids Count Data Book provides statewide numbers to help leaders see where progress is being made and where greater support is needed.

According to January Contreras, executive director of the Children’s Action Alliance and a Casey Foundation’s Arizona partner organization, the jump can be attributed to



According to a recent study, Arizona ranks 40th for overall child well-being. (Metro Creative)

• See **Child Study** on page 18

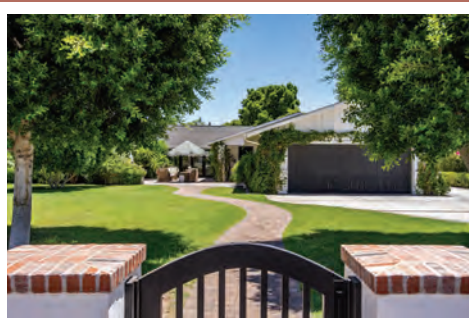


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ACHIEVEMENT

Rose Law Group hires experienced probate law attorney James X. Theut to lead probate department

Rose Law Group pc, Arizona's largest woman-founded law firm, is pleased to announce the addition of experienced probate attorney James X. Theut as Chair of the firm's Probate Law Department, expanding the firm's services for individuals, families, fiduciaries, and business owners navigating estate and trust matters.

Theut brings extensive experience in estate and trust litigation, probate and trust administration, guardianship and conservatorship litigation, and professional fiduciary representation. He has represented successor trustees, personal representatives, beneficiaries, and other fiduciaries in complex trust and estate controversies throughout his entire career.

"Probate, trust, and other fiduciary matters are becoming more complex and more common," said Theut. "Clients need counsel who can guide the administration of trusts and estates, provide candid cost-benefit advice, and litigate contested matters when disputes cannot be resolved. I'm excited to join Rose Law Group and



James X. Theut (Photo courtesy Rose Law Group)

bring the firm's depth, resources, and full-service platform to my clients."

Prior to joining Rose Law Group, Theut practiced probate, trust and estate litigation, guardianships and conservatorships, professional fiduciary representation, and estate planning at several prominent Valley law firms. He is known for his practical approach to helping clients administer estates, evaluate fiduciary issues, and resolve disputes efficiently. He is admitted to practice in Arizona, Illinois, and the U.S. District Court for the District of

Arizona and is a member of the Scottsdale, Maricopa County, and American Bar Associations.

Theut was also recently appointed Judge Pro Tempore for the Maricopa County Superior Court.

The addition of the incredibly well-respected Theut strengthens Rose Law Group's private client services, complementing the firm's estate planning, asset protection, business succession, and wealth transfer capabilities, while providing clients with comprehensive representation in both estate and trust administration and litigation.

About Rose Law Group

Rose Law Group pc, is a full-service law firm practicing in land use, zoning, corporate law, tax, AI, Web3, metaverse, renewable energy, government relations and lobbying, administrative law, family law, real estate and business transactions, water law, litigation, intellectual property, estate planning, asset protection, and more.

Public arguments sought for November ballot propositions

Accepted through Aug. 5

The Town of Paradise Valley is accepting written arguments supporting or opposing two ballot propositions that will appear in the informational public-ity pamphlet mailed to registered voters ahead of the November election. Arguments must be no more than 300 words and must be submitted by 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 5. A nonrefundable \$25 filing fee is required for each argument and may be paid online at <https://tinyurl.com/a3cmndk>. Residents should email their argument and the required signed sworn state-



The Town of Paradise Valley is looking for opinion letters on two ballot propositions. (Metro Creative Connection)

ment to dmiller@paradisvalleyaz.gov. Contact information is required for filing purposes but will not be published. Arguments that do not meet statutory requirements may be excluded from the pamphlet.

The ballot measures include Proposition 426, which would permanently adjust the town's state-imposed base expenditure limitation by \$3,940,190, and Proposition 427, which would allow the town to exclude funds set aside for capital projects and related land expenditures from the state's expenditure limitation. The town will publish arguments as submitted, although formatting will be removed. Any text exceeding the 300-word limit will be removed before publication. Visit the Town of Paradise Valley's website for more information at <https://tinyurl.com/3tpka3pn>.

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Tucked at the end of a gated cul-de-sac, this extraordinary 2-acre estate offers a rare blend of privacy, timeless Scandinavian design, and modern luxury. One of only four estates within this exclusive BedBrock community, the home is built by BedBrock Developers, designed by award-winning architect Dean Ciofani, and thoughtfully refined by Kaitlyn Wolfe Interiors. Defined by clean lines, expansive glass, and a seamless connection to the outdoors, the sophisticated interiors showcase natural stone, rich woodwork, and a warm, muted organic palette. The split floorplan is designed for both functionality and privacy, anchored by a serene primary suite complete with a steam room and sauna. Expansive living spaces open effortlessly to lush resort-style grounds featuring vibrant landscaping, mature trees, colorful gardens, and generous grass areas, creating an exceptional indoor-outdoor lifestyle in the heart of Paradise Valley.

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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.

Pool safety saves lives

For many families in Arizona, summer means more time spent gathering around the backyard pool. Whether you're planning a summer cookout, a pool party or a casual afternoon swim, pool ownership carries both personal and legal responsibilities.

Taking reasonable steps to protect family members and guests should be a priority for every homeowner.

Arizona homeowners have a duty to maintain their property in a reasonably safe condition for guests. When it comes to pools, that responsibility is even more important because water presents an obvious and potentially deadly hazard, especially for young children who might not understand the danger.

Among the most effective ways homeowners can protect their families and their guests is by creating multiple layers of protection around the pool. Safety fences, self-closing and self-latching gates and pool alarms can help prevent children from reaching the water unnoticed. No single measure is foolproof, which is why professionals often recommend using several safeguards together.

Supervision is equally critical. In many drowning and near-drowning incidents, adults believed someone else was watching the children. During parties and family gatherings, distractions are everywhere, from conversations and food preparation to games and cell phones. Designating a specific "water watcher," whose sole responsibility is supervising children around the pool, can help eliminate confusion and close dangerous gaps in supervision.

The unfortunate reality is that many drowning incidents happen during non-swim times, when children gain unexpected access to the pool area. That's why homeowners must think beyond active supervi-

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We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

sion and focus on prevention. Safety barriers, alarms, locked gates and ongoing vigilance are not just recommendations, they are investments in protecting lives.

Every Arizona family deserves to enjoy the summer safely. By taking pool safety seriously and understanding the responsibilities that come with pool ownership, homeowners can help ensure that a day of fun doesn't turn into a preventable tragedy.

Benjamin Taylor is Phoenix-based attorney who has been practicing law for 22 years and is past president of the State Bar of Arizona. This opinion was edited for length and can be read in full online at <https://tinyurl.com/369b-7kxw>.

Benjamin Taylor
PHOENIX

Protecting your health during wildfire season

Wildfire season has arrived in Arizona and can change daily life quickly.

Residents may face smoky skies, reduced air quality and the possibility of evacuation during periods of elevated wildfire activity.

While conditions may look different from one community to the next, smoke, poor air quality and sudden changes in fire activity can affect residents well beyond areas closest to active flames. A shift in wind, several days of lingering smoke or even a sudden evacuation order can affect anyone, but children, older adults, those who are pregnant and those living with conditions such as asthma,

Readers discuss Arizona crime rate decline

Arizona has become a safer state during the past decade, with both violent and property crime steadily declining.

According to recent statewide data from usafacts.org, Arizona records about 422 violent crimes and 1,792 property crimes per 100,000 residents.

That statewide improvement, however, doesn't tell the whole story. Crime rates vary significantly depending on where you live, with Arizona's largest cities facing different public safety challenges than many of the state's suburbs. Here are some comments from area readers:

Arizona crime rates continue steady decline

*"Sealed border, reduced drug flow into our country = crime drop." — **Steve C.***

*"The first sentence is 'Arizona has become a safer state during the past decade,' which means it was declining while the border was 'open' too. Soooo I guess closed border doesn't matter." — **James J.***

*"I have a hard time believing they are declining." — **Lorna B.***

*"Only because it's too hot to go out and commit crimes." — **Bob P.***

*"Despite these measurable reductions, public perception often does not match the data. Many Americans continue to believe that crime is rising, a divide frequently attributed to intense media focus on violent events." — **Sean H.***

*"I'm surprised. It seems like I read about murders and missing children every day." — **Pat G.***

*"Statistics like this need to be taken lightly. They're based on reported crimes. This means crimes not reported are not counted, and some crimes reported may not turn out to be crimes at all. But these are the best numbers we have to go on, I guess." — **Lawrence W.***

*"Has been a downward trend for years. Also, let's look at the big money crime." — **MJ N.***

COPD, heart disease or diabetes may face added health concerns.

While no one can predict exactly when or where a wildfire will occur, taking a few steps now can help people stay safer and better prepared, whether they are currently experiencing a wildfire or smoke impacts or

♦ See **Opinion** on page 25

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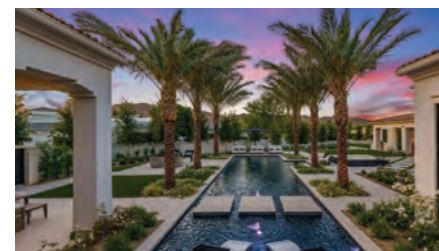
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Hidden speakeasy brings fresh sound to Valley jazz scene

Tell Your Friends, tucked beneath TheAmericano, features rotating jazz musicians Thursday through Sunday

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Diners at TheAmericano come for the restaurant's modern Italian steakhouse menu, but through a concealed door near the back of the dining room, a different experience awaits.

Down a staircase beneath the restaurant is Tell Your Friends, a speakeasy-style cocktail lounge that hosts live jazz performances Thursday through Sunday.

The underground venue features dim lighting, deep red accents, mid-century modern design and a stage where local musicians perform as customers gather for cocktails and small plates.

As live music venues continue to evolve across the Valley, Tell Your Friends has added another option for jazz fans looking for something new, said Justin Massei, the Co-Founder of Clive Collective.

"We didn't want it to feel like a low-energy jazz bar where people sit quietly in the corner," he said. "We wanted today's hits and recognizable classics performed with a jazz twist, songs people know and love but reimagined in a way that feels fresh and memorable."

While the restaurant above serves dinner, the lounge below shifts the focus to live performances, creating a separate nightlife experience centered on music, Massei said.

"Tell Your Friends was built to be an experience, not just a bar. The live

music programming is a big part of that," he said.

While the setting remains the same, the music doesn't. Tell Your Friends features a rotating lineup of jazz musicians, giving each night's performance its own sound and style.

Rather than following a set program, performers have the freedom to improvise, experiment with arrangements and bring their own influences to the stage, making no two shows exactly alike, Massei said.

"We really let the artists put their own spin on things, and that creative freedom is what makes each night different," he said. "It sets a tone you can't manufacture with a playlist."

While the hidden entrance and vintage-inspired design set the scene, the live music is what brings the experience together, he said.

"We wanted guests to feel like they stumbled into something special, and honestly, the music is a huge part of making that happen...," he said.

Alongside its live music programming, Tell Your Friends recently introduced a new seasonal cocktail menu featuring handcrafted drinks inspired by Arizona's landscapes and locally influenced flavors, according to Cassy Sandow, Bar Manager and master mixologist at Tell Your Friends.

"Being new to Arizona, I was immediately inspired by the scenery, microclimates and the plant life," Sandow said. "(It) is a perfect representation of how your everyday surroundings can become a canvas for creation."

To find out who is performing next visit: <https://tellyourfriendsaz.com/music>.



Live jazz band performing at Tell Your Friends in Scottsdale. (Submitted by Clive Collective)



Tell Your Friends, the speakeasy-style cocktail lounge beneath TheAmericano in Scottsdale, hosts live jazz performances Thursday through Sunday. (Submitted by Clive Collective)

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Greg Hague

*Paradise Valley Resident
Founder and Broker, 72SOLD
National Home-Selling Strategist*



Three candidates seek two SUSD Governing Board seats

By J. Graber

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

One incumbent and two newcomers are running for two seats up for grabs on the Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board in November.

Amy Carney is looking to win a second term on the board while Jeanne Beasley and Dr. Jennifer Johnson have also thrown their hats into the ring.

Carney's and Carine Werner's seats on the five-person board are up for grabs.

Werner, who was also elected as a state senator during her first term on the school board, is not seeking a second term.

Scottsdale Unified School District Board terms are all four years long and

are unpaid.

Beasley

A 30-year member of the community, Beasley has three kids who were educated in the Scottsdale Unified School District.

Along side volunteering when her kids were in school, Beasley is also a member of the district's audit committee.

"As a litigation paralegal, my skills in extensive research, critical thinking regarding complex issues, problem-solving, multitasking with attorneys and staff and working in a collaborative team environment will serve me well as your next SUSD school board member," her website says.

She lists her priorities as academ-

ic achievement, fiscal responsibility and thriving neighborhood schools.

For more information, visit beasleyforsusd.com.

Carney

Carney was first elected to board in 2022.

A Paradise Valley resident, all of her six kids have either attended or are attending Scottsdale Unified School District schools.

According to her website, Carney is an author, freelance writer and public speaker who focuses on strengthening families and communities. She also created a line of keepsake products that benefit Arizona's foster kids.



Incumbent Amy Carney and newcomers Jeanne Beasley and Dr. Jennifer Johnson are running for two seats opening up on the Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board in November. (Courtesy Scottsdale Unified School District)

She lists her priorities as to putting students first, partnering with parents, supporting teachers, building a culture of trust and focusing on academic excellence.

"As we face school closures and important decisions, you need someone with experience, someone you can trust, depend on and who will provide accountability and transparency," she

• See **SUSD** on page 26

EDUCATION

East Valley school districts tout a court win in EVIT lawsuit

By Janet Perez

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA



Under a new court ruling, the nine East Valley school districts suing EVIT can use the funds already generated through career and technical education satellite programs. (Photo courtesy Queen Creek Unified School District)

The nine East Valley school districts challenging an attempt by the East Valley Institute of Technology to reduce the funds it distributes for career and technical education satellite programs have scored a win in court, but the overarching standoff continues.

On June 29, Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Christopher Coury ruled EVIT could not control the use of funds already generated by district satellite programs.

School districts involved include Fountain Hills, Queen Creek, Chandler, Gilbert, Higley, Cave Creek, Apache Junction, J.O. Combs and Tempe Union. Scottsdale Unified, Mesa Public Schools and American Leadership Academy were originally part of the lawsuit, but those three districts reached new agreements with

EVIT in 2025.

Under the satellite program, students can take CTE classes on their high school campuses rather than going to the two EVIT locations in east and west Mesa.

"EVIT was trying to freeze our Fund 596, which are funds that are generated for kids that are enrolled in satellite programs that attend classes on our campuses and actually don't go to the EVIT campus but are served completely by the districts," said Queen Creek Unified School District Chief Operating Officer Amber Bordes. "The judge ruled that that was not allowed and that we have the authorization to utilize those funds for any CTE-related classes that we provide on our campuses."

"It's a huge win because we've always felt like those are our funds."

The judge also ruled EVIT retains authority over the content and quality

of all Career and Technical Education District programs, but it could not dictate how the districts spend money on vocational classes outside of the CTED system.

"Today's ruling denied EVIT's application for a preliminary injunction and rejected EVIT's core legal argument: that districts can only spend vocational education funds on EVIT-approved courses. The court was unambiguous. EVIT was wrong. The districts were right," according to a joint statement released by the districts.

EVIT Superintendent Chad Wilson stated in a press release that "we are grateful to the court for taking the time and the effort to sort out a very complicated issue regarding school finances and CTED funds. Unfortunately, this ruling does not provide clarity for the upcoming school year."

• See **EVIT** on page 26

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Caregiver

• From page 4

suffered a stroke and started showing signs of vascular dementia, she needed help with everyday tasks, she said.

Her family received in-home assistance from the hospital her mother was being treated at and the relief for her family to have someone to rely on for physical care lifted a tremendous weight for them, she said.

It allowed them to spend more precious time with their loved one and is what inspired Harris-Avril to go back to school at Paradise Valley Community College and receive her CNA license, she said.

"We had been helped as a family, by other people, CNAs, LPMs and RNs," she said. "That helped us get through that very difficult time, and I felt that it was really important after that was all finished, when my parents passed away, to give back and pay it back."

When families first come to The Perfect Companion, they act like a matchmaking service to perfectly pair the proper care provider for their loved one's specific needs she said.

"Each person and each family has their particular needs and wants and scenarios examined as to what is the best for them," she said. "It's like a matchmaker service where we're fitted up with the best people meeting the needs of the client that come to Perfect Companion."

Whether living independently at home or in an assisted living facility, seniors face unique benefits and challenges that outside care can help address, Harris-Avril said.

Specifically when seniors stay in their own home they can easily become isolated without proper assistance, she said.

"It's a tremendous burden on families to care for their loved ones in their own home, because it can be isolating, for not only the patient themselves, or the loved one, but also for the family members who must give a fair amount of their time and their lives in order to properly take care of their elderly parent or loved one," she said.

Working for The Perfect Companion has given Harris-Avril the chance to help bridge that gap in care for the seniors she takes care of and give families peace of mind, she said.

"I find it very helpful to be able to have a family step aside enough to still enjoy their loved one ... and to be a friend, really, with that person, and allow the family to enjoy the best of that person without having to coordinate and actually carry out all those other functions that caregiving requires," Harris-Avril said. "It takes the pressure, the burden, that stress out of the family, and that's a really rewarding thing to be and to be involved with."

Helping other families has given her the same sense of support and purpose that her own family experi-



Leigh Harris-Avril's mother and herself in 2011 roughly a year after her mother suffered a stroke at 83-years-old. Harris-Avril said her mother "was always a strong-willed lady," and took every opportunity to recover as much as possible after her stroke. (Photo submitted by Leigh Harris-Avril)

enced, and she hopes one day she will be able to get that same level of care for her husband and herself when they need it, Harris-Avril said.

"It gives a tremendous richness to my life to be able to help families like others helped our family," she said. "I hope good karma delivers my husband and me the gift of somebody who will do that for us when we get there."

Allison Kotzbauer can be reached at akotzbauer@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

Child Study

• From page 4

increased wages seen throughout the state.

"I think that our economy in Arizona is keeping wages in a place that is better than other states," Contreras said. "If you look at some of those rankings, we have had a higher minimum wage for some time. These are things that help keep people out of poverty."

"So that's a good thing," Contreras added. "The wrinkle is lots of rising prices right now, so families are really struggling, but it would be worse to have lower wages and have these rising prices."

The report also showed a decrease in children living in poverty. The number dropped from 19% to 15%.

"That's where I think we see a minimum wage that's rising come into play that really helps families stay out of poverty," Contreras said. "Now we've seen that rate be stable. This 15% was the same as last year. That's good. We don't want to see the arrow going the opposite way, where kids in poverty are rising, and yet we acknowledge that there are a lot of families that are really struggling right now to pay all those bills every month."

One area where Contreras is concerned is in the number of children lacking health insurance. While the national average is 6%, Arizona re-

• See **Child Study** on page 24

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FROM THE COVER

Golf

• From page 1

Fitness, said he noticed Noble, who's on a 200-plus day streak at the Fountain Hills gym, tearing up on the treadmill one morning and when he asked what was wrong, she was overcome with emotion from qualifying.

"I was shaking, actually," she said. Having the luxury of practicing at Paradise Valley Country Club where she is a professional teacher has also been a "luxury."

"...The membership and the management team there have been great so I've been very fortunate to be able to practice as much as I want," she said. "...Having the discipline of getting up every morning and having a routine and I think my students and members at Paradise Valley Country Club, that's been a big help, too."

This year Noble has taken a differ-

ent approach to the game.

A South Dakota native, she has been inducted into the South Dakota Golf Association Hall of Fame after capturing four SDGA championships, including three amateur championships. She also won the individual and team state championship in high school before carrying her success to New Mexico State where she won three times and was named NCAA First-Team All-American. She then spent a few years on the LPGA Tour before retiring in 2003 to pursue the business side of golf.

Now a teaching professional at Paradise Valley Country Club, Noble says she is still always learning.

"The only thing I've been working on is my tempo and trying to do everything as slow as I possibly can – meaning everything, walking, talking, practicing and it really paid off at the qualifier," she said. "I'm not

working on anything fundamentally, it's just literally all mental and working on that tempo and that pace."

Noble adopted the trick from a fellow top-50 golf instructor she followed on Instagram and has been dialing in on that for the past five or so months.

"Anytime you get into a situation, really no matter what it is, our minds start to race, everything just gets faster," she said.

And as one who generally has intense nerves heading into tournaments, the fruits of her labor paid off in the qualifier as she was able to get a great night sleep and enjoy breakfast before the round.

"I'm not usually like that because I'm so nervous," Noble said. "There was just a calm about me that I really hadn't felt in a long time."

With several until the tournament, Noble is back in South Dakota prac-

ticing, especially on her short game, on a course that she says is similar to the one in Michigan in terms of grass and course condition.

"This will be my sixth Open and I've never made the cut, so that is where we are focused," Noble said. "I want to play on the weekend."

To do so, golfers will play 36 holes both Thursday and Friday with the top 50 scorers (and ties) in the field advancing.

She will certainly have a chance, as she says her body feels the best it's felt in several years.

The tournament will be available via broadcast through The Golf Channel and NBC as well as Peacock.

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FROM THE COVER

Deficit

• From page 1

the council expects to review the alarm monitoring program during its fall session after returning from its summer break.

The program allows participating Paradise Valley residents to connect their home alarm systems directly to the department's dispatch center.

According to the town's website, alarms are received directly by police dispatchers rather than routed through a third-party call center, a system designed to reduce response times.

While Becklar oversees billing and day-to-day subscription management, alarm signals are monitored by Paradise Valley police dispatchers and responded to by Paradise Valley officers.

The department currently mon-



Advisory Committee on Public Safety committee members discuss the alarm monitoring deficit at their June 22 meeting in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

itors 255 residential alarm systems out of approximately 5,728 homes in Paradise Valley, Carney stated in an email.

Carney said the program would need additional subscribers to operate at a break-even point.

"The town would need to add about 110 more subscribers," he stated in an email.

According to the town's website, Paradise Valley is one of the few municipalities in the nation to offer a police-operated residential alarm monitoring service.

During the June 22 meeting, committee member Julie Schwalbe said her household uses the town's alarm monitoring service and praised its quick response time.

Other committee members questioned whether the program remains necessary given that only 255 of the town's approximately 5,728 homes are enrolled.

Carney said during the meeting that the town has not widely promoted the service in recent years and suggested participation could increase if more residents were aware of its benefits, including comparable rates and direct police response.

"Monitoring rates are comparable to private alarm monitoring companies," he later stated in an email. "The Paradise Valley Police Department strives to provide prompt service to all residents and guests to maintain a safe community. This program is one of many services that help us achieve that goal."

Allison Kotzbauer can be reached at akotzbauer@iniusa.org. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

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Child Study

• From page 4

mains well above it at 9%.

"I think one thing I want to recognize is that if we look back 15 years ago, we had even a higher share of children who were uninsured," Contreras said. "And so, over a decade or more, we have seen a lot of progress. But here we are, one of the bottom three states for the highest rate of uninsured children, and that hurts to see that."

"I want to recognize the governor and the Legislature for passing an extension of Kids Care in 2023, that went into effect in 2024," Contreras added. "So the governor and the Legislature do deserve credit for working to put affordable health care through kids' care within reach of more working families."

But Contreras continued that some families are still having to make the hard decision whether or not to

get health care.

"If you read the data, what it says is the number one reason people don't have the health insurance is that they can't afford it," Contreras said. "And we have a lot of parents who work one or two jobs or three jobs that either don't offer health insurance, or they don't have the amount of hours at a particular job that allows for them to have health insurance."

"So we don't see a rise in employer-covered insurance," Contreras added. "That means we really need to make sure parents know about the public programs that are available. And, you know, we need to do more on that side."

Then there are the challenges of getting 3- and 4-year-olds into preschool and into childcare options. According to the data, 65% of 3- and 4-year-olds are not currently in school, well above the 54% national rate.

"In Arizona, we have a very bright line rule because our constitution

says K through 12 school should be funded," Contreras said. "And so, I wish Arizona would be stronger if we didn't treat education as a political football, but we really just make sure we were covering the cost so that all kids have access to quality education."

So, what does Contreras want to see over the next couple of years?

"What we advocate for is that Arizona can be the best place to raise a child, that it can be the best place for a child to grow up in," Contreras said. "I grew up here, I raised my kids here, and I know what we're capable of when parents have opportunities within reach, but we have to acknowledge that in these times, there are lots of opportunities."

See the report at ataecf.org/data-book.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Riley Green to perform during WM Phoenix Open

The 2027 Coors Light Birds Nest lineup will feature multiplatinum, ACM and CMA award-winning singer-songwriter Riley Green.

Green will take the stage on Wednesday, Feb. 10, and will be joined by Special Guest Ashley Cooke for the first night of the four-night concert series that runs Feb. 10-13 during WM Phoenix Open week.

Tickets for this Wednesday show will go on sale Tuesday, June 9 at 10 a.m. online at coorslightbirdsnest.com.

General admission tickets for

• See **Riley Green** on page 25



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Riley Green and Ashley Cooke will perform at the Coors Light Bird's Nest during the 2027 WM Phoenix Open. (Courtesy WM Phoenix Open)

Riley Green

• From page 24

Wednesday will start at \$135. VIP tickets and elevated experiences are available for Green's performance starting at \$350 each and provide exclusive access to an enhanced VIP area where guests are treated to complimentary food and drinks and access to a premium viewing area for the shows.

Prices will increase as the event draws closer.

OPINION

Opinion

• From page 8

preparing for the possibility in the future.

Protect your lungs from wildfire smoke: During smoky days, check your local Air Quality Index using local news forecasts or AirNow.gov to see whether air is rated from "Good" to "Hazardous" and help determine when it is safe to be outside.

Use the right mask if you must go outside: If you must go outside in smoky conditions, a well-fitting N95 mask can help reduce smoke exposure.

Create cleaner air indoors: Keeping windows and doors closed can help limit outside air from entering. Consider using a portable air cleaner or a high-efficiency air filter.

Take extra precautions for people at higher risk: Seek medical help right away for chest pain, severe shortness

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of breath, confusion, fainting, symptoms that do not improve indoors or any other emergency warning signs.

Know where to turn for care and emotional support: If wildfire smoke, evacuation or other disruptions affect access to care, contact your health insurance provider to ask about early prescription refills, telehealth visits, replacement ID cards, access to network providers and available support services.

Patricia Tan, M.D. is chief medical officer for a Valley healthcare provider. This opinion was edited for length and can be read in full online at <https://tinyurl.com/2es2nmc6>.

Patricia Tan, M.D.

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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.



Now that you've read the checklist, take the Civility Pledge at yourvalley.net/civility-pledge.

SUSD

• From page 16

said in a social media commercial.

For more information, visit amy-carney.com/amy-carney-for-susd

Johnson

All of Johnson's children were educated in public schools, according to her website.

Johnson has been a teacher, a principal and superintendent in the Glendale Union High School District. She also served as deputy superintendent at the Arizona Department of Education and an associate vice president for academic alliances at Grand Canyon University.

She has volunteered with the School Connect non-profit since 2018 and is currently the board chairperson.

"Jennifer's experience with School Connect will help position SUSD for important collaborations with businesses, nonprofits, faith communities, and civic organizations on valuable contributions to student success," her website says.

Johnson also holds a doctorate in educational leadership and public policy from Arizona State University.

She lists her priorities as academic achievement, career exploration and readiness and community engagement.

For more information, visit jennifer4susd.com.

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EVIT

• From page 16

Wilson stated EVIT will spend the coming days reviewing the ruling and determining its next steps.

By ruling that the districts have access to funds already generated, schools will be able to fund the satellite programs in the new school year but there will be no money for the following year unless an agreement with EVIT is reached.

Last fall, the involved districts sued EVIT when it attempted to reduce the percentage of state funds it doles out to the districts for satellite programs.

Under a now expired intergovernmental agreement, districts received 87% of their funding for satellite programs from EVIT. Under a new agreement proposed by EVIT, funding would be reduced to 83% with cuts continuing at about 2% to 3% each year for the life of the contract.

"In fiscal year 2024, EVIT collected more than \$36 million in state funding attributable to satellite CTE enrollment, the students enrolled in district-run programs," according to the dis-

tricts' joint statement. "More than \$30 million of that was paid back to the districts, with EVIT retaining \$6 million. EVIT's proposal would have reduced that pass-through, with EVIT keeping even more dollars inside an administration that serves a fraction of the student population."

The nine districts and EVIT have yet to negotiate a new intergovernmental agreement so neither the districts nor EVIT will receive any CTED funding this coming school year.

For its part, EVIT stated that it has offered to fund the entire \$4 million cost of busing CTE students to the main EVIT campuses.

"Our position has always been that we want what is best for all students in the EVIT CTED. That includes students who take these programs at their high schools," Wilson stated in the release. "We don't completely agree with the court's ruling. But we respect the court and we respect the law and will follow it accordingly."

Janet Perez can be reached at jperez@iniusa.org. Please send your comments about this article 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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