



Ballet

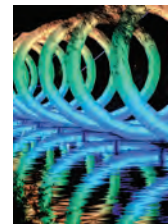
Performs at
Surprise library;
4



INDEPENDENT

Art

International
competition;
10



July 22, 2026 Volume 29 Issue 29

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper - YourValley.net

Money raised varies in Surprise council race

By Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The three Surprise City Council candidates who ran unopposed in this year's primary election all took different routes to get to the same spot.

In campaign finance reports released July 15, the three incumbent council members — Nick Haney (District 1), Jack Hastings (District 5) and Chris Judd (District 6) — carried vastly different campaign balances into the July 21 primary.

Hastings finished the recent cycle with a war chest of \$156,000, a massive sum for a city council election, especially one run unopposed.

Judd, meanwhile, had just under \$14,000 in his balance and did not even receive or spend money in the last quarter.

Haney was in the middle, ending with a balance of a little more than \$57,000.

Hastings raised \$30,845 in the last quarter alone, which is a little more than double of Judd's entire balance.

• See **Finances** on page 19

Esports levels up at OUAZ



**Zimmerman helps team rise
to new heights of game
playing**

By Noah Flug
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

It is story sports fan know well: A new coach inherits a struggling program, raises expectations and starts winning.

Think Vince Lombardi with the Green Bay Packers, Phil Jackson with the Chicago Bulls or Ted Lasso for TV fans.

At Ottawa University-Arizona, Esports Program Manager Michael Zimmerman is living his own version of that story.

When Zimmerman took over the program in 2023, students were receiving scholarships to play video games, but there was little structure

• See **OUAZ** on page 23

OUAZ senior Joel Parada practices on a game for an upcoming esports competition.
(Independent Newsmedia/Noah Flug)



Tuesday, August 18, 2026

9:00am - Noon

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22202 N. Cochise Ln.,
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Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker, L-135th, L-Deer Valley Rd., L-Tom Ryan, R-Via Manana, L-Las Brisas, R-Pecos, L-Cochise Ln.

SUNDAY, JULY 26TH
10:00AM-NOON

15357 W. Black Gold Ln.,
SUN CITY WEST

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-151st., L-Deer Valley, R-Executive Way, L-Black Gold Ln.

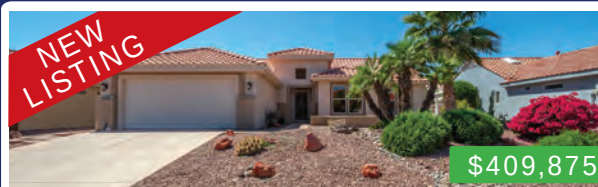
TUESDAY, JULY 28TH
10:00AM-NOON

14165 W. White Rock Rd.,
SUN CITY WEST

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, L-Trial Ridge, L-White Rock Dr

NOTE:

FOR MORE PHOTOS & INFORMATION ON EACH OF THE HOMES SCAN THEIR RESPECTIVE QR CODE



15357 W. Black Gold Ln., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7002574

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-151st., L-Deer Valley, R-Executive Way, L-Black Gold Ln.

Highly sought after Prescott model. Home has 1872 sq. ft., 2 bedroom, 2 bath, den & great room floor plan. Home is located just a block & half from SCW's Desert Trails GC pro shop. Don't Wait! Call Today to View!



12635 W. Eveningside Dr., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7040339

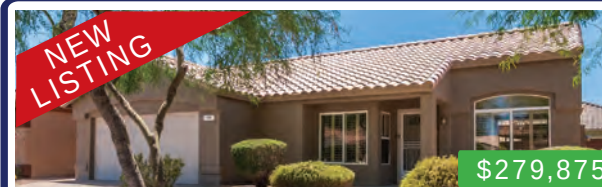
Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-128th, R-Sunglow Dr. which becomes Eveningside Dr.

Fabulous panoramic view of Stardust GC's 4th & 5th fairways & greens. Home has 2599 sq. ft., 3 large bedrooms (split), 2 updated bathrooms, golf cart garage plus an added 175 Sq. ft. art/crafts studio or office. This home is truly special & an absolute must see! Call today to view!



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MLS# 7051608

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker, L-135th, L-Deer Valley Rd., L-Tom Ryan, R-Via Manana, L-Las Brisas, R-Pecos, L-Cochise Ln.

Popular La Paz model located in the Palm Ridge Rec. Cntr. area of SCW. Home has 1086 sq. ft., 2 bedroom, 2 bath, great room floor plan & a block wall fenced private backyard. New roof underlayment 2026. Neighborhood HOA allows pets & rentals. Call today to view!



14165 W. White Rock Rd., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7010367

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, L-Trial Ridge, L-White Rock Dr

Highly desired Aspen model duplex located in the Grandview GC area of Sun City West. Home has 1866 sq. ft., 2 bedroom, 2 bath & an office/craft room. New interior paint 2026 & HVAC 2025. HOA allows pets & rentals. Being sold furnished. Call today to view!



12727 W. Copperstone Dr., SUN CITY WEST
MLS# 7024624

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-128th, R-Copperstone Dr.

Expanded duplex has 1697 sq. ft., 2 bedrooms, 2 baths plus a 19' X 9' glass enclosed AZ room/lanai. This home has been a successful seasonal rental & is being sold furnished. Neighborhood HOA also allows pets. Home is located close to SCW's Pebblebrook GC pro shop. Call today to view!



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AUGUST 21 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

When four fading Broadway stars hear about a small-town high school's decision regarding the annual prom, they swoop in to save the day – while also hoping to revive their own careers.

Ballet dances to a classic

Convergence performs 'Mary Poppins' at Surprise library

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Ballerinas performed a piqué and pirouette in front of a packed room of families while portraying the main characters in P.L. Travers' story of "Mary Poppins" at the Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave.

Members of the Convergence Ballet Company presented its dance renditions about the magical nanny June 29.

The free, theatrical storytelling performance and interactive ballet experience showcased excerpts from "Mary Poppins," while incorporating the musical's soundtrack and dance.

Children and parents used their imagination to follow along with the story as ballerinas engaged them through their dance routines, demonstrating how an east-blowing wind blew in Mary Poppins, who floated down from the sky while clutching an open umbrella, and how she appeared before an ad was ever placed from a well-off couple, The Banks, to care for their way-

ward children, Jane and Michael.

"Can you make the sound of wind for me?" said Jennifer Cafarella Betts, Convergence Ballet Company director, as she narrated and encouraged the audience to make gushing wind noises.

"Just then, Jane and Michael heard a knock at the gate," Cafarella Betts said.

Describing a bang when the nanny landed, she said the whole house shook.

"That's how Jane and Michael came to meet Mary Poppins, their new nanny," noted Cafarella Betts.

While narrating the "Mary Poppins" story, she was joined by the cast of professional ballerinas, who played multiple



The Convergence Ballet performed "Mary Poppins" in Surprise in late June. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

roles.

Maddie Coury, 25, of Mesa; Samantha Gray, 37, of Anthem; and Katelyn Beaulieu, 20, of Phoenix, dressed in costumes to dance and demonstrate parts of the book.

The audience participated in various parts of the performance, while the story revolved around Mary Poppins reforming a family, restoring values and her searching for a fallen star.

"This is getting kids in the library and seeing the arts. Not everyone has a chance



The Surprise Regional Library was the site of the Convergence Ballet's performance of "Mary Poppins" in late June. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

"This is getting kids in the library and seeing the arts."

Maddie Coury
Mesa resident

to see the ballet," Coury said.

Also noting the benefits of children experiencing "the magic of storytelling, music and dance," with the interactive ballet production, Cafarella Betts said she loves to see the children's faces during the live dance performances while making its rounds to libraries valleywide.

"It was so neat. I thought it was wonderful," said Donna Meuse, whose 7-year-old daughter, Olivia, also enjoyed the show.

Reagan, 7, and Kendall, 9, wore their tutus to the library for the Mary Poppins presentation by Convergence Ballet.

They were with their mother Tara Hellmann, of Surprise, and grandmother, Denise Addington, who were proud to have three generations attending the special production.

Delarita Ford can be reached at dford@iniusa.org. Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AsOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

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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.

Proposed Surprise ICE facility hardly a 'concentration camp'

In response to Skip Porter's letter, "Why I'm no longer spending money in nearby Surprise," the letter contains this sentence: "I am disappointed that Surprise would host a concentration camp (the proposed regional U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement intake and processing facility that is coming to Surprise)."

Concentration camp? Really?

The Nazis of Germany were trying to kill all Jews, who were living in Europe.

When the Allies liberated these camps, those who had not yet died

or been killed were emaciated from starvation and disease.

How can you compare an intake and processing facility to that? Is the government

planning mass executions and starvation of those they're holding for deportation? I think not.

Incidentally, how could the leadership of Surprise stop the federal government?

Secondly, Turning Point USA, founded by the late Charlie Kirk, who was assassinated for his beliefs, has no more influence than any of several leftist organizations, which also attempt to influence governmental agencies.

Lastly, I am glad that we are still able to express ourselves openly.

Taking your money elsewhere is a time-honored form of expression going all the way back to the late 1700s in Colonial America. Good

Please send your comments to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

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

job for that, at least!

George Hilburn
SUN CITY WEST

Editor's note: The term "concentration camp" is defined by dictionaries as a place where a large number of people are confined or detained without trial. According to Yad Yashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, the Nazi regime operated several types of camps, including concentration, labor and hard labor camps, extermination camps, transit camps and prisoner of war camps. 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.

There's no room for human trafficking in Arizona

Every July 30, World Day Against Trafficking in Persons serves as a reminder that preventing human trafficking is a responsibility shared by every community.

While law enforcement plays a critical role, lasting prevention also depends on businesses, organizations and individuals working together to recognize the signs of exploitation, support survivors and make communities safer.

Across Arizona and the country, the hotel industry is working to ensure its properties are places of safety.

Hotels are uniquely positioned to help recognize and prevent trafficking because hospitality employees interact with thousands of guests every day.

Rather than waiting to respond after exploitation occurs, the

Speak Up

From Nextdoor & Facebook

'Here are some comments about stories happening in Surprise:

Surprise ICE detention center not only one delayed in US

"How many here were complaining when immigrations sweeps were being done under prior admins? I never saw any protestors then." — **Karla L.**

"Basic human rights is a topic of discussion and it shouldn't be. I'm ashamed to call myself an American. America today is the exact opposite of what America really stands for." — **Mario A.**

"There is no better country. Are we perfect? No. But you wouldn't want to live anywhere else." — **Chy W.**

"I'm curious: What does ICE have to do with the environment?" — **Mel S.**

"And part of the beauty of this country is you can have a different opinion and still be American." — **Brenda C.M.**

"Best country in the world. Love this country. We have laws for a reason. And laws must be enforced to keep it the greatest country on the planet." — **Victor S.**

Popular chicken restaurant coming to north Surprise

"It's going to be in an area of Surprise that is nearly impossible to get to due to the heavy traffic, especially at dinner time." — **Kathy M.**

"Chicken is chicken." — **Mark A.**

"A sit-down restaurant or bar of some kind is needed." — **Tess K.**

"I want them to build a Pita Jungle or White Castle." — **Jill V.**

"Can't have enough chicken places." — **Penny C.**

"More garbage food." — **Jeffrey W.**

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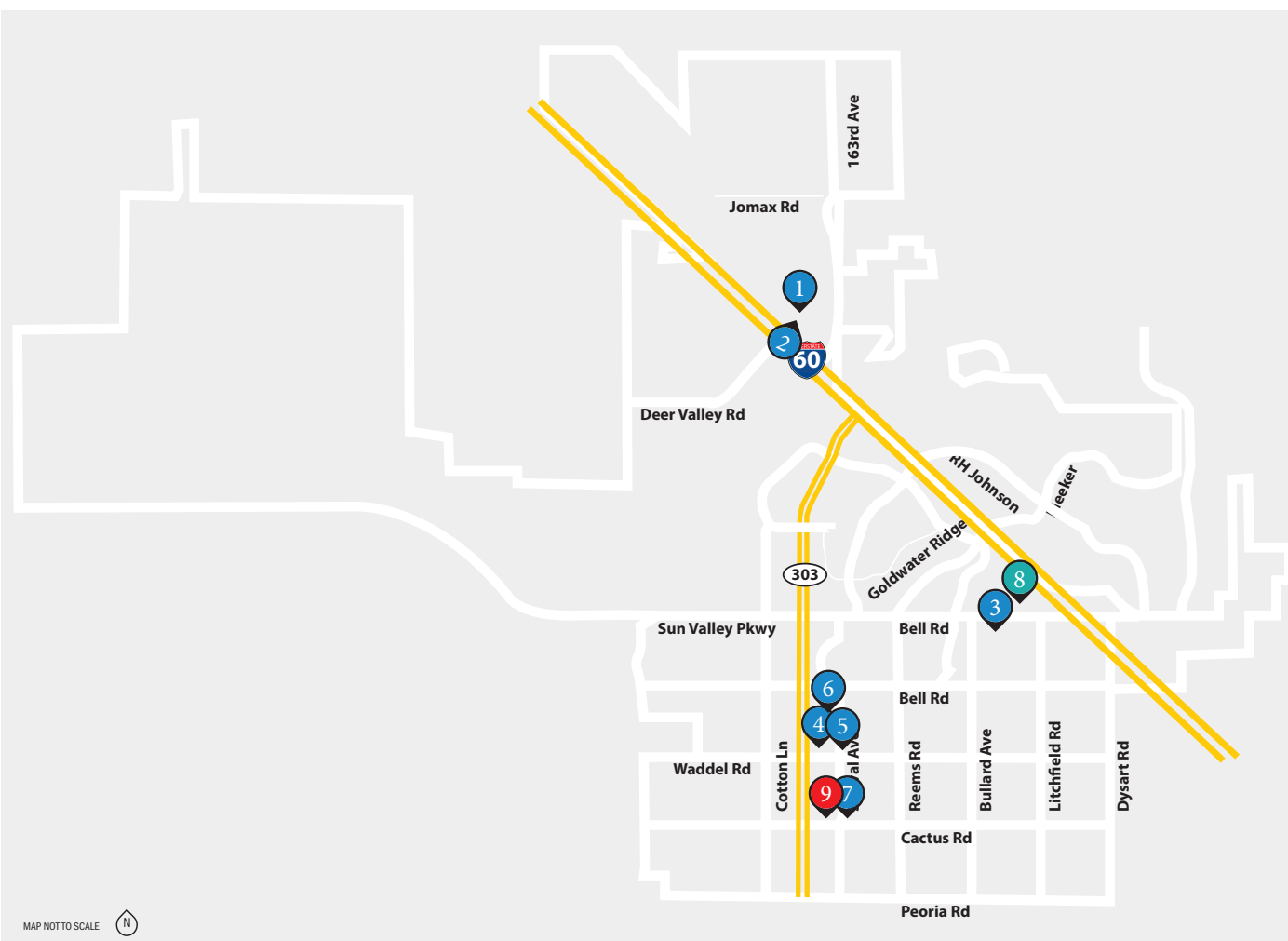
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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

NOW OPEN

1 First Watch opened a second location in Surprise at 23350 N. 163rd Ave., Suite 130. It features breakfast, brunch and lunch daily. 480-923-8381. firstwatch.com/locations/asante-trail.

2 Jimmy John's opened its fourth location in Surprise at 23236 N. 163rd Ave., Suite 120. It is the popular sandwich shop's first spot in north Surprise. locations.jimmyjohns.com/az/surprise/sandwiches-4706.

3 Tacos Chilango welcomed itself to the Surprise market this spring at 14420 W. Elm St., Suite 109. Previously, the Mexican restaurant only had West Valley locations in Avondale and Litchfield Park. 480-275-7149. tacoschilango.com.

4 J Crew Factory opened its first Surprise location at 16390 W. Waddell Road, Suite 100. The clothing store is in the Prasada North shopping center. factory.jcrew.com.

5 Sephora now has a freestanding store in Surprise at 16390 W. Waddell Road, Suite 108. 480-618-1016. sephora.com.

6 Men's Wearhouse brought fashion to Surprise when it opened last month at 16340 W. Waddell Road, Suite 104. menswearhouse.com/store-locator/2518.

7 La-Z-Boy Furniture Store gave Surprise another furniture store after years without one when it opened this spring. The store opened last month at 16350 W. Cactus Road. It



TACOS CHILANGO



FIRST WATCH

is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 480-944-4882.

MEDICAL

8 Magnolia Sage Psychiatry, a new psychiatric and mental health clinic in Surprise, is now taking patients. The office specializes in providing psychiatric care and medication management services for adults and older adults. 14239 W. Bell Road, Suite 203. 623-356-1560.

GROUNDBREAKING

9 Gold Medal Swim School began its entry into the Surprise market when it broke ground June 8 at an official city ceremony at 16517 W. Cactus Road. The family-owned company based in Chandler has been providing swim instruction for swimmers of all ages and skill levels for nearly two decades. goldmedalswimschool.com/surprise.



See what all the fun is about!

Tuesday, August 18, 2026

9:00am - Noon

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Surprise shows off its artistic side to the world

Art piece takes big 'Bounce' in international competition

A public art installation outside of Surprise Stadium is up for an award with three others in Arizona.

The stadium's "Bounce" piece near the first-base gate and along Bullard Avenue is one of four in the state that was named a top 100 finalists for a CODAaward.

The honor is given to those who successfully integrate commissioned art into interior, architectural, or public spaces.

Public voting will last until Thursday, July 30 at knowledge.codaworx.com/codazine/codaawards-shines-a-spotlight-on-top-100-public-art-projects.

The 16-by-48-by-6-foot "Bounce" structure, which simulates a ball bouncing out of the park, was installed last year, along with its companion "Swing" piece near the third-base gate.

Other Arizona nominees are two separate Scottsdale projects — "Molecules" and "Long Wave" — as well as one called "The Giving Tree" in south Phoenix.

The two artworks that receive the most votes will win a People's Choice CODAaward.

CODAworx is a creative online platform that connects artists, designers and fabricators with municipali-



Four Arizona art installations are up for an international award, including one called "Bounce" in Surprise. (Courtesy CODAworx)



Scottsdale has a second piece of artwork, called "Long Wave," that is up for a CODAaward. (Courtesy CODAworx)

ties and developers who commission artwork.

Its annual CODAwards is an international competition.



"The Giving Tree" in south Phoenix is one of four Arizona art installations up for an international CODAaward. (Courtesy CODAworx)

Design categories include landscape, residential, health care, commercial, institutional, liturgical, public spaces, transportation, hospitality and education.

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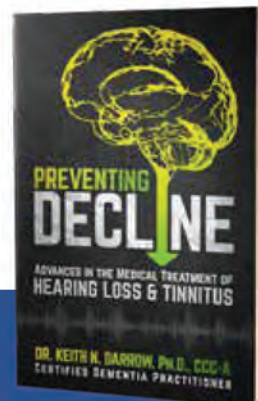
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Opinions

• From page 6

industry has made prevention a priority by investing in employee education, strengthening reporting protocols and partnering with law enforcement, survivor advocates and nonprofit organizations.

Front desk associates, housekeepers, maintenance staff, restaurant employees, security officers, suppliers and managers all have opportunities to notice behaviors or situations that others may never see.

Through specialized training, they learn how to recognize potential indicators of trafficking, respond in ways that prioritize safety, follow established reporting procedures and avoid actions that could place survivors or themselves at greater risk.

No single sign confirms trafficking, but understanding in-

dicators such as coercion, fear, restricted movement or unusual guest activity helps employees recognize when something may be wrong and notify the appropriate authorities.

Since 2020, hospitality employees nationwide have completed more than 2.6 million anti-trafficking trainings, underscoring the hotel industry's commitment to guest and employee safety.

The hospitality industry is also investing in survivors through workforce development partnerships and the American Hotel & Lodging Association Foundation's No Room for Trafficking Survivor Fund, which provides grants to community-based organizations focused on housing, economic stability, career development and other resources that help survivors rebuild their lives while reducing the risk of revictimization.

This work is making a dif-

ference, but preventing human trafficking cannot rest with one industry alone.

Healthcare professionals, educators, transportation providers, businesses, community organizations and residents all play an important role in recognizing exploitation, reporting concerns and helping survivors find safety, support and a path forward.

Exploitation thrives on silence and isolation. Prevention depends on awareness, partnership and people who are willing to act.

Together, Arizona can continue building communities where traffickers have fewer places to hide and survivors have more opportunities to find help.

Kevin Carey

Kevin Carey is president and CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging Association Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that trains hospitality employees to recognize, report and prevent human trafficking through its No Room for Trafficking

initiative, and provides survivor support through its No Room for Trafficking Survivor Fund. 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.

Speak Up

• From page 6

"Surprise needs better food choices not more fast food locations. Just sayin'." — **June U.**

Hamadeh labels protesters 'communists' at GOP meeting

"Does Abe know what communism is? I think not." — **Julie B.**

"It's obvious 'communism' polled well enough for the Republican Party to adopt it for their 2026 campaign season. Fear and anger. Campaign on something that will help the people for a change." — **Steve B.**

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Best of Peoria!**





George Van De Langeryt, left, accepts the Individual Legend award from Surprise Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission Chair Steffan Hanzel at the Sept. 28, 2023, Interfaith Breakfast event at the Dysart Unified School District Offices. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)

City needs sponsors for Golden Rule breakfast

Event honors top volunteers, organizations in Surprise

The city of Surprise is seeking sponsors for the Surprise Area Interfaith and Golden Rule Community Breakfast on Wednesday, Sept. 16.

This community gathering serves

as a celebration of the golden rule, a principle of treating others as one would want to be treated.

The celebration includes the fourth annual presentation of the Surprise Community Legend Awards.

• See **Golden** on page 15

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City dishes out arts and culture grants

Various Surprise groups awarded money for projects

The city of Surprise announced the recipients of the fiscal year 2027 Surprise Arts and Culture Grant Program, which include a youth theater, a local band and area arts groups.

The program provides funding to support local arts and culture organizations, creative programming and community-based projects taking place in Surprise.

The Arts and Culture Grant Program is designed to invest in work that brings people together, encourages curiosity, preserves culture and heritage and expands access to arts and cultural experiences across the community.

Funding is awarded through two grant categories: arts operating support grants, which help strengthen organizational capacity, and arts project grants, which support specific pro-

grams, events or activities.

This year's Surprise Arts operating support grant recipients are as follows:

- **Actors PLAYground Theater Company:** Recognized for its commitment to providing engaging youth theater education and performances that inspire creativity, confidence and self-expression throughout the community.

- **Honor Dance:** Continues to expand opportunities for young people through accessible dance education and community programming that inspires creativity, discipline and connection.

- **On Stage Now:** Supports emerging artists and entertainers through education, mentorship and performance opportunities, helping strengthen the local arts community.

- **Surprise POPS Band:** Brings free,

• See **Grants** on page 17



Actors PLAYground was one of six recipients of a city of Surprise Arts and Culture operating support grant. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)



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Golden

• From page 13

The Surprise Veterans, Disability and Human Services Commission created the award program to honor winners of the following awards: Individual Legend, Outstanding Youth, Volunteer of the Year and Organization of the Year. Sponsorship opportunities for organizations that would like to partner with the city to support this event are available through July 31.

The Arizona Interfaith Movement has designated Surprise a Golden Rule Community since 2017.

This event is made to foster collaboration and dialogue between city, faith, business and nonprofit leaders.

This year's breakfast will be at the Dysart Schools District Office

IF YOU GO

What: Surprise Area Interfaith and Golden Rule Community Breakfast

When: 8 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 16

Where: Dysart Schools District Office Governing Board Room, 15802 N. Parkview Place

Information: 623-222-1647, or katrina.stombaugh@surpriseaz.gov

in the Governing Board Room at 15802 N. Parkview Place. The celebration starts at 8 a.m. with breakfast and networking, followed by a program at 8:30 a.m.

For details on sponsorship opportunities, contact Katrina Stombaugh at 623-222-1647 or Katrina.Stombaugh@surpriseaz.gov.

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BRIEFS

City pool to host state long course championship

Oasis Swim Center is hosting its first AZ Swimming Long Course Age Group Championships this week.

Competitive swimmers from across Arizona will visit Surprise for a multi-day event from July 23-26.

This competition will be the city's first chance to highlight the amenities of Surprise's swim center.

To accommodate the championship, public open swim at Oasis Swim Center will not be available those four days.

All regularly scheduled swim lessons will continue as planned.

Those traveling in the area should expect increased traffic and limited parking in and around the facility throughout the event.

Fast food chicken spot to open in north Surprise

Zaxbys is looking poised to enter the Surprise market, giving residents another spot for chicken options.

The restaurant chain asked for a conditional use permit from the Surprise Planning and Zoning Commission for a drive-thru facility on the southeast corner of 163rd Avenue and Pinnacle Peak Road on July 16.

Zaxbys has hundreds of locations across 30 states but only one other spot in Arizona. Queen Creek currently has the only one.

The master developer asked for permission to build a 2,112-square-foot restaurant with double drive-thru lanes that can hold up to 17 cars.

About 19 parking spots will be provided, and the developer is constructing Planada Lane to the south of Pinnacle Peak so motorists can reach it from 163rd Avenue.

The restaurant is planned for property that Surprise annexed in November 2024.

A month after that, the council approved rezoning the land from rural residential to community commercial.

Artists wanted to create art at police substation

Professional artists and artist teams are invited to apply for a major public art commission at the future police substation at 163rd Avenue and San Ysidro Road.

Finalists will receive a \$1,500 honorarium plus travel and lodging,

and the selected artist will receive a contract of approximately \$165,000 for design, fabrication and installation.

The 32,000-square-foot police substation is expected to open in fall 2027.

Applications are due Monday, Aug. 31 at surprisearts.com/opportunities/artist-calls.

Local student graduates magna cum laude in Iowa

A student from Surprise was among the spring graduates at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa.

Abby O'Connor graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's of science in kinesiology.

O'Connor is also a graduate of Shadow Ridge High School in Surprise.



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Grants

• From page 14

high-quality musical performances to audiences of all ages, helping make the arts accessible and enjoyable for the broader community.

• West Valley Arts Council: Continues to support artists, organizations and arts education while enriching the cultural life of Surprise and the West Valley.

• WHAM Art Association: Creates opportunities for artists of all ages and abilities, fostering creativity, collaboration and community through the visual arts.

The Surprise Arts project grant recipients are as follows:

• Dysart Unified School District: The district will receive support for the Dysart Festival of Arts, a community celebration of student creativity through visual and performing arts.

• First Friday Surprise: First Friday Surprise will continue its monthly events celebrating local artists, makers

ARTS AND CULTURE OPERATING SUPPORT GRANT RECIPIENTS

- Actors PLAYground
- Honor Dance
- On Stage Now
- Surprise POPS Band
- West Valley Arts Council
- WHAM Art Association

ARTS AND CULTURE PROJECT GRANT RECIPIENTS

- Dysart Unified School District
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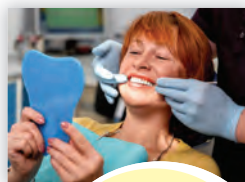
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Residents offered water rebates for improvements

Efficient nozzles, turf removal among reimbursed options

The city of Surprise is offering five rebate opportunities to help residents save water and money.

The Water Conservation Rebate Program, which is available through June 1, 2027, includes rebates for a variety of water-efficient improvements, including a new rebate option introduced this year.

Eligible Surprise residents can take advantage of the following programs:

Residential, HOA, multifamily and commercial property owners can apply for a rebate of up to \$1,250 to install qualifying high-efficiency irrigation rotary nozzles that help reduce outdoor water use.

Eligible single-family residential properties within Surprise can receive reimbursement of the actual purchase price, up to \$5 per qualifying nozzle, for a maximum rebate of \$200. HOA, multifamily and commercial properties can receive reimbursement of the actual purchase price, up to \$5 per qualifying nozzle, for up to 250 nozzles.

Applications must be submitted by June 1, 2027.

Residents who purchase and install



The city of Surprise is offering five rebate opportunities to help residents save water and money. (Courtesy Metro Creative Connection)

a WaterSense-labeled irrigation controller may be eligible for the cost of the controller, up to \$125, excluding installation/labor, shipping, tax, etc. Residential, homeowner associations, schools, multifamily and commercial properties are eligible to apply.

Applications must be received by May 15, 2027, and irrigation controller installation must be completed and the city must inspect them by June 1, 2027, to receive the rebate.

Review the rebate program requirements and access the application at surpriseaz.gov/WaterConservation.

Receive a \$400 rebate for install-

ing a low-water-use landscape on eligible properties — those that are new, single-family residential homes purchased and built within the past two years of the date of application. All plants used in the landscape design must be listed on the Arizona Department of Water Resources plant list.

Applications must be received by May 1, 2027, and xeriscape landscape installation must occur by June 1, 2027.

Residents with eligible single-family residential properties can apply for a rebate to receive \$2 per square foot of turf removed, for up to 1,000

square feet or \$2,000. To apply, participants must contact the city's Water Conservation Office and receive pre-eligibility approval prior to completing the application.

The application deadline is May 1, 2027. Projects must be completed and the city notified by June 1, 2027, to receive the rebate.

Eligible HOA, multifamily and commercial property owners can apply for a rebate to receive \$2 per square foot of turf removed, for up to 6,000 square feet — a maximum of \$12,000. To apply, participants must contact the city's Water Conservation Office and receive pre-eligibility approval prior to completing the application.

The application deadline is May 1, 2027, and no new applications will be processed following this date. Projects must be completed and the city notified by June 1, 2027, to receive the rebate.

All water rebate programs are administered on a first-received, first-served basis until the application deadline or fund depletion, whichever occurs first.

Visit surpriseaz.gov/WaterConservation.

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Finances

• From page 1

Notable big donations in the last quarter included \$5,000 gifts from Chas Roberts CEO Roberta Shank, Dan O'Leary, of Scottsdale, and Garth Wieger, of Phoenix. Those three also gave similar donations to Haney.

Rick and Rico West and Scott Phillips, all of Carefree Partners, the firm developing the City Center, all donated to both candidates as well.

Notable donations to Hastings in the quarter included \$2,500 more from developer Kent Xander, who had already given \$2,000.

Joshua Isner, president of Scottsdale-based Axon, the inventor of the Taser, gave Hastings \$1,000.

Hastings also dispersed about \$32,000 this election cycle, mostly on the signs that are plastered at intersections all across the city. Hastings spent more than \$30,000 this cycle on signs

and supplies.

The council member, who is running for election unopposed for the second straight cycle, also contributed \$16,000 to his own campaign for a spot on the Maricopa County Community College District governing board. If elected, it is a volunteer position he plans to serve on simultaneously to the council seat.

Haney, a firefighter paramedic, got his big catch with a \$6,750 donation from the United Phoenix Firefighters Association.

Meanwhile, his biggest expense was \$1,500 for campaign website design.

Judd had no supplemental reports this quarter since he did not receive or spend money.

Jason Stone can be reached at jstone@iniusa.org. Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.



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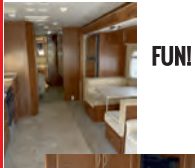
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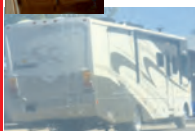
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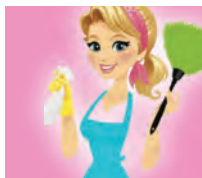
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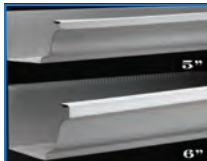
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Publish: Phoenix Independent, July 17, Surprise Independent, July 22, 2026/45220_1

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CITY OF SURPRISE PUBLIC NOTICE

Take notice that at the dates, times, and place listed below, the City of Surprise Planning and Zoning Commission & City Council will hold Public Hearings relating to a city-initiated proposed Zone Text Amendment to the Land Development Ordinances (LDO) to establish a new Battery (B) overlay zoning district related to Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and create use-specific development standards. Case#FS23-1041

Please contact: Chris Sexton; 623-222-3134 or at christina.sexton@surpriseaz.gov for more information regarding this request.

MEETING DETAILS

Planning and Zoning Commission		City Council	
DATE:	Thursday, August 06, 2026	DATE:	Tuesday, September 01, 2026
TIME:	6:00 PM	TIME:	6:00 PM
LOCATION:	Surprise City Hall 16000 N. Civic Center Plaza Surprise, AZ, 85374	LOCATION:	Surprise City Hall 16000 N. Civic Center Plaza Surprise, AZ, 85374

The City of Surprise streams and broadcasts its City Council meetings. Watch live on Cox channel 11, www.surpriseaz.gov/surprisetv, or the Surprise City Gov Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cityofsurprise. At these meetings, any member of the public may appear and be heard relative to this request or may submit written comments at any time prior to the Public Hearing. To submit email comments, including Call to the Public for non-agenda items for Planning & Zoning Commission meetings, please email pubandzcomments@surpriseaz.gov prior to the start of the meeting. Individuals wishing to address the City Council on this item, please submit a Public Comment Form online at <https://surpriseaz.gov/480/Council-Meeting-Public-Comment-Form> or in-person with a paper form located at the entrance of the Council Chambers. Please check the agenda for exact start times. Only comments received prior to the start of the meeting will be considered and included in the record. Any interested party may obtain an agenda 24 hours prior to the Public Hearing at the Surprise City Hall. Please note that this item will be placed on the next available agenda should the meeting be canceled or quorum be lost.

FROM THE COVER

OUAZ

• From page 1

and virtually no organized competition. Students were forced to organize themselves, and If they wanted to compete, they had to find tournaments on their own.

"I wouldn't say anyone was competing to be honest," senior Joel Parada said of the program before Zimmerman arrived.

But OUAZ teams today regularly compete in collegiate leagues, make playoff appearances and are building a reputation as a rising program.

Zimmerman, who came to OUAZ with an athletic director background, said the university wanted the program to become more competitive. He approached esports like any traditional sport, creating a structured practice environment.

The first year focused on introducing the new philosophy to the students. By the second year, expectations increased.

"We're practicing now. We're competing now. You have to be at practice. You have to be at your matches," Zimmerman said.

Parada said players welcomed the change.

"The second year is when we kind of kicked it off," Parada said. "I feel like everyone kind of liked it because it was like, 'Whoa, we're actually learning all this stuff now.'"

That structure now resembles what athletes experience in more traditional sports. Players spend eight to 10 hours each week practicing. Teams review game film, scrimmage against other colleges and work with specialized coaches who break down strategy.

"The amount of detail that goes into a Call of Duty coaching map session is unbelievable," Zimmerman said.

The additional preparation has translated into results.



OUAZ esports has grown under the leadership of Michael Zimmerman, who joined in 2023 as the university's esports program manager. (Independent Newsmedia/Noah Flug)

OUAZ's Super Smash Bros. team earned a third-place finish in its first tournament, while the Call of Duty and Overwatch teams have each qualified for postseason play. The program's deepest playoff run reached the semifinals.

Zimmerman said the team's first Call of Duty playoff victory remains one of his proudest moments.

"It gave me more confidence as the program manager," he said. "I'm doing this right. I'm putting together a team that can win games."

As esports continues to grow at high schools and colleges across the country, Zimmerman hopes more people begin viewing it as more than entertainment.

"I think people should realize that it's not just a form of entertainment anymore," he said. "You can compete and try to be the best at it."

For Zimmerman, that's exactly what Ottawa University's esports program is doing.

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