



Community
Baker, Goreé
expected to win
city council
election; 4



INDEPENDENT

Sports
Deer Valley
football pushes
for win in
playoffs; 14



August 2026 Volume 32 Issue 8

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

SCHOOLS

Deer Valley enrollment continues to dip

**2027 budget process
wraps up**

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

With voters having restored the 15% maintenance and override initiative last year, Deer Valley Unified School District looks to have more money to work with as the fiscal year 27 district budget wrapped up.

In 2025 the district had to trim \$11 million from its budget as a result of the override — which was authorized in 2019 — sunseting its funding in 2025. That \$11 million loss amounted to cutting almost 50 staff positions and also raised fees for extracurricular activities.

The district's FY27 budget, adopted in July, authorizes up to approximately \$285.4 million for M&O spending and includes approximately

• See **DVUSD** on page 9

GIVING BACK

Glendale teen starts nonprofit, takes fight to SIDS

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

On July 23 Kenna Wasson's nonprofit Candles in the Dark took a major step.

The North Glendale resident's organization focused on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome prevention and safe sleep for infants provided free safe infant sleep sacks to Phoenix Children's Hospital's campuses, including the one in Glendale. The sacks include a pamphlet on her organization and the golden rules of safe sleep.

Kenna Wasson is a 14-year-old about to start her sophomore year at BASIS Peoria.

"Having that milestone makes it feel so much bigger," Wasson said.

It is more than a tale of a young do-gooder going above and beyond to give back to the community.

This is personal, for Kenna and her parents, Krystal Hicks-Wasson and Alexis Wasson.

As a result of efforts by the Institute and other organizations, the sudden infant death rate is at an all-time low, according to the American SIDS Institute. However, about 3,500 sleep-related infant deaths oc-

cur each year in the United States.

"As much as we know about it, there's still is a real lack of research for what really is the root cause. We still don't know, in terms of having more than some rough guidelines," Hicks-Wasson said.

"There isn't a lot of information for families. And a lot of people still

think it's okay to co-sleep with the baby — they may not say it out loud but they still are thinking that."

The mystery syndrome exacted a terrible toll on the family, killing Kenna's two older siblings.

Kalinda Hicks was three months old when she died in April 2004 in

• See **SIDS** on page 5



Alexis Watson, left, his daughter, Kenna, and wife, Krystal Hicks-Wasson smile July 17 outside Haus Murphy restaurant in downtown Glendale. Kenna, 14, is the founder of a Sudden Infant Death Syndrome awareness and prevention charity. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

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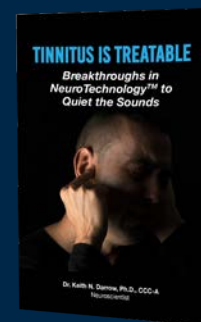
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ELECTION 2026

Baker, Goreé build solid leads in council races

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

One night after the election, at 6:40 p.m. July 22, first time Glendale City Council candidates Lisa Baker and Rory Goreé were in good shape to win their district races.

Maricopa County updated its vote totals for the fourth time that night and Goreé's lead over Ocotillo District incumbent Leandro Baldenegro grew. Goreé had 950 votes (57.1%) compared to Baldenegro's 714 (42.9%).

Election results were not official as of press time but Goreé had reason to be confident during a July 21 election night party at GFWC Glendale Woman's Club downtown.

He nearly went through with a recall effort against Baldenegro in early 2025 over the possibility of moving the Velma

Teague Library out of Murphy Park. That laid his campaign's foundation.

"We felt like this was coming. While we were out knocking on the doors we had no one that liked him," Goreé said. "With the recall, they went through the district once, I went through the district seven times on my own, knocking on doors. We set out four or five fliers and massive amounts of texts."

Calles cut into Baker's initial lead in a pre-dawn update July 22, but she rebuilt the advantage by that night. The West Valley Realtor was up 204 votes on election night, but dropped to 189 votes seven hours later.

By the night of July 22 Baker led with 2,351 votes (52.5%) to Calles 2,126 (47.5%).

"It's a lovely feeling and I'm optimistic. But you never know until they call

it," Baker said July 21.

Cholla District Councilmember Lauren Tolmachoff was not opposed in her reelection bid. All four candidates in competitive races were new at running for political office. Baldenegro is an incumbent but was appointed shortly after former Ocotillo District council member Jamie Aldama resigned in March 2024 to run for mayor.

Calles is a retired Phoenix Police officer and Navy and Army veteran.

"From the very beginning, we have believed that every legal vote deserves to be counted and that the voters of the Barrel District deserve a complete and accurate election process," Calles wrote in part of a statement released July 22.

"I also want to thank our volunteers, supporters, family members, and everyone who dedicated countless hours



Lisa Baker, right, celebrates voting results on July 22. She is leading her race for Glendale City Council. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

to this campaign. Your hard work and belief in our vision for the Barrel District have meant the world to me."



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SIDS

• From page 1

Houston. Alexandre Wasson was four months old when he died in April 2009.

Krystal and Alexis decided to try again and Kenna was born in January 2012.

Last summer, Kenna brought the idea of a SIDS to her parents and it took them by surprise.

"I think I cried a little. I was very touched when she decided to do that," Hicks-Wasson said.

"The OB said it was like the worst luck imaginable — like the odds of shooting an arrow through another arrow. It very rarely happens more than once to a family. After going through all that we weren't even sure we were going to try again. Kenna was born and she was on a monitor for the first year of her life, although there were no incidents the entire time. It's always been a sore spot."

She started the organization last July after putting a plan together for two months.

Kenna opened up a business account when she was 13.

"Since I was little, my mom has always told me about my siblings and made sure I knew about all those sensitive topics. However, I didn't fully understand until I was older and I would see — like Spring for SIDS month is April, and I would see how it affected my mom. It really strengthened my passion for it and some classmates were starting local passion projects."

THE ABCS OF INFANT SLEEP

ALONE - The safest place for your baby is alone in their own sleeping space in the same room with a parent or caregiver. Their sleeping space should be free of other people, pets, blankets, toys, bumpers, and other soft objects.

BACK - For every sleep, place your baby on their back before your child is 1 year of age.

CRIB - Your baby should always be placed in a safety-approved crib on a firm mattress covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding or soft objects.

Source: Strong Families AZ

A young volunteer army

Kenna and her parents spent most of last summer making the website and going through the documents needed to become a 501(c)(3).

Interest began to pick up last August, as Wasson formed a club at BASIS Peoria. It now has about 30 members, including middle schoolers.

Club members help set up Candles in the Dark donation events and restaurant fundraisers. Kenna said all that money goes to making sleep sacks and educational material, which are given to hospitals.

"And now she's got support staff," Hicks-Wasson said with a chuckle.

The nonprofit plans to branch into the Dignity hospitals like St. Joseph's, Honor Health medical centers and local OB/GYN offices.

"A big thing I love is getting those materials particularly to lower-income families or teen pregnancies, which don't necessarily have those educational materials," Wasson said.

Around 20 BASIS students volunteer to get the word out about the club and nonprofit.

"They're all in middle school and they're amazing. I also have a bunch of other things that divert my attention, so having that staff can help me keep on track. I just love it," Wasson said. "My volunteers love making bracelets so we would all sell those at younger kids' birthday parties."

BASIS students cannot raise funds while on school grounds.

Volunteers help her make the pitches in local neighborhoods.

"She was a kid that never really liked to have to call people or make contact without knowing them. And now she's the master of the cold call," Hicks-Wasson said.

Life Pregnancy Centers in Phoenix and Tucson will get the kits. Kenna hopes to get more hospitals on board.

The nonprofit also passes out tip sheets to organizations like Phoenix-based Father Matters, and at OB/GYN offices and abortion clinics.

Kenna now has a director of social media and a director of fundraising and will create committees for those directors

to lead.

Candles in the Dark has set the goal of one big fundraiser per month. Through Aug. 20, Candles in the Dark is hosting a fundraiser with Valley AMC Theaters through their ticket packages, where 20% of those sales go to the nonprofit.

On Aug. 24 she will have a fundraiser at the Chipotle at 9940 W. Happy Valley Parkway, Peoria.

Kenna is on Glendale Mayor Jerry Weiers' Youth Advisory Council and will soon meet with the city's Community Services Director, Kimberly Hall. She said she wants to join Gov. Katie Hobbs' Youth Commission.

"She's always been such a leader and we're so proud of her for so many things she does. But this one really has been fun to watch her grow as a passion project," Hicks-Wasson said.

Searching for clues

It is difficult to get research on this condition once a child has died because of its painful scars and sensitive nature.

Beyond the ABCs of infant sleep available on nearly every related website, there are some general rules. Parents should not put toys and big bedding in the crib.

"They recommend having the baby in the same room as you but always in a little carrier next to you. Not together," Wasson said. "Where they're sleeping, make sure they're tight sheets and there's no loose blankets, no little stuffed animals they could grab onto. Because they could eventually choke on them."

ON YOURVALLEY.NET**Office, medical complex near mall sells for \$25.25M**

A company called 17235 Piedmont LLC bought the Arrowhead Executive Center, an office property in Glendale, for \$25.25 million. Cushman and Wakefield announced the sale July 21.

The center has 101,397 square feet of Class B office and medical space across eight buildings on more than 12 acres of infill land at 17235 N. 75th Ave.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/3rbch644>

Luke Air Force Base changes command, assignment

Luke Air Force Base in Glendale changed its command and designation July 17.

During a command reassignment ceremony, the Air Education and Training Command became an Air Combat Command.

Col. Nicholas Ihde assumed command of the 56th Fighter Wing from Brig. Gen. David Berkland.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/5cxub5jp>

Unauthorized Glendale Glitters vendors under microscope

Glendale City Council members Dianna Guzman, Bart Turner, Lupe Conchas and Lauren Tolmachoff raised concerns about unlicensed vendors setting up shop in or around the Glendale Glitters blocks during a June 23 council workshop.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/2s7dzwyyw>

BUSINESS

A new place to flock in Peoria

Nest in the Desert Studio recently opened near Glendale

By Noah Flug

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Robyn Halperin is returning to familiar ground with Nest in the Desert Studio, a new Peoria showroom that marks her return to the west Valley retail scene after four years spent growing her business in southern Arizona.

The boutique home furnishings and decor store, located at 6525 W. Happy Valley Rd., opened this spring and represents a homecoming for Halperin, who has lived in Peoria for nearly two decades and previously owned Robyn's Nest, now Nest Home & Co., near Lake Pleasant Parkway and Happy Valley Road.

"I always knew I wanted to get back," Halperin said.

After selling Robyn's Nest and agreeing to a noncompete clause, Halperin spent the last four years building Nest in the Desert in Oro Valley, north of Tucson. The location quickly found an audience and allowed her to continue doing what she loves: helping customers creating inviting, personalized spaces in their homes.

The success of the Oro Valley store ultimately made it possible for her to return to Peoria.

"Everybody's been wonderful down there," Halperin said. "That helped us be able to come back and open here because they've been so wonderful and that store's done so well."

Halperin said the new location feels like a natural fit. Not only is Peoria her home, but many former customers from her Robyn's Nest days continued reaching out over the years.

"People were always texting me saying, 'it's not the same,'" Halperin said.

Halperin's path into retail began long before Nest in the Desert. An interior



After four years in Southern Arizona, designer Robyn Halperin returns to the west Valley with Nest in the Desert Studio. (Independent Newsmedia/Noah Flug)

designer for more than 30 years, she originally opened a store because she was tired of driving across the Valley to source furnishings and accessories for clients.

"I was so tired of having to drive to

Scottsdale to buy products and things for clients," she said. "I figured there's going to be other women like me around that hate having to go to Scottsdale."

Read the full story online at <https://shorturl.at/7Orib>.

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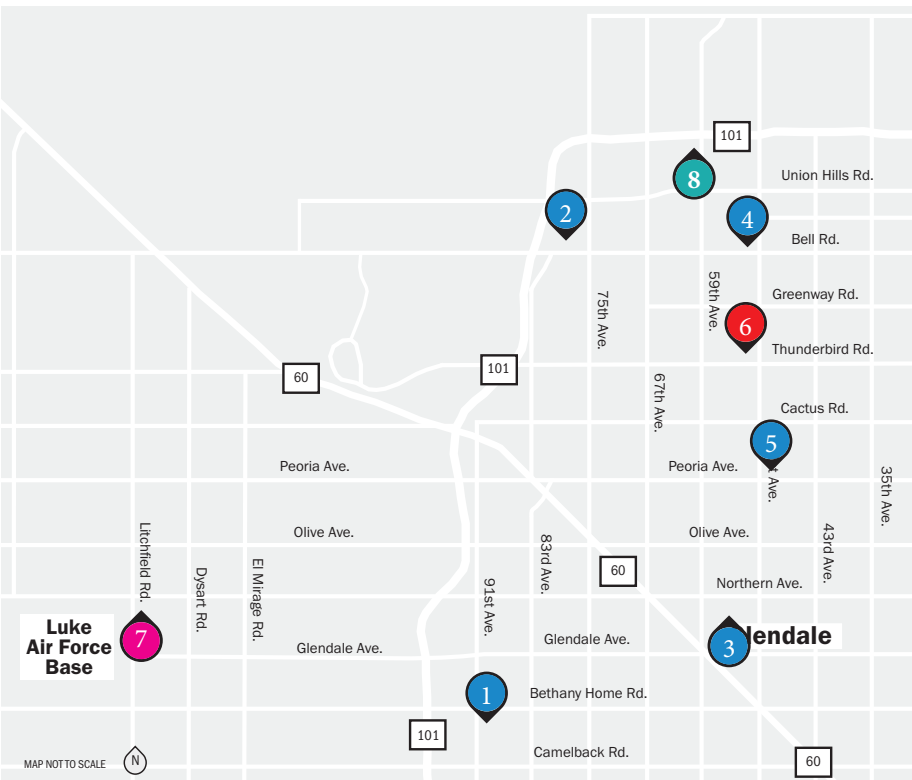


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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

NOW OPEN

1 The newest **Black Rock Coffee Bar** celebrated its grand opening July 20 at the Shops at the Cardinal, 5937 N. 91st Ave. It is one of the first stores open at this new retail development.

2 On May 31, **DJ Collectibles** opened its new store in Arrowhead Towne Center, on the second floor to west of food court. Its longtime location is at 43rd Avenue and Bell Road in west Phoenix. This sports card shop features all major sports, Pokémon, Magic the Gathering, One Piece, POP Funkos, retro video games and board games.

3 **Tacos King** just opened this summer at 7800 N. 55th Ave., Suite 110. It is a family-owned restaurant.

4 In late 2025, **Ladybug Lemonade** opened at its new Glendale location at 5350 W. Bell Road. In addition to the 20 flavors of lemonade available, the shop offers 27 flavors of Italian water ice, as well as pretzels and cake.

5 Also in late 2025, the owners of the popular **Tacos El Rojo** food truck opened a sit-down restaurant at 5044 W. Peoria Ave. Featured dishes include tacos al pastor, asada, chorizo, tripa and suadero.

OPENING SOON

6 The Glendale Planning Commission unanimously approved a conditional-use permit June 25 for a business **Pawn Co.** CEO Guy Dryer dubbed a “modern-day pawn shop.” This pawn shop will soon move into



an unoccupied storefront on northwest corner of 51st Avenue and Thunderbird Road next to Lovet Pet Health in Thunderbird Plaza. The shop, at 5140 W. Thunderbird Road, will be open 9 a.m.-7 p.m. weekdays, and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday.

LEASES

7 The 2.4 million-square-foot **Luke Field** development in Glendale is now fully occupied, as Lincoln Property Company executed two full-building leases at its property June 29. This global, full-service real estate firm operates the Class A, three building, LEED-certified logistics campus at 13543 A and 13543 B Northern Ave., and 7733 Litchfield Road. The new user, a leading company in the artificial intelligence sector, will occupy Luke Field’s 695,750-square-foot Building A and 454,761-square-foot Building B. It joins existing Luke Field tenant, Walmart, which purchased the project’s 1.28-million-square-foot Building C in late 2025 for \$152 million. The deal marked Arizona’s largest industrial building sale of the year. “Luke Field has redefined what modern logistics space can deliver,” Lincoln vice president of development Michael Monroe stated in a press release.



NEW NAME

8 Nail Depot & Spa has been a fixture at Arrowhead Promenade for decades. Now the store is called **Natural Nails & Lashes**, at the same site, 6030 W. Behrend Drive, Suite 125. The salon is reopening after closing for two weeks in July for renovations.

DVUSD BUDGET PRIORITIES FROM STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

(Based on stakeholder input gathered from parents and staff via surveys and committee discussions)

- Competitive and sustainable compensation (salaries and benefits) for recruitment and retention.
- Maintaining a safe and secure learning environment via staff and infrastructure (e.g., cameras, SSOs, SROs).
- Supporting students' emotional well-being with professional support.
- Preserving staffing levels and sustaining high-quality academic, co-curricular and special education programs.

SOURCE: DVUSD EDUCATION

DVUSD

- From page 1

\$417.1 million in planned expenditures across all funds. The M&O spending is up \$11 million from last year — with the voter-restored money — and includes a 2% salary increase for staff.

Salaries and benefits consume approximately 85% of the district's budget, according to Deputy Superintendent Heather Mock.

The basis of the district's budget is its average daily membership, or ADM.

The district is expecting its enrollment to drop again in 2026-27 by about 425 students from the previous year's



SUPPLIED TO START SCHOOL

The line to get into the Back-to-School Giveaway on Friday, July 17, stretched around Desert Diamond Arena in Glendale. Lerner & Rowe sponsored the event and the law firm set a goal to give away 6,250 backpacks filled with school supplies in seven cities across the U.S., including Glendale. "It's very important because it's a little help," said Valeria Ramirez, who waited in line with her two little ones, one going into preschool and another into kindergarten this fall. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

100th-day enrollment figure, and that trend will continue. Deer Valley Unified is anticipating fewer incoming kindergartners (1,704) than 12th graders (2,488) in the next school year, which begins Aug. 3.

According to Mock's June presenta-

tion, the district's actual student count for 2025-26 was 29,419. A look back at previous years' actual student counts shows that marks the first time Deer Valley's enrollment has dipped below 30,000 since registering a count of 29,812 in 2003-04.

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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.

From a stranger, with gratitude — remembering Nick Hutcherson

I live in Fruita, Colorado, a small town in the western part of the state. On June 27, a wildfire broke out about 20 miles from where I live, near a remote canyon along the Colorado-Utah border. It grew fast and it grew dangerous.

People came to fight it. They came from across the country, the way wildland firefighters do — not because they were told to, but because that is who they are. They go where the fire is.

They don't ask questions about where they're headed or who they're protecting.

They just go.

One of the people who came was yours; Nick Hutcherson, 27, from Glendale.

I didn't know that name last Saturday. I do now, and I won't forget it.

Along with two colleagues, Nick was lost when the fire overtook them. Two others were badly injured. They all did everything they were trained to do. And now, in a town far from this fire, people are grieving someone they loved — and we here in Fruita hold you in our hearts.

I wanted to reach out — imperfectly, as a stranger — to say that we know. That the people of this corner of Colorado are grateful beyond what words can hold. That Nick came here when we needed help, and that we will carry that with us.

To the family, the friends, the colleagues who are grieving: we are so sorry. What was lost was real, and it mattered, and it will not be forgotten here.

With deepest respect and gratitude.

Jared Miles
FRUITA, COLO.

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.

There's no room for human trafficking in Arizona

Every July 30, World Day Against Trafficking in Persons reminds us that preventing human trafficking is a responsibility shared by every community. While law enforcement plays a critical role, lasting prevention also depends everyone working together to the signs of potential trafficking, support survivors and make communities safer.



Kevin Carey

Across Arizona and the country, the hotel industry is working to ensure its properties are places of safety. Because hospitality employees interact with thousands of guests every day, hotels are uniquely positioned to help recognize and prevent trafficking.

The industry has made prevention a priority through employee education, stronger reporting protocols and partnerships with law enforcement, survivor advocates and nonprofits.

Front desk associates, housekeepers, maintenance staff, restaurant employees, security officers, suppliers and managers all have opportunities to notice behaviors others may miss. Through specialized training, they learn to recognize potential indicators of trafficking, respond safely, follow reporting procedures and avoid actions that could place survivors or themselves at greater risk. While

Speak Up

Read what local residents are saying about hot-button issues:

Below is a list of comments from people on social media, including Glendale's newest police officers, the continuing court case about council member Lupe Conchas and police investigations into Peoria Unified School District:

Ten new officers join Glendale Police Department after graduating

"Stay safe rookies! It's a great career but 20 years go by in the blink of an eye." — **Fay Winter**

"Congrats and thank you for caring enough about your communities to watch over them. God bless." — **Tammie B.**

Glendale council votes for appeal of county judge's ruling on Conchas

"A judge has already ruled on this once. The money spent on this appeal should come out of the mayor's salary or another part of the budget so the taxpayers don't eat the legal bill on this." — **Dave Kayser**

no single sign confirms trafficking, indicators such as coercion, fear, restricted movement and unusual guest activity can signal when authorities should be notified.

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Denied? Don't Panic — You Have More Power Than You Think!



Jim Schmidt, Medicare And You™

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.



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the PROM

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EDUCATION



With several new developments planned around Sandra Day O'Connor High School in North Phoenix, the boundaries of schools feeding that high school are likely to change. (Courtesy O'Connor Facebook)

Deer Valley board OKs some, not all, new boundary proposals

Process to prepare for upcoming enrollment impact moves on with 2027-28 focus

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Deer Valley Unified School District may be getting a little closer to changing its boundaries.

The controversial effort to redistribute student enrollment to manage capacity and growth impact on its north end made some headway over the summer's board meeting. The board voted to accept recommendations from the district's Long Range Planning Committee on some newer models for updated boundaries for the 2027-28 school year, but not all of them.

The board voted to accept a proposal in the Sandra Day O'Connor High School growth area that would adjust unpopulated portions of the Stetson Hills boundary.

Significant residential growth (15,000 new homes) expected for

the NorthPark development project south of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. will affect future projections, and the committee recommends students residing north of Loop 303 be assigned to Canyon Springs. Additionally, students residing in the Stetson Hills area north of the canal should be assigned to Inspiration Mountain School.

The board did, however, request a clearer map showing street demarcations.

The board also accepted one of several options the committee recommended for the Barry Goldwater High School area in North Phoenix.

In one spot, students in Paseo Heights, a new development, and the surrounding area at 39th Avenue and Pinnacle Peak, will attend Desert Sage Elementary (currently students in that area are in the boundary for Paseo Hills School and Goldwater High School). Also under the proposal, the district will use 35th Avenue on the east and the canal/Model Way on the south and 43rd Avenue on the west to include in one boundary

• See **Proposals** on page 13

ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Local students graduate, make dean's list in spring

The following students from Glendale recently earned these honors in college:

- Sonny Sandoval, studying for his bachelor of arts degree in political science, earned a spot on the sprig dean's list at Marquette University in Milwaukee.
- Lindsey Wong earned a spot on the spring 2026 dean's list at Valdosta State University.
- Jose Barraza made the dean's list at Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas.
- Gerlain Djoko, Aniyah Jackson, Dylan Kinney, Josue Rodriguez and Mason Stutesman were on the dean's list at University of Maryland Global Campus.
- Benjamin Mayberry completed a doctor of osteopathic medicine degree May 29 from Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences.

GCC celebrates opening of student-staffed cyber security center

Glendale Community College celebrated the opening of its Regional Security Operations Center, as well as similar facility at Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix on June 29.

A partnership between the colleges and the Arizona Department of Homeland Security allows student interns to work at each RSOC. PVCC site lead Amar Jouda said GCC has a morning shift, usually with three interns from 8 a.m. to noon and an afternoon shift with four from 1 to 5 p.m.

Proposals

- From page 12

Desert Sage, Hillcrest and O'Connor High School.

The board did table two other proposals for now: the Sandra Day O'Connor boundary and the remaining contentious Goldwater region boundary maps. Using further review, the board will look to consider them as one holistic area.

Arizona's fifth-largest school district is balancing current declining enrollment with an enrollment spike expected over the next few years due to an influx of new residents in the Deer Valley Unified footprint spurred by the arrival of TSMC in north Phoenix and Peoria.

The district is wrangling with existing overcrowding and enrollment imbalances, notably at Union Park (potentially 200% capacity in 10 years) and declining enrollment at Norterra Canyon.

Discussions to create new boundaries started last year with the original intent to have them in place by the 2026-27 academic year, which begins Aug. 3. With that goal not possible, the focus to implement any changes turns now to the 2027-28 academic year, although district Superintendent Dr. Curtis Finch cautioned against letting the process go beyond that.

"As long as you don't punt it for another year," he said. "It's still for the next year (2027-28) then it's probably doable, but as we know, Union Park is already past capacity and it's only going to get worse next year and it's only get worse the following year."

The Long Range Planning Committee will meet again at 6 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 20, in the main governing board room at 20402 N. 15th Ave., in Phoenix. The meeting is open to the public.

Residents can email the committee at future@dvusd.org.

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Deer Valley Skyhawks

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2025 record: 6-5
Playoffs: 4A first round
Region: 4A West Valley
Coach: Dan Friedman (9th year)

SEASON PREVIEW

Skyhawks seniors seek 4A playoff run

By Richard Smith

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Deer Valley football has a senior it can depend on at almost every position group and Coach Dan Friedman said he feels good about all 22 starters.

The Skyhawks made the 4A playoffs for the first time in four years in 2025, and battled Phoenix St. Mary's Catholic in the first round before falling 29-28.

Like it is for many 4A teams, the

concerns for Deer Valley are if those starters get injured.

"They're like secondary coaches on the field and can help the younger kids that are coming up or guys that were on the bench last year," Friedman said. "We can build upon what we did last year, no doubt. I'm happy with the 1s across the board. It's just that depth is going to be an issue this year. I love our linemen across the board, but there's no depth whatsoever."

Senior offensive guard Hudson Yakesh said every year, the Skyhawks' coaches challenge the senior class to go a step further than their predecessors. This senior class saw Deer Valley go 9-1 in 2024 and miss the playoffs because of a weak schedule, then win its region and make the 2025 playoffs with a 6-4 record against a gauntlet.

The Class of 2027 is not looking to take one step by winning a playoff game. They want to make a postseason

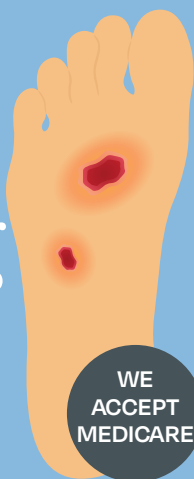
run.

"We came up short last year, and that was a bummer. We worked so hard," senior RB/LB Cash Smith said. "But I think last year everyone slacked off. I think a good amount of people slacked off and weren't taking it 100%. I think that all starts in the film room, honestly. That plays a big role in succeeding on the football field."

Deer Valley should not have two-

• See **Skyhawks** on page 16

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Skyhawks

• From page 14

way starters except at running back. Smith and fellow starting linebackers Bryson Keith and Baxter Floyd will split carries.

Senior Dylan Sierra transferred in from Goldwater at linebacker after leading the Bulldogs in tackles last season. He should be fresh for region play and can give the busy trio a break.

“He does have a hardship but I don’t know if the AIA will look at it like that. He’ll appeal sitting out, but I’m not getting my hopes up. He’s an incredible young man that’s got great talent and great work ethic. I think he’s going to add a lot of value to our team in games 6-10,” Friedman said.

Other two-way starters are possible at wide receiver and the defensive backfield — possibly even a four-way starter.

Graduation hit the secondary hard. Senior Davin Fine is the only sure new starter.

“The biggest area we probably lack in is defensive back. That’s probably where we need to fill the most spots,” Friedman said. “Connor Bogart, who started at H for us last year and is going to wind up starting for us in the slot again, he’s probably going to have to play a corner position. Austin Chaves started at X receiver. He’s probably also going to have to play safety or corner.”

Chaves is the top returning receiver and Bogart is not far behind.

Junior Jaxson Hall impressed the team with seven catches for 168 yards in the final three games of 2025.

“It’s really Austin Chaves for me. This kid keeps growing and growing every year. He’s a receiver, kicker and punter,” senior RB/LB Bryson Keith said. “Sure, last year he got overshadowed by a couple of our receivers. All offseason, all I’ve heard this guy talk about is football and all I’ve seen him do is football. The first sevens tournament back he had what, six touchdowns?”

Chaves is more used to the physical-

DEER VALLEY SKYHAWKS

KEY RETURNEES: Gavin Youngker, Sr., QB; Bryson Keith, Sr., RB/LB; Jaxson Hall, Jr., WR; Austin Chaves, Sr., WR/DB/K/P; Hudson Yakesh, Sr., OG/DT; Cash Smith, Sr., LB/RB; Connor Bogart, Sr., CB/WR.

TOP NEWCOMERS: Baxter Floyd, Jr., LB/RB; Dylan Sierra, Sr., LB, (transfer-Goldwater).

ity of football, Friedman said.

Senior quarterback Gavin Youngker will start for a second year after throwing 15 touchdowns and nine picks as a junior.

“He’s more knowledgeable and more confident, I think. He’s not allowed to get hurt because we don’t have another quarterback in the program,” Friedman said.

Youngker’s potential backup has been injured most of last year and all of this offseason, Friedman said..

Junior center Kolton Brenden impresses Yakesh by starting as a sophomore.

Senior tackle Teo Pierce is back to start, and Jacob Nielson should join him. At 6-5, 340 pounds, Nate Palliant would stand out on any high school football team — and does even moreso at Deer Valley.

Senior Mikey Jacobs, a 285-pound anchor, will focus on defensive tackle this year after also playing on the offensive line in 2025.

Junior Brayden Bowden was dynamic as a sophomore and can play either defensive tackle or end. Senior defensive end Marcus Williams is ready to start after an injury-riddled junior season.

“I think a lot of teams are underestimating us. I know we’re not the biggest group but I tell you what. I want any team that plays us to tell that to our faces. Size doesn’t matter at all,” Smith said.

Letters

• From page 10

Since 2020, hotel employees nationwide have completed more than 2.6 million anti-trafficking trainings, demonstrating the industry's commitment to guest and employee safety. The American Hotel & Lodging Association Foundation also invests in survivors through its No Room for Trafficking Survivor Fund, which provides grants to community-based organizations supporting housing, economic stability, career development and other resources that help survivors.

If someone appears to be in immediate danger, call 911. To report suspected human trafficking, contact Homeland Security Investigations at 1-866-347-2423 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888.

Exploitation thrives on silence. Arizona can build communities

where traffickers have fewer places to hide and survivors have more opportunities to find help.

Kevin Carey
AHLA FOUNDATION

Editor's note: The author is president and CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging Association Foundation. This opinion has been edited for length and can be read in full online at <https://tinyurl.com/5y49c7hv>.

Abe Hamadeh: Making AZ-08 a national punchline?

As a resident of Arizona's 8th Congressional District, I was embarrassed to see Congressman Abe Hamadeh recently become the subject of national ridicule.

National media outlets mocked a series of highly staged photographs from Hamadeh's congressional office that looked more like a fashion shoot than the workplace of a

member of Congress.

Rather than drawing attention to his work on behalf of Arizona, Hamadeh generated headlines that raised serious concerns about his judgment and priorities.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident.

Over the past year, his official social-media presence has repeatedly produced distractions ranging from peculiar photo opportunities and questionable intern content to posts that appear designed to attract attention rather than inform constituents.

At the same time, comments are frequently blocked or restricted on his official congressional Facebook page, preventing constituents from publicly responding to much of the content he publishes.

Residents of AZ-08 deserve to be known for our communities, businesses, military veterans, retirees, workers and families — not for becoming the latest source of internet mockery.

Whether one agrees with Congressman Hamadeh's politics or not, surely we can agree that the goal of a congressional office should be effective public service, not social media stunts.

Arizona faces serious challenges. Residents of AZ-08 deserve a representative focused on solving problems and exercising the sound judgment required of a member of Congress.

As voters evaluate who deserves to represent AZ-08 in the future, they should ask themselves a simple question: Is this the judgment, seriousness and leadership they expect from a member of Congress?

Anne Whitmore
SUN CITY WEST

Editor's note: This writer is using a pen name. Congressional District 8 includes parts of Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise.

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REAL ESTATE

City's rising home sale prices buck Valley trend

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The average June sale price of single-family real estate in Glendale was \$512,404, an increase of 4.3% over the same month one year ago.

That number stands out to one local real estate expert, perhaps more than the 236 closed home sales in the city — a 2.2% increase — and the 151 pending sales in Glendale as the month ended — a 26% decrease from June 2025.

Sammy Glassman, board president of Phoenix REALTORS, stated in an email that Glendale's increase in average sales price is notable because many Valley cities have seen either flat or modest price growth this year as buyers are more price-conscious.

"The fact that Glendale's average sales price increased 4.3% year-over-year while the median price remained

essentially unchanged suggests we're seeing strong activity across multiple price points, including higher-end homes that are helping lift the overall average," Glassman stated. "It speaks to Glendale's broad appeal and the city's ability to attract a diverse range of buyers."

Glendale's real estate market is one of the West Valley's strongest competitive advantages because it combines diverse housing, expanding commercial development and strategic transportation access, Glendale Economic Development Director Dan Henderson stated in an email.

According to the U.S. Census, Glendale is home to more than 94,000 households. Henderson said the city offers housing options that support employees at every stage of their careers.

• See **Sales** on page 20



Two Arrowhead Ranch residents and golfers look at the pond on hole six of Arrowhead Country Club in Glendale in 2024. Arrowhead Ranch home prices are among the highest in Glendale. (Courtesy Arrowhead Ranch Phase II HOA)

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SPORTS

Cardinals end camp this month, prep for season

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Diamondbacks may be heading into their stretch run in baseball, but at State Farm Stadium it's almost football season.

Having opened camp in July, the Cardinals have two more practices open to the public this month, on Aug. 3 and Aug. 9. Both sessions start at 4 p.m.

The Cardinals will close out their preseason this month, headlining the Hall of Fame game against Carolina in Canton, Ohio on Aug. 6.

The club is in need of a serious turnaround from a year ago. The Cardinals closed last season with a nine-game losing streak to finish 3-14 and in last place in the NFC West. They were also 1-7 at home in Glendale last year.

Under first-year coach Mike LaFleur, the Cards will also enter the season in a loaded NFC West. Not only did Seattle win the Super Bowl, the Sea-

REMAINING CARDS CAMP SCHEDULE

Monday, Aug. 3: 4-6 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 9: 4-6 p.m. (Red/White practice)

KEY DATES

Aug. 6: vs. Panthers in Hall of Fame Game (in Canton, Ohio)

Aug. 22: vs. Cowboys in first home preseason game

Sept. 13: at Chargers in regular season opener

Sept. 20: vs. Seahawks in regular season home opener

hawks topped the Los Angeles Rams, also in the West, in last year's NFC

• See **Cards** on page 20

THINGS TO DO

AUG. 2

Golden Rescue

Valley residents have two chances to support dogs in need this fall when Arizona Golden Rescue hosts its Chicken N Pickle and Dine Out With the Dogs fundraisers. Arizona Golden Rescue is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization working to find homes for golden retrievers and golden mixes. Registration is \$50 per person, \$100 per team, or \$25 for children 10 and under. Sign up at tinyurl.com/672ycnr8.

Chicken N Pickle Westgate
9330 W. Hanna Lane
1-4 p.m.

AUG. 15, 17

Thrift Shop Sale

Hospice of the Valley's four White Dove Thrift Shoppes are having a massive 50% off sale on Saturday, Aug. 15, and Monday, Aug. 17, in celebration of National Thrift Shop Day. These boutique-style shops feature unique, upscale donations ranging from designer fashion to vintage home décor. More importantly, every purchase directly funds care for patients and families who need hospice services but lack insurance or financial resources.

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A household is defined as any individual or group of individuals who live together at the same address and share income and expenses. Services are not transferable, and only eligible consumers may enroll in these programs. Consumers who willfully make false statements to obtain these discounts can be punished by fine or imprisonment and can be barred from these programs.

If you live in a CenturyLink service area, visit <https://www.centurylink.com/aboutus/community/community-development/lifeline.html> for additional information about applying for these programs or call 1-800-201-4099 with questions.



Cardinals fans take in a previous training camp inside State Farm Stadium in Glendale. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

Cards

- From page 19

Championship Game.

While training camp parking and

admission are free, digital tickets are required for entry.

Tickets can be reserved by visiting azcardinals.com/camp and will be accessible via the Cardinals mobile app.

Sales

- From page 18

"Economic Development uses these strengths to show companies that Glendale offers the space, infrastructure, and quality of life needed to recruit talent, retain employees and support long-term growth," Henderson stated.

Glendale's inventory level at the end of June was 682 homes, up 3.5% year over year. Glassman said this is not concerning in today's market.

Well-priced homes in desirable neighborhoods are continuing to attract strong interest, he said, while buyers are benefiting from increased negotiating power compared to the highly competitive conditions of a few years ago.

"In fact, it reflects the broader trend we're seeing throughout the Valley where inventory has gradually increased, giving buyers more choices and more time to make decisions. Glendale's 3.7 months of supply still falls within what many would consider a relatively balanced market," Glassman stated.

Real estate is a major factor in at-

tracting companies, Henderson stated, but it is part of a broader site-selection equation.

CensusReporter.org lists Glendale's median household income is \$75,711, and that figure was \$73,530 in the 2024 U.S. Census.

"Glendale benefits from access to the Phoenix West Valley labor shed of more than one million workers, a 63.9% (American Community Survey) labor force participation rate, and a growing talent pipeline from Midwestern University, Glendale Community College, and ASU West Campus," Henderson stated.

Another of the city's strengths is its affordability relative to many other parts of the Valley, Glassman said.

"Buyers can often find more home for their money in Glendale than in neighboring communities, which continues to attract first-time buyers, growing families and those relocating from higher-priced markets. Glendale also offers a unique mix of established neighborhoods, newer developments, major employment centers, entertainment venues and convenient freeway access, making it one of the most diverse housing markets in the Phoenix area," he stated.

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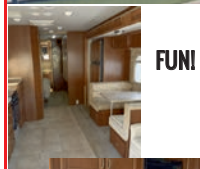
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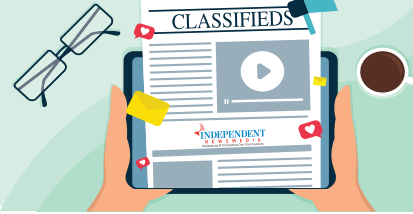
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