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July 29, 2026 Volume 43 Issue 30

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REAL ESTATE

Paradise Valley home market defies broader slowdown

Luxury properties continue
to draw buyers as unique
estates and limited inventory
drive demand

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Paradise Valley is standing out in the Valley's luxury housing market, with home prices continuing to climb while much of the Phoenix metropolitan area has leveled off.

Paradise Valley recorded a 13% year-over-year increase in average home prices, making it the only community in the state to post significant price growth, according to the Arizona Regional Multiple Listing Service.

The ARMLS is the database used by licensed real estate professionals to list and track homes for sale across Arizona.

The median 2025 sale price for closed listings for Paradise Valley homes was \$3,550,000 and in

• See **Real Estate** on page 6

Paradise Valley election sets next council



Mayor Mark Stanton ran for reelection unopposed

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Heading into the weekend, candidates Anna Thomasson, Bob Brown and Bill Nassikas led in the race for three Paradise Valley Town Council seats up for election in the July 21 primary, according to unofficial results.

As of press time and with 99 percent reporting, Anna Thomasson led the polls with 2,630 votes, totalling 30.34% of the counted ballots.

Bob Brown was second among the candidates, tallying 2,370 votes, of 27.34% of the vote among ballots counted.

Bill Nassikas was in third place with 1,991 votes, accounting for 22.97% of count-

• See **Election** on page 21

Voters leave Paradise Valley Town Hall after casting their ballot on July 21. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

The Customer Nobody Fights For

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IN THE CENTERSPREAD

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4 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,605 square feet
5850kathleen.com



\$2,995,000 3308 East Stella Lane
46,200 square foot lot - Plans Available for this Home



\$7,300,000 7102 East Kalil
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 8,200 square feet



\$2,595,000 7133 North 40th Street
vacant lot 1.33 acres



\$9,995,000 5022 East Orchid Lane
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,511 square feet
5022orchid.com



\$1,395,000 8675 East Via De Los Libros
3 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,412 square feet
8675viadeloslibros.com

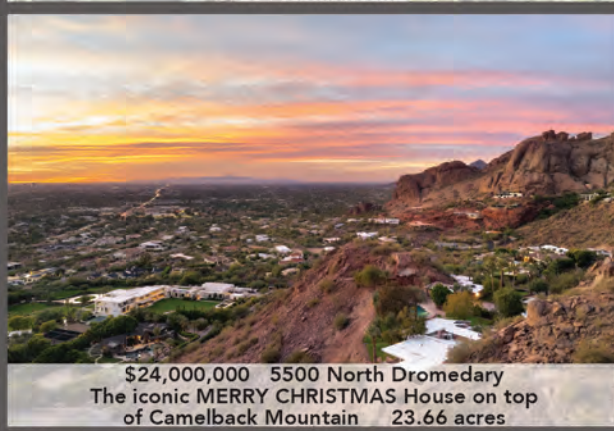


\$9,595,000 9790 North 56th Street
4 bedrooms, 5 baths, 8,144 square feet



SALE
PENDING

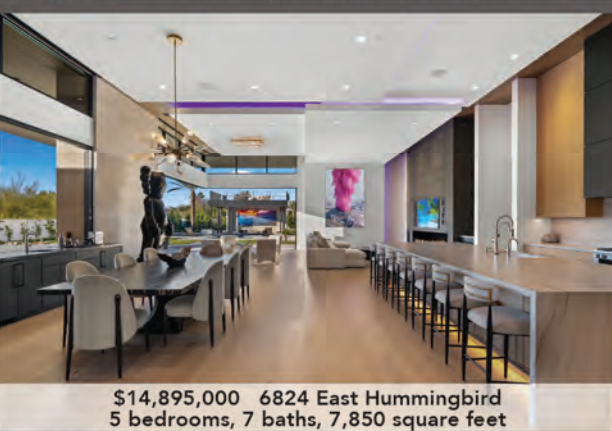
\$5,199,000 8441 East Cortez Street
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 5,765 square feet



\$24,000,000 5500 North Dromedary
The iconic MERRY CHRISTMAS House on top
of Camelback Mountain 23.66 acres



\$7,500,000 9735 East Kemper
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,742 square feet



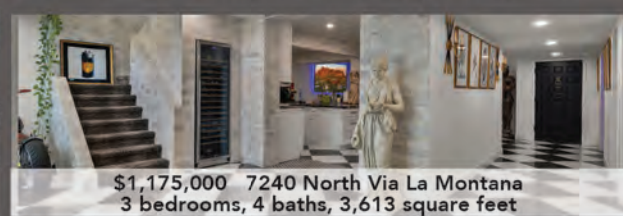
\$14,895,000 6824 East Hummingbird
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,850 square feet



\$1,495,000 7157 East Rancho Vista #4001
3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 2,213 square feet
7157ranchovista4001.com



\$1,695,000 4843 North 72nd Way
2 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,122 square feet



\$1,175,000 7240 North Via La Montana
3 bedrooms, 4 baths, 3,613 square feet



Robert Joffe



Jonah Joffe



Adam Joffe



Andrew Mehlman



Z. Jawanmardi



Dan Lombard

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The Customer Nobody Fights For

Sometimes something gnaws at me until I have to say it out loud, and this is one of those times. Here it is... **Greg Hague weighs in on the real estate industry in the centerspread.**



ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Executive order bans many state employees from betting on prediction sites

In a new executive order, Gov. Katie Hobbs is telling the thousands of state employees under her control that if they profit from “nonpublic information” they are subject to being fired.

In other words, Arizona Department of Transportation employees who have insider knowledge of when work on an overpass will be complete are not allowed to set up a bet on sites like Kalshi to benefit from that knowledge.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/47vy-ja9n>

Game and Fish seeks Commission Awards nominations

The Arizona Game and Fish Commission is soliciting nominations for its 2026 Commission Awards.

These awards recognize local residents who have contributed significantly to the conservation of the state’s wildlife, its outdoor heritage, and the mission of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. There are 13 award categories.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/2yekzn3c>

Border crossings in Arizona fall dramatically

After years of record-breaking migrant crossings, Arizona’s southern border is experiencing a dramatic slowdown.

After recording more than 564,000 migrant apprehensions in fiscal year 2024, Arizona’s Tucson and Yuma border sectors saw encounters decline to approximately 65,813 apprehensions in fiscal year 2025 — an 88% decrease, according to data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Fiscal year 2026 totals are tracking even lower, reflecting changes in federal border enforcement and migration patterns.

Read online: <https://tinyurl.com/2ye-3maxp>

Stephen Curry’s Underrated youth golf tournament makes stop at Troon North

Junior golfers built connections through national tour

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Fifteen-year-old Layla Phillips stood over her final putt on the 18th hole at the Underrated Golf Tour stop in Scottsdale as about 100 fellow competitors watched from around the green.

As soon as the ball dropped into the hole to secure her victory, the other competitors sprinted after her, chasing her with water bottles before drenching her in celebration; a tradition among competitors on Stephen Curry’s Underrated Golf Tour.

The annual tour gives top Black and Brown golfers ages 12 to 18 the opportunity to compete on some of the nation’s premier golf courses while

• See **Golf** on page 16



Will Lowery, Lucas Gimenez and Layla Phillips at the Underrated winners ceremony at the Scottsdale stop on the Underrated Golf Tour at Troon North golf club on July 15, in Scottsdale. (Photo submitted by Underrated Golf)

COMMUNITY NEWS

Central Bark Paradise Valley owner speaks on new Phoenix tether law

Ways to protect your dog during summer months

By Mark Carlisle and Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

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

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

She said Poverty’s Pets once reported to the city they had seen

• See **Tether** on page 16



Owner of Central Bark Paradise Valley Daniel Glad with dog “Butch”. (Photo submitted by Daniel Glad)



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FROM THE COVER

Real Estate

• From page 1

2026 the median rose to \$3,995,900.

Scottsdale also saw an increase, with average home prices rising 8%, while most other Valley markets remained relatively flat compared to last year.

While some Valley communities saw slight changes in home values, several remained largely unchanged.

Fountain Hills, Gilbert, Mesa, Tempe and Peoria all recorded essentially no change in median home prices year over year, according to ARMLS data.

Buckeye and Maricopa each saw a 1% decline, while Chandler, Glendale, Good-year, Surprise, Phoenix and Queen Creek posted increases of about 1%, according to ARMLS data.

Cave Creek experienced the largest increase among those communities at approximately 3%, according to ARMLS data.

The S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller Home Price Index, which tracks changes in the value of single-family homes by comparing repeat sales of the same properties over time, shows that home values across the Phoenix metropolitan area declined through much of mid-2025 before leveling off in recent months, suggesting the broader market has stabilized rather than continued to climb.

By comparison, Paradise Valley continued to see year-over-year price growth, standing out from many other Valley communities that recorded little change or slight declines in median home prices.

Arizona Realtor of roughly 40 years and owner of 72 Sold, Greg Hague, said he attributes the difference in Paradise Valley's market to the town's unique character. He said that in softer markets, buyers often feel comfortable passing on a home because they believe they can find a similar property at a better price.

"Buyers would feel like the home I pass on today, because I don't feel like I'm get-



A home at 5060 E. Desert Sky Lane in Paradise Valley is pending and scheduled to close Aug. 31. (Photo submitted by Jennifer Michaels)

ting the deal I want, I'm gonna find another home tomorrow like it and I might find one better," Hague said.

However, he said that dynamic is different in Paradise Valley because the town's luxury homes are often one-of-a-kind.

Unlike many cookie-cutter homes throughout the Valley, Paradise Valley properties are harder to replicate, which can lead buyers to pay more than they initially believe a property is worth to secure a home they truly want.

In the Valley, the current housing market is not experiencing a major downturn, but rather a slower period where buyers have more options and sellers may need to adjust expectations while buyers are being more careful when choosing a home, Hague said.

"It's not a meltdown at all. It's just a lethargic market. You know, you have a little more supply than demand. It's all kind of slow," he said.

Buyers are often drawn specifically to Paradise Valley because of the town's lifestyle, limited inventory and the feeling

that there are few true alternatives, Hague said.

"It isn't like, I'll just as soon buy a home in Paradise Valley as anywhere else," Hague said. "People who want a home in Paradise Valley, pretty much want a home in Paradise Valley: 'I want that ZIP code, I want to live in Paradise Valley. I like no street lights, I like that town, I like the more wide-open spaces.'"

That strong demand, combined with limited choices, can push buyers to pay more for a home that meets their expectations, Hague said.

However, in other areas of the Valley, buyers don't have that same pressure in a slower market, he said.

"There's just a lot of the homes that are similar," Hague said. "You don't have this feeling, like, if I pass on this home, I'm never gonna find one like it ... That makes all the difference in the world."

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.



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6633 E Solano Dr PARADISE VALLEY	\$4,100,000
-------------------------------------	-------------

5532 E Sanna St PARADISE VALLEY	\$3,825,000
------------------------------------	-------------

9290 E Thompson Peak NORTH SCOTTSDALE	\$3,100,000
--	-------------

5275 N Camelhead Rd PHOENIX	\$2,550,000
--------------------------------	-------------

OPINION

Take the Civility Pledge

Yes, I will do my part to help my community become a safe place for people to engage in civil discourse about public issues. Visit iniusa.org/civility-pledge/ to take the pledge.

Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our opinions, and we insist on civility. Please include your name and phone number, so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We welcome your photo. All opinions must be no more than 300 words.

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.

Response to concerns about Mockingbird Lane

Many residents recently received two large mailings from Mr. Steve Gayor who, through his PAC and printing business, targeted me for my vote on the Mockingbird Lane improvement project. After his first mailing, my call to him resulted in a productive conversation where I explained the project and rationale for my vote.



Anna Thomasson

The road design is fully compliant with national safety standards for urban roads rated at 35 MPH. Our professional staff of engineers, consultants and traffic safety experts would not bring forward a road design that did not meet safety standards. That would be foolish.

The road design objective was to slow down traffic to make the road safer. The use of medians, planter/chicanes, water run-off channels and a curvilinear path reduces speed, making the road safer for vehicles and cyclists. Virtually all of the road is 11' wide with only a small fraction 10' wide next to a bike lane – all meeting national safety standards. The new design is safer.

This eight-year project included nine publicly noticed council meetings, two neighborhood mailings informing of two public meetings, numerous mentions in the town manager's newsletter and at least two front-page stories in the Paradise Valley Independent.

Five out of seven council members, including Mayor Stanton, voted to approve the project and Councilmember Andeen-Keller's "No" vote was for financial reasons. Your council studied and supported this project.

I thanked Mr. Gaynor for his advocacy and invited him to be my guest

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.

at the PV Men's Breakfast. Please stay informed by signing up for the town manager's newsletter, register to be notified of Planning Commission and council meetings, attend monthly Coffee with a Cop or volunteer to serve on a town board or committee.

I take public safety seriously and look forward to a safer, slower Mockingbird Lane.

Anna Thomasson

MEMBER, PARADISE VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Another critical election for Scottsdale Unified School District

Every election cycle we hear this is the most important school board election yet. While that message can lose its impact over time, this year's Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board election truly will shape the district's future.

The stakes are high. If voters don't participate, the board could lose members willing to challenge Superintendent Dr. Scott Menzel's agenda and advocate for academic excellence, fiscal responsibility and parental involvement.

The current board includes three progressive members elected after campaigning in support of Dr. Menzel and promoting greater reliance on education professionals over parental input. Since then, many parents believe the district has moved further away from its traditional focus on student achievement.

This November, two board seats are on the ballot. Amy Carney is seeking reelection, while Carine Werner is

stepping down to focus on her reelection campaign for the Arizona Senate.

The Scottsdale Education Association has endorsed Dr. Jennifer Johnson, a professional educator whose background raises questions about her independence. Johnson recently established residency within the district and has professional ties to both Dr. Menzel and SUSD leadership. As Assistant Vice President for Academic Alliances at Grand Canyon University, she directed the Superintendents Collaborative Network, which included Dr. Menzel as a mentor for new superintendents. She also serves on the board of Love Public Ed AZ alongside SUSD Assistant Superintendent Dr. Heather Cruz.

These connections suggest Dr. Johnson would likely support the current administration's priorities rather than provide independent oversight.

For voters seeking a different direction, Amy Carney has consistently advocated for academic achievement, responsible budgeting and accountability. Jeanie Beasley brings decades of community involvement, having lived in Scottsdale for 30 years and raised three children who attended SUSD.

Scottsdale voters who want greater accountability and a renewed focus on student success should support Amy Carney and Jeanie Beasley.

Mike Bengert
SCOTTSDALE

The social cost of leaf blower pollution

Polling estimates indicate that a third or more active voters in the Town of Paradise Valley are concerned about the obvious negative effects of gas and electric leaf blowers, but we did not hear a peep from town council candidates on the matter.

♦ See **Opinion** on page 22

Markets Change. Experience Doesn't.

Every market tells a different story. Knowing how to navigate each one comes from experience, not trends.

For nearly 30 years, I've helped Paradise Valley families make confident real estate decisions through changing markets with local knowledge, thoughtful guidance, and long-term perspective.



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If you're considering a move this fall, or simply wondering what today's market means for your home, I'd love to be a resource.



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7150 N HILLSIDE DRIVE
PARADISE VALLEY, 85253 | \$30,000,000
5 BEDS | 8 BATHS | 12,440 SQ FT ON 2.8 ACRES



6610 N MOUNTAIN VIEW DRIVE
PARADISE VALLEY, 85253 | \$9,288,888
5 BEDS | 8 BATHS | 8,363 SQ FT ON 1 ACRE

#1 IN PARADISE VALLEY



SOLD: \$32,388,888
5724 E MOCKINGBIRD LANE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BOTH BUYER & SELLER



SOLD: \$20,975,000
5901 E EDWARD LANE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BOTH BUYER & SELLER



SOLD: \$19,250,000
6025 E CHOLLA LANE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BUYER & SELLER



SOLD: \$16,000,000
6724 N 62ND STREET | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BUYER & SELLER



SOLD: \$18,750,000
6447 E MCDONALD DRIVE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED SELLER



SOLD: \$17,000,000
6203 E JOSHUA TREE LANE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BOTH BUYER AND SELLER



SOLD: \$16,250,000
5001 N WILKINSON ROAD | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED SELLER



SOLD: \$14,275,000
6515 E MEADOWLARK LN | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED SELLER



6821 E VALLEY VISTA LANE
PARADISE VALLEY, 85253 | \$7,999,995
6 BEDS | 7 BATHS | 7,538 SQ FT ON NEARLY 1.1 ACRES



6650 N HILLSIDE DRIVE
PARADISE VALLEY, 85253 | \$5,999,999
5 BEDS | 7 BATHS | 6,021 SQ FT ON NEARLY 1 ACRE



5924 E NORTH LANE
PARADISE VALLEY, 85253 | \$1,350,000
4 BEDS | 2 BATHS | 2,167 SQ FT



SOLD: \$13,000,000
6101 N YUCCA ROAD | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED BUYER



SOLD: \$12,300,000
OFF MARKET SALE IN FINISTERRE
REPRESENTED BUYER



SOLD: \$12,000,000
6101 E CABALLO LANE | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED SELLER



SOLD: \$9,100,000
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The Customer Nobody Fights For

I don't write about real estate much. Nobody wants to hear about it unless they're buying or selling a home, which is a small slice of us at any given time. So I mostly leave it alone and write about life, love, and street smarts.

But sometimes something gnaws at me until I have to say it out loud, and this is one of those times. Here it is.

Real estate may be the only industry on earth that doesn't put the seller, our customer, the one who writes the check, first. Not second. Not third. Even further back than that.

And after all these years, I still can't fully explain why.

Whose Money Keeps the Lights On?

Let me explain the check part first. When a home sells, the seller pays the commission. All of it. A class action lawsuit was settled with the intention that buyers would begin paying for their own representation. But it hasn't happened. In most every sale, the seller still pays for everything.

And the seller's money quietly fans out and funds the entire industry. The brokerages, the agents, the coaches, the conferences, the associations, and yes, the home search portals you scroll at night. Trace any dollar in this business back far enough and you land at the same table, with the same person signing the same check. The seller.

So you'd think the whole industry would organize itself around one question. How do we get that seller what they want most, the highest possible price? You'd think wrong.

Major real estate firms have built entire business models around recruiting more agents. It isn't sellers. It's agents. How to recruit more of them.

These firms are reluctant to develop, advocate, and market a better way to sell homes, one proven to put more money in their sellers' pockets. Why? Because a few of their agents, often the established ones, don't need it and don't want to change their ways. Rock the boat and they might grumble and leave.

The better way goes unspoken. The majority of agents suffer. And the seller never hears about it.

In most industries, businesses hire people to service customers they generate. In our industry, businesses hire people to go out and find business.

Your Own Home, Turned Against You

Then there are the portals. We hand them our sellers' homes, and they hand the world days on market, the price-cut history, and offer guides nudging buyers to come in under the quoted price.

Worse, the portals use your home as bait. Your photos, your description, your biggest asset attracts a buyer, and that buyer gets sold off to an agent who paid for the lead and usually knows less about your home than the buyer who clicked on it. So the buyer isn't served and the seller is harmed.

Sellers fund everything we do, so serving them should be the centerpiece of everything we do.

What Ferrari Knows That My Industry Doesn't

There are absolutely, positively ways to market a home, show it, position it, and negotiate offers, that take from the playbooks of Rolex, Ferrari and other premium brands. Done right, and I know this from experience, these strategies sell homes faster and for more money, a lot more money.

And here's the quiet tragedy. Most homes are still sold the way they were half a century ago.

Put it on the market. List it on the MLS and the same portals as everyone else, with marketing that looks like everyone else's. Show it. Wait. Reduce the price if it stalls.

That approach is based on hope and time, and it entirely misses the sophisticated marketing strategies that separate a good sale from a great one. And this costs sellers a small fortune in lower sale prices. The cruelest part is they never know it.

Five Questions to Ask Agents You Interview

This isn't a knock on real estate agents. Most work hard with a genuine desire to serve the sellers they represent. But they live in industry handcuffs. Nearly all the training is about how to win your listing, not how to sell your home for more money, which, when you think about it, is the finest listing tool ever invented.

The next time you interview an agent, ask a few questions and listen closely. I could give you a hundred, but here's just five.

- Exactly what training have you taken on buyer psychology, marketing, positioning, and price negotiation?
- What exactly, step by step, do you do during each showing to make my home shine above every competing home a buyer is seeing?
- What's your strategy so time on the market doesn't make buyers assume my home was passed over?
- How do you create real urgency, without pressure, so buyers make a fast, strong offer?
- And once an offer comes in, before you bring it to me, what do you do to learn how much more the buyer will pay?

Ask. Then listen. It's not their fault if the answers come up thin. I've spent a lifetime learning these things, and I still find it hard to believe that almost no one teaches them. They teach how to get a seller to sign. Selling the home for more is a different craft entirely.

The Bravest Thing a Brokerage Could Do

The firms, big and small, could build that craft into a real program, brand it, teach it, and stand behind it. Most of their agents would do a lot more business because of it. And when a firm generates more business than its agents can handle, that's when it recruits new agents to service it.

What Is My Motivation?

I'm not trying to sell you anything. My email is greg@72sold.com. If a phone call with me can help, I'm glad to make the time. I don't list homes anymore, but I'll happily get on the phone and help you make sure your agent, the one you choose, is doing the right things.



And if you'd like to learn the home selling program I teach, it's posted for every home seller in America to see at **72HOUR.com**.

I've been fortunate and made more than enough. So none of this is about money for me. It's about an industry that has been good to me, and my stubborn hope that it will someday see the one priority, home sellers, that it should be focusing on every day.

The truth is, most real estate agents work their hearts out, with good intentions, for people they genuinely want to help. But their hands are tied by an industry with the wrong priorities.

Okay, I got that off my chest. Thanks for indulging me. Next time, back to the mystery of life, love, and street smarts.

Greg Hague CEO, 72SOLD

BUSINESS

Phoenix Country Day seniors turn broken bottles into business

Founders spent two years developing the patent-pending ATLYS One

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

During his sophomore year at Phoenix Country Day School, Reid Umar's Gatorade squeeze bottle fell off his desk during a free period.

Instead of simply picking it up, the broken bottle revealed mold and buildup trapped inside the plastic nozzle that he realized he could never fully clean.

As a hockey player, Umar had relied on squeeze bottles for years, but he had long noticed their shortcomings. Plastic bottles failed to keep water cold, could leach microplastics into drinks and often couldn't be cleaned thoroughly, he said.

At the same time, traditional insulated metal bottles weren't practical on the ice.

With gloves, shoulder pads and a helmet on, opening a screw-top bottle during a game isn't easy, and the mouthpiece often won't fit through a hockey helmet's cage.

"There's all these different stipulations that make it so squeeze bottles are the most efficient, easiest to use and just, by far, the number one option in the sports world," Umar said.

That broken bottle sparked an idea. Umar texted his longtime friend Carson Rose, whom he has known since kindergarten, and the pair decided to create a better alternative.

"Right then and there, in the classroom, is when I decided I wanted to make it better," Umar said. "That



Carson Rose drinks from the patent-pending ATLYS One water bottle. (Photo submitted by Atlys One)

same day, I texted Carson, and I was like, 'Hey, what do you think of this idea?' and he loved it."

Over the next two years, the two students designed and refined what became the patent-pending ATLYS One, a stainless steel water bottle with an electronic lid that offers both a press-to-spray mode and a traditional pour mode.

The design combines the insulation of a metal bottle with the convenience of a squeeze bottle for athletes and people participating in activities such as hiking and biking where speed and efficiency matters just as much as keeping water cold, Rose said.

"We wanted to make it more efficient for everybody," he said.

Before the bottle launched for pre-sale June 30, videos documenting the



Carson Rose, co-founder of ATLYS One. (Photo submitted by Atlys One)

product's development had garnered more than 3 million views on social media.

Just eight days after the June 30 presale launch, the pair had sold 240 bottles, a milestone Rose said made the years of work feel worthwhile.

"It's really cool to see something that you made come to a reality, and to see other people, especially buying your product and commenting on your videos and saying that it's a really cool thing," Rose said. "I think it just kind of fuels the fire, to be honest, and it makes me keep wanting to push forward with this business and gives me extra incentive to work harder."

Beyond the product itself, Rose said he and Umar wanted ATLYS to have a broader impact. The company has partnered with the Inspiring Children Foundation, with a portion



Reid Umar, co-founder of ATLYS One. (Photo submitted by Atlys One)

of each bottle sold supporting the nonprofit's youth mental health programs.

"We were both really happy to be able to put ATLYS's name next to something that's bigger than just itself," Rose said.

Umar said finally holding the finished product was unlike anything he had experienced before, and he is excited to continue the company's journey with Rose.

"Getting the bottle for the first time is like opening a Christmas present when you're five, six years old," Umar said. "There's really nothing like it."

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Golf

• From page 4

preparing them for college golf and future careers.

Everything is sponsored during the tournament, from flights and hotels to new golf gear like bags, visors and polos. The goal is to make the sport more accessible while continuing to develop players who have already shown exceptional talent, Underrated Tour Ambassador Will Lowery said.

“We just want to make sure that we make that impact on a space that has high barriers to entry, especially for those that come from a different clubhouse, so to speak,” Lowery said. The Scottsdale tournament was

one of four U.S. stops on the 2026 tour, with top finishers advancing to the Curry Cup championship in September.

After her win, Phillips said the camaraderie she has with her competitors is unlike anything she has experienced at other tournaments.

“It’s a friendly competition,” she said. “It’s competitive, but at the end of the day I’m friends with everybody, so it’s nice to play.”

Phillips said this is her second year participating in Underrated, and the opportunity to play championship courses like Troon North in Scottsdale is something she would not have experienced without the tour.

“It’s a really good experience, because I would never play these courses before Underrated, and, I’m

playing courses that professionals are playing, and it’s a good experience to play with people who are likeminded because they know the experience, and I can experience it with them,” she said.

The tournament is about more than preparing junior golfers for competition, Underrated staff member Hampton Clark said.

It is also designed to prepare them for the pressures of competing in an individual sport at a high level while introducing them to leadership, business and career opportunities beyond golf.

“We understand that golf is kind of their main passion, their main thing, but we know there’s always a life after athletics, even if they go

• See **Golf** on page 22

Layla Phillips swings her club at Troon North golf club during the Underrated Golf Tour on July 15, in Scottsdale. (Photo submitted by Underrated Golf)



Tether

• From page 4

a dog tethered in 99-degree heat. The response was that there was nothing the city could do because the temperature had not reached 100 yet.

“The dog’s suffering did not change when the temperature changed one degree. Cruelty cannot be measured by temperature alone,” Sivoilella said.

The previous ordinance, still in effect until July 17, bans tethering on private property only during extreme weather conditions, which are defined as the temperature being below 32 degrees or above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, during a heat advisory, or if a monsoon, hurricane, tropical storm, dust storm or tornado warning has been issued.

Owner of Central Bark Paradise Valley, Daniel Glad, said he agrees with the new legislation but finds it upsetting that it is something that has to be made a law in the first place.

“Our pups aren’t just like family,

they are family, and you’re not going to tether a family member in the backyard in the heat the entire day,” Glad said. “You have to be able to give them reasonable living conditions.”

Another part of those reasonable living conditions is avoiding more surfaces than just asphalt in the summer as things like truck beds, sand on hiking trails, and more can also burn dogs’ feet and are not what owners typically think about, he said.

“Being in Phoenix in the summer is like being in an oven,” he said. “If you can’t put your hand up against it (any surface) for seven seconds it’s going to be way too hot for your pup.”

Glad said a lot of owners who put their dogs in dangerous situations are not meaning to be harmful, but they are uneducated of the dangers.

“I think what happens is people just don’t process what that’s like and they don’t take that into consideration,” he said. “They just need to be educated that this is really harmful for the dog.”

Glad also recognized the challenge of keeping a dog exercised properly

during the summer when days can get so hot that the only time to go outside would be very early mornings or late at night.

That is why places like Central Bark Paradise Valley exist: to give owners a safe, indoor option to keep their dogs active, especially during Arizona’s hotter months.

“That’s why we have services like we have at Central Bark, because you have to exercise your dog, and we have a great, safe, indoor option to exercise your dog, so you don’t have to worry ... about burning your dog’s foot,” he said.

Several other board members and volunteers from Poverty’s Pets spoke before council on June 17, as well as representatives from the nonprofit Handover Rover.

“The suffering that takes place in the desert heat is just too much to look away from,” said Koco Garcia, Handover Rover’s founder.

Sherri Hoffman, a board member of Poverty’s Pets, said she and her team have seen the “horrific effects of tethering: dogs standing in their own feces and urine, covered in flies,

behavioral deterioration, heightened aggression, severe psychological distress and vulnerable to extreme weather.”

Don Bentley, a volunteer with Poverty’s Pets, said because of the imprecision around when the temperature crosses 100 degrees, the ordinance was confusing for residents and made it difficult to enforce.

Vice Mayor Kesha Hodge Washington called the ordinance changes “commonsense solutions and updates” that provide more clarity for enforcement.

“I believe they reflect the best practices when it comes to animal welfare, and I think it reinforces our commitment to humane treatment for animals,” she said.

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

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SUSD board to get deep look at standardized test results

By J. Graber

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

How Scottsdale Unified School District students are doing on standardized test scores depends on how you look at it.

The district is in the top 10% nationally for both math and reading scores, according to a recent report from Stanford University, and district students consistently score higher than state averages.

But that doesn't exactly tell the whole story.

Namely, the latest group of test scores show students not meeting the district's standards in some areas.

For instance, while the latest Arizona Academic Standards Assessment shows proficiency scores for English students increased for students going from third to fourth grade by 12%, it also showed a 17% decrease in math for students going from fifth to sixth grade.

Also, raw numbers not in comparison to other organizations don't always look as good as some board members would like.



The Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board is going to take a deep look at standardized testing scores in August. (J. Graber/Independent Newsmedia)

The district governing board got a look at test results last month and is going to take a deeper look at the situation in August, though it's not clear if it will be at the board's Aug. 4 or Aug. 18 meeting.

Governing Board Member Dr. Matthew Pittinsky said during a June 9 meeting that the district leans too heavily on results relative to state averages.

"I don't think it's unimportant," he

said. "If the whole state is moving in one direction in math and we're heading in a different direction, that means something, versus if we're moving in the same direction, but it does feel like we lean a lot on our relative position in the state."

He also recommended looking for year over year trends in scores.

"The data is very mixed," he said. "It feels like we are running in place, as opposed to making progress."

And he encouraged the board and staff to look at raw scores that are not relative to others.

"That's often how the community judges us, 40% of our kids are proficient, 50% of our kids are proficient," he said. "That's obviously a really tough number for people to look at and then say (the district is doing well)."

And finally, he said the scores should be looked at relative to the district's goals.

Board Member Mike Sharkey said test scores need to be looked at in a school-by-school, grade-by-grade situation.

"One option is to shift the way we look at our metrics around academic achievement," he said. "Focus more on one of the 20-something schools that we have, and all the grades in there, how many of them are not up to par or decreasing in trend ... I think it's much more actionable for us to make improvements."

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EDUCATION

SUSD Nutrition Services Director named Summer Hunger Hero



Scottsdale Unified School District Nutrition Services Director Patti Bilbrey, who was recently named a 2026 Summer Hunger Hero by the nonprofit No Kid Hungry, intends to serve 135,000 meals to families over the summer. (Courtesy Scottsdale Unified School District)

Scottsdale Unified School District Director of Nutrition Services Patti Bilbrey has been named a national 2026 Summer Hunger Hero by the nonprofit No Kid Hungry.

This annual celebration shines a spotlight on extraordinary individuals from across the United States who go above and beyond to end childhood hunger, according to a press release.

Summer is known as the most challenging season for childhood nutrition. When school lets out, the free and reduced-price meals that families rely on during the school year suddenly disappear, stretch-

ing tight household budgets to the breaking point.

Seeing the hurdle local families were facing, Bilbrey and the district's Nutrition Services team joined forces with Scottsdale Community College to pioneer an innovative, flexible "non-congregate" summer meals program. Instead of requiring families to travel for daily meals, this model allowed them to pick up an entire week's worth of ready-to-eat, frozen, and shelf-stable food all at once.

The district plans on serving 135,000 meals to local families over the summer break.

For more information, visit sUSD.org/nutrition.

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SMoCA welcomes new director

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The nonprofit Scottsdale Arts has named Dr. Christina Brungardt as director of Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

“In every conversation with Dr. Brungardt, it was apparent that, besides her strong qualification as a museum director and fundraiser, she fundamentally embraces the identity of SMOCA within Scottsdale Arts, recognizing the opportunities this creates — from reaching a broader audience base to education and outreach to collaborations among visual, performing and public arts,” Dr. Gerd Wuestemann, president and CEO of Scottsdale Arts, said in a press release. “With an eye toward a future museum expansion, we are excited to have found the right leader for SMOCA’s future.”

Brungardt is currently the director of institutional giving at the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas, one of the largest nonprofit regional theaters in the country. She oversees all foundation, corporate and government support, as well as the Individual Giving team.

Prior to the Alley, Brungardt served as the Gabriele Haberland Director of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in Wisconsin, where she achieved the American Alliance of Museums’ reaccreditation for the museum, organized several exhibitions of modern and contemporary art and developed an institutional giving plan for the organization.

Other museum experience includes serving as deputy director of Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, where she also worked as interim director to provide key leadership during a period of transition for the organization.

Brungardt’s areas of focus for



Dr. Christina Brungardt will take over as director at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art Aug. 31. (Courtesy Lynn Lane)

nonprofit arts organizations are administrative best practices, strategic planning, alternative fundraising methods and financial oversight. She is looking forward to working with staff, patrons and institutional partners to build on SMOCA’s successes and to expand on its important role of supporting contemporary artists, according to the press release.

“The strength of SMOCA’s collection and exhibitions, along with its commitment to collaboration, is what drew me to the organization and inspires me to think broadly about the future of museums,” Brungardt said in the release. “It provides an extraordinary opportunity to explore experimentation and connection as only the arts can — grounded in hope and infinite possibilities.”

Throughout her career, Brungardt has served in a variety of capacities in the arts, including working for galleries in New York and Texas, serving as the finance manager of Neue Galerie New York Museum for German and Austrian Art, and teaching art history at Bronx Com-

munity College, Hunter College and the University of North Texas.

Brungardt received undergraduate degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, a master’s degree from the University of Chicago and doctorate from the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Her research focuses on the nexus between the arts and politics from the 1850s to present.

Elizabeth Shaw, SMOCA committee chair and member of the board of directors for Scottsdale Arts is pleased to have Brungardt on board as the new SMOCA director.

“Her thoughtful and focused ideas to enhance SMOCA’s exposure, both locally and nationally, as well as her experienced approach to fundraising, will take us to a new level,” Shaw said. “I am looking forward to the future with Dr. Brungardt’s leadership.”

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BUSINESS



Travel fashion brand Sprayground has blended concepts used in architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s work. (Courtesy Sprayground)

Travel fashion company teams up with Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

Travel fashion brand Sprayground has teamed up with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation to create a limited edition backpack and luggage set.

The collection uses modular silhouettes to turn travel pieces into works of art.

The bags echo the principles behind Wright’s groundbreaking buildings while bringing artistry and innovation to travel fashion.

The collection features a palette of blueprint blues, mid-century terracottas and geometric patterns that turn Frank Lloyd Wright’s floor plans into fashion pieces. For instance, one backpack is inspired by the spiraling form of the Guggenheim Museum. The collection also includes two luggage designs that extend the architectural concept to travel gear, alongside pieces incorporating reinterpretations of Wright’s stained glass patterns, murals and artistic motifs.

The collection is on sale at sprayground.com.

FROM THE COVER

Election

• From page 1

ed ballots.

Daran Wastchak held the lowest vote total with 1,677 ballots cast in his favor, totalling 19.35%.

While the results were not official as of press time, they were complete enough that some candidates were ready to make statements.

Wastchak said in an email he is grateful for the residents who cast their vote for him and the support he garnered during his campaign.

"I very much enjoyed meeting town residents throughout the campaign and on election day at the polling location at Paradise Valley Town Hall," he said. "You are the reason Paradise Valley is the best town in Arizona. I look forward to finding other ways to serve you and the town."

Wastchak also congratulated his opponents on their win.

Council Member Thomasson said in an emailed statement she is excited to continue working for the residents of Paradise Valley and is looking forward to collaborating with fellow candidates in the future.

"I enthusiastically look forward to continuing to serve Paradise Valley, working with all my council colleagues to preserve our town values of 1-acre zoning, public safety and limited government," she said. "I thank my fellow candidates, Bob, Bill and Daran, for jumping in to run for office. Each of them made the town better and I look forward to working with them in the future."

Bob Brown did not respond to the Independent's request to comment and Bill Nassikas declined to comment as of press time.

Incumbent Mayor Mark Stanton is seeking another term after being elected mayor in 2024, following

three terms on the town council. He ran unopposed. So far, 3,156 votes have been counted for Mayor Stanton.

Stanton thanked residents for their support following Tuesday's election, saying he is honored to serve a second term and remains committed to protecting Paradise Valley's character, supporting public safety and maintaining a limited-government approach.

"My door is always open. I welcome conversations with residents and continually seek opportunities to enhance the level of service we provide," he said. "My wife, Barb, and I are deeply grateful for the encouragement and support we received throughout the election. Thank you for your continued confidence in me as your mayor. By working together, we will keep Paradise Valley the special place we all cherish."

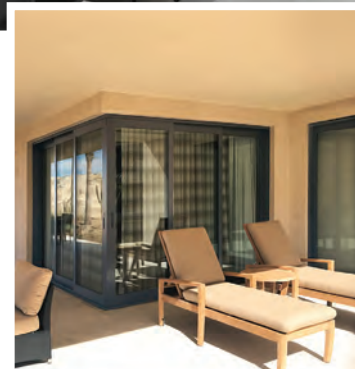
Bob Brown serves on the Paradise Valley Planning Commission until April 2028 and previously led an HOA management company as CEO of Brown Community Management.

Bill Nassikas has served on the Paradise Valley Planning Commission since August 2020 and is a longtime hospitality executive who helped lead the redevelopment of several Arizona luxury resorts.

Incumbent Council Member Anna Thomasson was first elected in 2018 and previously served on the Paradise Valley Board of Adjustment and as vice mayor.

Daran Wastchak is a former Paradise Valley Planning Commission chairman and small business owner who has volunteered with the town for more than a decade.

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OPINION

Opinion

• From page 8

The noise, dust, filth and total disregard for the well-being not only of our residents, but of the landscapers themselves, is deplorable. Most often without masks, and forever harnessed in the heat to deafening machines in a cloud of dust and smoke.

Who, may I ask, will bear the cost of their eventual and inevitable care, assuming any is available? Are we satisfied to envision them succumbing to COPD and noise-related stress; out of sight, out of mind?

We've all looked horrified into our rear-view mirrors at the pollution we leave behind as we take a drive out of town. Let us hope our new town council stops looking through a rear-view mirror and instead looks forward to a rapid solution – as have so many enlightened towns in our country with

the guts to curb this asininity and assure a higher quality of life for residents and service workers alike.

Victor Alexander
PARADISE VALLEY

Poor leadership allowing for serious health risk

Cyclosporiasis is a big public health concern. It is a hard-to-investigate parasite. Symptoms can take up to two weeks and confirming it requires specialized lab testing.

But even more worrying, now federal food safety agencies are stretched thin. Neither the FDA nor the CDC has a permanent director, and both agencies have lost staff and lab capacity. This chaos is actively happening at a critical moment when we need competent leadership!

Peggy Yeargain
FOUNTAIN HILLS

Golf

• From page 16

pro. So we just want to make sure that they are well equipped with the right tools to be successful when that time comes,” he said.

Lucas Gimenez of Jacksonville, Florida, won the boys division in Scottsdale, his second victory of the season after also winning the Gainesville, Florida, stop.

The 17-year-old, who has committed to the University of Oklahoma, said his father introduced him to golf, and the sport has always been something he enjoyed.

Competing in the Underrated Golf Tour and traveling to play championship courses are opportunities he said he would not have had otherwise.

The experience has helped prepare him for college golf and, he hopes, a professional career.

“There’s no tour really like it. You get to meet awesome people and go

to awesome places,” he said. “It is truly life changing.”

Scottsdale resident Kaitlyn Moreland, 16, who has committed to Washington State University, was among several Arizona golfers competing in the tournament.

Moreland said golf teaches players valuable life skills such as integrity, communication, honesty and perseverance, while the Underrated Golf Tour provides a community where athletes can support one another while competing at a high level.

“For those of us that want to play in college, it prepares us for these high level courses, and it’s a very competitive environment, but everyone still cheers each other on. It’s more of a family environment,” she said.

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Sun City West • October 28, 2026 • SCW Foundation Center

Mesa • November 13, 2026 • Mesa Marketplace Swap Meet

Apache Junction • January 6, 2027 • Central Arizona College

Surprise • January 19, 2027 • The Colonnade

Litchfield/Goodyear • February 17, 2027 • Tuscany Falls Clubhouse (Pebble Creek)

Chandler • February 23, 2027 • Sun Lakes Country Club

Peoria • March 25, 2027 • Westbrook Village

Sun City West • April 13, 2027 • SCW Foundation Center

Sun City • May 3, 2027 • Sundial Recreation Center

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