



**Senior
Expo**
Coming
Aug. 18; 4



INDEPENDENT

**High
school
football**
Previews; 8



August 12, 2026 Volume 29 Issue 32 Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

About 21% of eligible voters in Surprise cast a ballot

Final totals certified for wins for Haney, Hastings, Judd

By Jason Stone
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Final voting results show 12,134 Surprise residents cast a ballot in this month's city council primary election.

What do you think?

What is your position on this issue? Send comments to jstone@iniusa.org.

That is among the findings the council is expected to approve at Tuesday night's regular meeting.

The turnout for the July 21 primary amounted to 21.3% of the more

than 57,000 registered voters in the city.

About 7,489 Republicans voted from Surprise, while Democrats made up 4,316 voters. The party

• See **Election** on page 10

Feeling classy



Dysart Schools officials offer welcome back well-wishes

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Dysart Unified School District opens its doors to a host of staff, students, and families for the 2026-2027 school year on Aug. 6.

DUSD governing board members were among the first to extend well-wishes and welcome back

• See **Classy** on page 10



Dysart Unified School District teachers, students and parents were all smiles leading up to the first day of school at the meet the teacher and orientation nights the week before classes opened Aug. 6. (Courtesy DUSD)



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Independent's Senior Expo returns Aug. 18

The Surprise Independent's Senior Expo will return 9 a.m.-noon Tuesday, Aug. 18 at The Colonnade, 19116 N. Colonnade Way.

There will be an extensive selection of products and services, access to essential health screenings and the option to connect with local and national vendors.

Those attending can also take home free samples and participate in giveaways and door prize drawings.

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Vendors are ready to go for the Surprise Independent's Senior Expo. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason Stone)

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Speak Up

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

Corrections

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

Do propaganda campaigns work against data centers?

I believe most people who are opposed to AI data centers like Project Baccara in the West Valley are misinformed.

People hear that their power bill will go up. However, the existing Ratepayer Protection Pledge brought together tech titans including Amazon, Google, Microsoft, Meta, OpenAI, Oracle and xAI — who agreed to pay for their own electricity generation infrastructure to power their data center operations while providing additional capacity to bolster the public's power supply. Under this agreement, ratepayers should not see an increase in their electricity bills.

Then there is water consumption. A data center recirculates water through a closed cooling system with limited evaporation. It works like our golf courses, which reuse their own water, albeit with more evaporation.

Noise generated by data centers is actively managed, with mitigation measures which combine strategic design, equipment selection and operational controls to reduce low-frequency and high-frequency noise for employees and surrounding communities.

Architects are now focusing on creating visually appealing designs for these facilities, moving away from utilitarian warehouse-like appearances.

It's critical that data centers be constructed on U.S. soil and not overseas. We need to maintain ownership of our data infrastructure and not lease it from some foreign entity who may have conflicting interests which could undermine our national security.

These concerns are genuine and are being addressed. Solutions exist, and further progress will depend on individuals committed to innovation.

Please send your comments to
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R.H. Borst
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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.

ICE facilities are anything but humane, reader says

I have read both sides of the ICE detention facility issue in Opinions section in recent editions. I appreciate that the writers are speaking out and expressing their opinions! That is the American way!

Having said that, I must disagree with Ms. Goncalves' opinions regarding the proposed Ice detention facility in Surprise!

Careful reading of the news reported by many respected news organizations, the New York Times being one, indicates the ICE operation of similar facilities around the country is anything but humane.

The facility in Mesa, for example, reportedly has regularly been seriously overcrowded and though intended to be a short-term holding facility has in fact held many for much longer time periods!

ICE has often denied access to our elected representatives attempting to inspect the conditions in response to constituent requests for help. This is not openness in government! If there is nothing to hide, what is the basis for refusing access?

There are many other aspects to this very complex and troublesome issue and I suggest that Ms. Goncalves

Speak Up

From Nextdoor & Facebook

Here are some comments about stories happening in Surprise:

LOCAL NEWS

See where to get the cheapest gas in Surprise

"Costco is the cheapest." — **Albert C.**
"Don't drive much. Just once a week." — **Irene H.**
"Use Upside (app)." — **Sherri F.**
"Stay at home. Do not drive." — **Jesse F.**
"Stick to ARCO around El Mirage and outskirts of Surprise for now. Otherwise your membership to Costco won't help." — **David A.**
"Keeping my butt at home." — **Connie A.**
"And to think, many voted for these absurd prices." — **Floyd M.**

investigate much further before presenting what I believe is only one side of the story!

Hopefully readers will not allow themselves to be misinformed.

Dudley Gibson
SUN CITY WEST

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.

Here is why I don't support ICE detention facilities

I have lived in Arizona for 72 years and in my 72 years, I have lived in neighborhoods and gone to school and church with Mexican Americans. I did not ask them if they came here legally or illegally because I didn't care. They were hard-working people trying to make a good living for their family.

Has the woman who told us how

♦ See **Opinions** on page 12



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Guardians eye 4A title with veteran senior core, new QB

By Noah Flug

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

After reaching the 4A Conference semifinals last season, ALA-West Foothills believes it has the experience — and the quarterback — to compete for the state championship.

The Guardians finished a 9-4 season last year on a five-game winning streak before losing to Arcadia in the semifinals. But with a senior-heavy roster and quarterback Rush Kamakeeaina taking over after sitting out last season, expectations inside the program are high.

“We always want to be a playoff contention team, no matter what happens,” said head coach Bryan Rauzan about the team’s steady progress.

Rauzan, who has been with the program since the school opened in 2022, began as the offensive line and special teams coach before becoming offensive coordinator and eventually taking over the program.

Along the way, he has adapted his offensive philosophy from the run-heavy style he learned coaching in northeast Ohio.

“You’re always going to learn something different from every single person you come across,” Rauzan said. “That’s the fun part about coaching.”

That willingness to adapt should be on display this season.

Last year, ALA-West Foothills leaned heavily on current senior running back Kenyon Rosenthal

while breaking in a freshman quarterback Carlos Serrano, who transferred to Canyon View in the summer. This season, Kamakeeaina’s arrival gives the offense another dimension.

“He’s a shifty little cat,” Rauzan said. “If we don’t have an open receiver, we’re still going to get five yards out of it. And if a guy is open downfield, he’s got a cannon for an arm.”

Kamakeeaina transferred from Millennium into the program last year but was forced to sit out varsity because of Arizona’s transfer rules. He also fractured his shoulder during the JV season, making this fall his first opportunity to lead the Guardians on game day.

“I wish I could play last season,” Kamakeeaina said. “We had so many great players.”

Now healthy, he expects the offense to be far less predictable.

“Just being able to throw the ball definitely opens a lot more,” Kamakeeaina said. “This year we’re definitely coming different.”

Kamakeeaina described himself as a vocal leader, something he believes has helped strengthen the team’s chemistry throughout the offseason.

“If I see something and I know how to fix it, I’ll tell you right then and there,” he said. “It’s just constructive criticism.”

The Guardians believe that chemistry is one of their biggest strengths.



ALA-West Foothills junior running back Kenyon Rosenthal leaps past a Combs defender en route to his second touchdown of the Guardians’ 34-14, second-round 4A playoff win Nov. 14, 2025. Rosenthal rushed for 212 yards in the game. (Independent Newsmedia/Jason W. Brooks)

Senior receiver Rex Stabler said the locker room has created a more urgent sense of accountability after last season.

“It helps a lot, having more experience,” Stabler said. “There’s more accountability.”

He said the team’s goals are straightforward.

“I think we can win state 100%,” Stabler said.

Senior receiver and safety Cole Nuanez said the roster has developed a close bond despite adding several transfers to the squad.

“This team is like the tightest team I’ve ever been around,” Nu-

ALA-WEST FOOTHILLS GUARDIANS

KEY RETURNEES: Kenyon Rosenthal, Sr., RB; Rex Stabler Sr., WR; Aden Watson, Sr., LT; Mike Mody, Sr., LS/DL; Logan Alvarez, Sr., LB; Cole Nuanez, Sr., DB/WR.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: Rush Kamakeeaina, Sr., QB.

anez said. “We obviously have the



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FROM THE COVER

Election

• From page 1

with the next highest turnout was the Libertarian Party where 31 people cast a vote.

Only three districts in Surprise had council races — the northwest District 1, the centrally located District 5 and the southeast Surprise District 6.

In District 1, Councilmember Nick Haney retained his seat with 5,639 votes in an uncontested race. Haney's district saw double the voting activity of the other two districts with council elections.

A total of 6,258 voters from the northwest Surprise district, or 22.2% of registered voters, cast a ballot. The

turnout from District 5 (2,935 voters) and 6 (2,941) were basically the same.

Councilmember Jack Hastings earned reelection in District 5 with 2,463 votes. Hastings has been on the council since 2020.

In District 6, Chris Judd retained his council seat despite having somewhat of an opponent. Judd earned 2,531 votes or 96.5% as the lone name on the ballot.

But resident Carrie Deakin, who was an official certified write-in candidate, took 70 votes to keep it a clean sweep for Judd.

Across the three districts, about 145 people wrote in a candidate who was not qualified. Surprise only counts write-in votes for residents



From left, Nick Haney, Jack Hastings and Chris Judd won reelection in their uncontested races. (File photos)

who apply by the spring deadline. Deakin was the only one to submit an application in time.

A total of 1,150 voted on election day or dropped off their ballots then.

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

Classy

• From page 1

stakeholders during the July 27 board meeting.

Superintendent John Croteau's update acknowledged the work new and veteran teachers did from lesson planning to classroom managing to prepare for students on their first day of school.

"Here we go again, '26-'27 is coming up pretty quick, and we're excited about it," Croteau said.

Board members Dawn Densmore and Denise Destiche gave well-wishes and welcomed back students and

staff.

"I want to wish everybody a happy and successful new school year," Destiche said during her update.

Afterward, board members commenced to accepting the consent agenda, which included items ranging from approving intergovernmental agreements for continued shared use of the community center in El Mirage for district activities to partnering with the Deer Valley Unified School District for a special educa-

tion services agreement this academic year.

The following were among consent agenda items:

"I want to wish everybody a happy and successful new school year."

Dawn Destiche

DUSD governing board member

- An intergovernmental agreement for operation of schools as community centers with the city of El Mirage for the 2026-27 school year;

- Approve the Deer Valley Unified School District and DUSD special education services agreement for the 2026-27 school year;

- An intergovernmental agreement between the DUSD and El Mirage for placing two resource offices at Dysart High School and Thompson Ranch Elementary School for the 2026-27 school year.

The next DUSD regular board meeting is 6 p.m. Monday, Aug 24, at the Dysart Education Center, 15802 N. Parkview Place.

The meeting is also live streamed on Dysart's You Tube page at youtube.com/c/DysartUSD.

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Opinions

• From page 6

good the conditions are in ICE detention facilities been in one? Where is she getting her information? What I see and hear on bipartisan news media is not anywhere close to the truth.

Also, the gentleman who questioned the phrase, “concentration camps.” What would he call a place where hundreds of people are confined without a trial? Do we not remember what our government did to Japanese Americans during WWII?

History is repeating itself. Do we never learn how cruel it is to treat human beings this way?

The original purpose of deportation was to deport the worst, but that is not what is happening. I agreed at first when we were told only the worst of the worst were to be deported. But we are deporting people who are looking for a better life for their families. They do jobs many Americans feel are

beneath them.

We might as well send the Statue of Liberty back to France because the words don’t appear to mean anything these days.

U.S. immigration laws make it hard for people to come in legally. Some are doing exactly what they are required to do but are being picked up outside their hearings for citizenship.

Everyone has the right to their opinion, but praising ICE agents who have killed several Americans is morally wrong in my book.

Chris Lahaie
SUN CITY WEST

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Reader is happy that Surprise ICE facility has been delayed

I was happy to learn recently that our Attorney General Kris Mayes was

able to at least stall Department of Homeland Security’s plan to convert the industrial warehouse in Surprise into an ICE detention facility.

She managed to get a court-stipulated agreement between DHS and ICE. At this point they are legally prohibited from performing any construction, retrofitting or detention of individuals at the site until a formal environmental assessment is finalized.

State officials estimate the mandatory environmental study will create at least a nine-month delay to the project.

The facility site is directly across the street from a Rinchem chemical storage warehouse that local leaders and the state AG argue pose severe safety hazards. The project faced protests, community opposition and scrutiny over its proximity to area schools, like Dysart High School. It is less than a half-mile from residential neighborhoods and would also cause a serious strain on local municipal and

emergency services.

ICE purchased 11 such warehouses across the country for just over \$1 billion of taxpayers’ money! But since the purchase, the administration has had to scale back on its initial plan for the warehouses, and is now seeking to offload seven of those warehouses.

Unfortunately, the Surprise warehouse is not one of the seven about to be sold or given away.

I believe the agreement between DHS and Arizona is a major win for the people of Surprise.

“My office will keep fighting to ensure the law is followed,” Mayes said. That’s a comfort to me. It may not solve the problem forever, but I’m glad Attorney General Mayes is on the side of the people since our current administration seems to be against us.

Lorie Lux
SUN CITY WEST

♦ See **Opinions** on page 14



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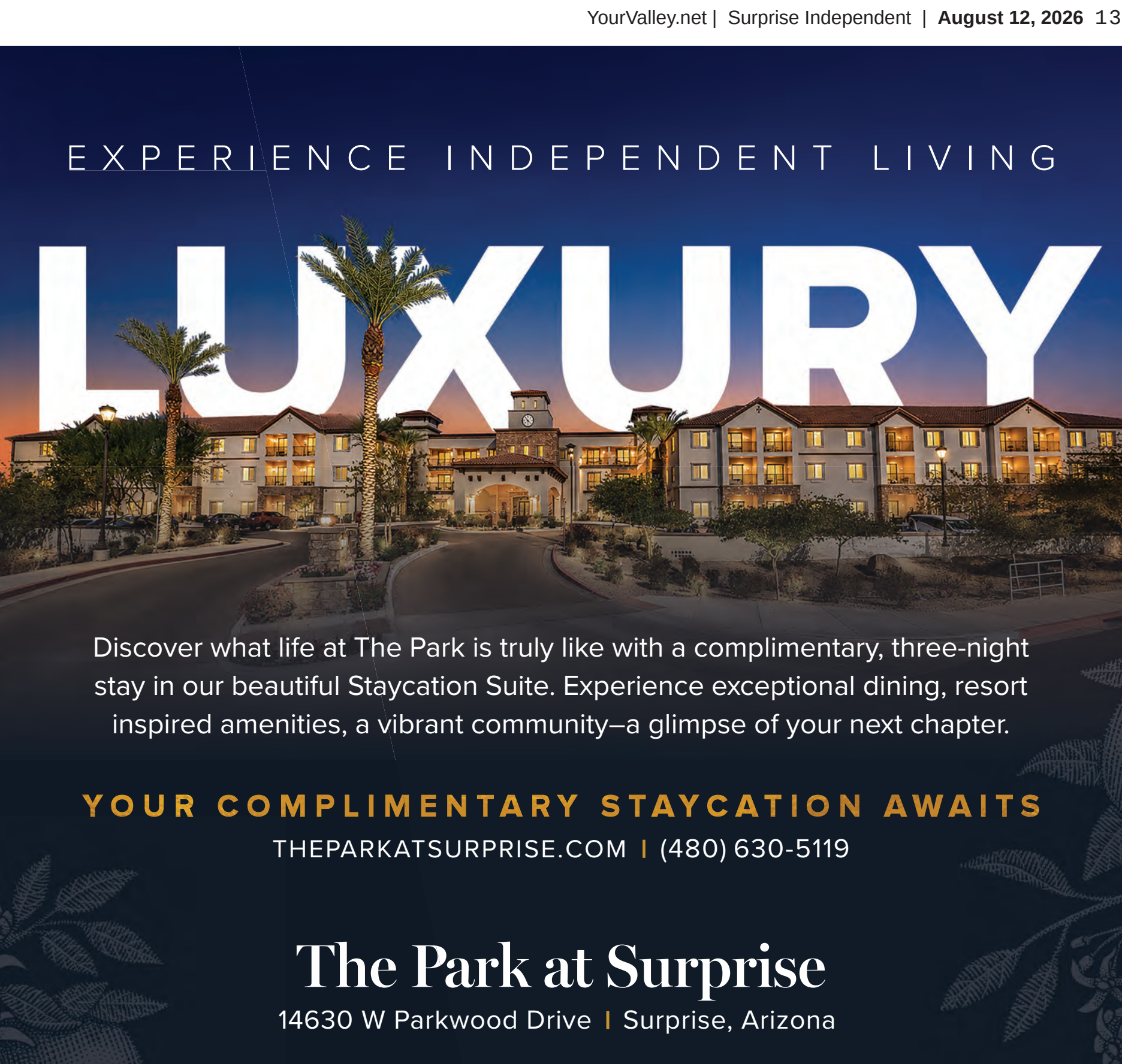
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Opinions

• From page 12

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Grandmother thrilled Surprise has new indoor activities

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Vice Mayor Earle Greenberg and the Surprise City Council for a job well done bringing more indoor entertainment to our city. I emailed Vice Mayor Greenberg last year about several things, including indoor playgrounds I've visited with my grandchildren. Coming back from vacation with the grandchildren recently, I discovered a new indoor playground had opened here. We went the day after returning and it is a wonderful place for all ages to enjoy!

We traveled to an indoor playground in Goodyear for a long time, and now Surprise has its own, with an abundance of trampolines and fun activities — cannot get bored there!

Surprise has many visitors, including kids. I believe other indoor entertainment facilities should take notice of Surprise for their future establishments. That would increase our city as a destination for our residents and visitors!

Patricia Templeton
SURPRISE

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Will seniors pay more for prescription plans in 2027?

Congressman Abe Hamadeh has closely aligned himself with President Trump and his administration. That's why I think Congressional District 8 voters should pay attention to the administration's latest Medicare decision — and what it could mean for Arizona seniors.

The Trump administration has

announced it will end the Medicare Part D premium stabilization program after 2026. That program helped keep Medicare prescription drug plan premiums from rising sharply.

Without it, many Medicare beneficiaries are expected to pay higher monthly premiums for their prescription drug coverage beginning in 2027. Administration officials estimate that about 45% of Part D enrollees will see premium increases, many in the range of \$11 to \$20 per month, unless they switch plans.

For seniors living on fixed incomes, every dollar matters. Higher Medicare prescription drug coverage costs come on top of rising housing, grocery, and utility bills. Many retirees in Arizona's 8th Congressional District already struggle to make ends meet. Telling seniors to shop for a new plan every year is not a real solution.

Congressman Hamadeh has consistently supported President Trump and his policies. If he supports ending this program, he should explain why Arizona seniors should pay more for the Medicare prescription drug coverage they rely on. If he does not, he should say so publicly and work to protect Medicare beneficiaries.

Healthcare affordability should not be a partisan issue. Seniors paid into Medicare throughout their working lives and deserve stable, affordable prescription drug coverage.

In CD 8, voters should remember this: a vote for Abe Hamadeh is a vote for the Trump administration's Medicare policies—including ending the Part D premium stabilization program, which is expected to leave many seniors paying more for their prescription drug coverage.

Anne Whitmore
SUN CITY WEST

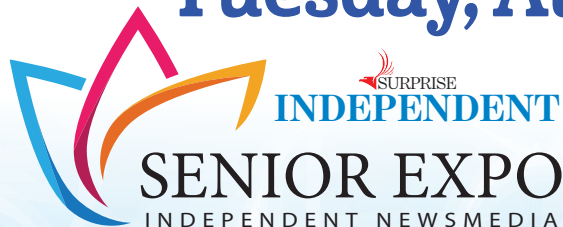
This writer is using a pen name. Congressional District 8 includes parts of Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise. Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters, or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.



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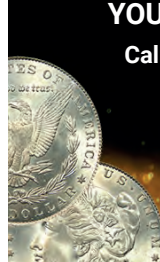
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How volunteering benefits seniors' mental health

Seniors are vulnerable to mental health issues. The World Health Organization says around one in five older adults experience psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, and dementia-related mood changes. While various therapies can help, seniors may discover volunteerism can be a surprising antidote to mental health concerns.

Volunteering offers seniors many benefits, including a renewed sense of purpose. Volunteering also helps combat social isolation, which can lower rates of depression and anxiety. According to Voices for National Service, older adults who volunteer have reduced risk of mortality, more optimism and feel less depressed and lonely. People who were once working full time and are now in retirement may find they have hours to spare. Those hours can be directed toward volunteer efforts, which can boost seniors mental health in myriad ways.

Lowers depression and anxiety: The National Institutes of Health says research indicates consistent volunteering can help to reduce risk of depressive symptoms. Staying engaged and active combats feelings of hopelessness.

Decreased social isolation: Points of Light says regular time spent with peers and the people being helped can mitigate loneliness. Having a strong support network can make stress more tolerable and increase feelings of belonging.

Restores sense of purpose: When work ends, many seniors lose the structure that governed their working life. Volunteering gives the opportunity to wake up, follow a schedule and achieve goals. It can be rewarding to play a valuable role in the community



(Courtesy Metro Creative)

again, according to Voices for National Service.

Mental stimulation: Volunteering may lead to learning new skills and interacting with others, and that can keep the mind sharp.

Physical activity: Older adults may lead sedentary lifestyles if they have nothing to keep them busy. Volunteering helps a person engage in some sort of physical activity. A 2025 study published in the journal Social Science & Medicine found volunteering is associated with lower levels of hypertension and chronic inflammation. Staying active can lower blood pressure, risk of heart disease and eight types of cancer.

Volunteering is a tool older adults can use to stay healthy both physically and mentally.

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Highland Prep football hopes to turn lessons into wins

By Noah Flug
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Highland Prep football enters this fall with a new voice in charge, a slimmer senior class and a clear sense of purpose.

After a turbulent 2-7 season marked by coaching turnover and outside distractions, first-year head coach Derek Anderson said the program is ready for a reset.

"This year is a growth year more than anything," he said.

Anderson has been part of the program for four years and is taking over as head coach and was offensive coordinator last season. At 28, he said he is learning alongside his players.

Last fall, Highland Prep had to adjust on the fly. Anderson said the team dealt with a summer coaching change, then navigated more chang-

es during the year.

Jason Shaw resigned as coach on July 7, 2025 to join the ALA-Vistancia staff. Highland Prep hired Mykhael Sanford July 12, then fired him last October after he was caught using a play-calling app to communicate with the coaching staff while serving a suspension.

"It was hectic," senior wide receiver and safety Lucas Bickel said. "Now we actually have a head coach who's planning on riding out the entire season."

The result was a roster that, in Anderson's view, never had a true chance to settle in. This offseason has probably been like a fresh start," he said.

One of the biggest changes comes on offense. Anderson said the Honey

• See **Highland Prep** on page 24



Highland Prep offensive coordinator Derek Anderson, left, and junior receiver Lucas Bickel pose for a photo the day of a Sept. 5, 2025 home game. Anderson is now the Honey Badgers' head coach and Bickel is back for his senior year. (Courtesy Highland Prep on Facebook)

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Guardians

• From page 8

talent, but we're just such a close team, too."

Nuanez, who has known Kamakeeaina since youth football, said he believes the offense will benefit from having an experienced quarterback directing it.

"It's going to be really helpful for our offense," he said. "We're going to be a lot better on the offensive side."

Rosenthal remains the centerpiece of the running game after leading the offense last season. While he expects the passing attack to expand, he doesn't expect the team's identity to change.

"Our bread and butter is running the football," Rosenthal said.

Rosenthal said he believes a more balanced offense will make defenses pay for focusing on stopping just him.

"Once we go short, go deep and then go right down the middle and score," he said, "they won't even

see it coming."

On the offensive line, senior left tackle Aden Watson will play a key role protecting Kamakeeaina while helping break in several new starters.

Watson said the offensive line has worked throughout the offseason to prepare for a more balanced attack.

"We finally have a quarterback that I know I can rely on if I give him enough time," Watson said.

The only returning varsity offensive lineman, Watson has embraced a leadership role while helping younger teammates adjust.

"This is like our biggest leader group," he said. "I think this is probably going to be one of our best years."

Several players pointed to re-matches against Arcadia and rival Paradise Honors as games already circled on the calendar.

Still, their focus seems to already be set on the bigger prize.

"State's the goal," Kamakeeaina said.

Highland Prep

• From page 23

Badgers will be more run-heavy this season, a shift from the more complicated system he tried to install a year ago.

"That was my first coaching mistake," he said. "I was coaching to my scheme and not to my players."

Now the staff has simplified things and built the offense around the personnel on hand. That includes several younger players who have added strength and confidence.

Junior quarterback Jayson Tree blamed himself for a lot of the team's struggles last season. He said he used the offseason to work on his throwing power, mobility and confidence.

"I was not very good last season," Tree said. "This year, I've worked

on everything."

Tree said the team's offensive approach suits what Highland Prep wants to become.

Anderson said a handful of players have emerged as leaders, including Tree, Bickel and sophomore receiver and defensive back Noah Kwast.

"Those guys are super cerebral," Anderson said.

"The best part about these guys is they lead by example."

Bickel, one of only two seniors on the roster, said he has focused on helping younger players believe in themselves.

Kwast said the team has gone back to basics under Anderson and a new defensive coordinator.

"There's definitely a lot more drive," Kwast said. "It feels more like a football team this year."

BRIEFS

Police still participating in vehicle theft task force

The Surprise Police Department is expected to continue its participation in the Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force for up to the next four years.

The Surprise City Council is likely to accept an intergovernmental agreement with the Arizona Department of Public Safety for the Police to provide one full-time AZ P.O.S.T. certified sworn law enforcement officer to the task force.

The new agreement will renew each July 1 for up to four years.

Under the deal, the Department of Public Safety will reimburse the city 75% of personal services and employee-related expenses.

The Police Department will be responsible for the remaining 25% of the salary and benefits costs not covered under the agreement through its existing operating budget.

City OKs new sublease for housing aid center

The Surprise City Council approved a new sublease with Native American Connections to take over operations of the West Valley Housing Assistance Center.

The approval allows Native American Connections to manage the center on property the city will lease it at 12779 W. Grand Ave. and 12785 W. Grand Ave.

Native American Connections is a nonprofit group that battles homelessness and provides behavioral health services and substance use treatment.

A New Leaf previously subleased the two buildings of the West Valley Housing Center through a long-term agreement the city entered with Mustard Seed Ministry in August 2021.

Gideon Missionary Baptist Church currently occupies a third building of the housing center at 12763 W. Grand Ave.

Funding continues for congregate meal program

The city of Surprise approved an Area Agency of Aging grant of \$22,500 for salaries and expenses related to the city's congregate meal program.

The Surprise City Council on Tuesday accepted the money to continue the program that has been in place since 2004.

This grant award provides \$22,500 for the special event hosting expenses for the meal program as well as a portion of part-time salaries. There is a 10% in-kind city match requirement of \$2,300, which will be met with Human Services and Community Vitality Department's operating budget. That makes the total grant budget \$24,800.

The congregate meal program offers hot lunches for older adults and people with disabilities at noon on weekdays at the Surprise Community and Resource Center, 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive.

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MEET YOUR EDUCATOR



Terry Young is transitioning from her role as a fourth grade math teacher to her new one as an assistant principal. (Submitted photo)

Vice principal is big supporter for families

Young moves to administrative role to further serve students

The Surprise Independent periodically features a different educator in our city. This week, we shine the light on Asante Prep Academy Assistant Principal Terry Young.

What is your title?

Fourth grade math teacher transitioning to assistant principal.

How long have you worked here?

4.5 years.

What are you excited about on your campus/in your department and why?

I am excited to transition into my role as assistant principal and continue supporting students, staff and families in a larger

capacity. I look forward to building positive school culture, supporting teachers and helping create an environment where everyone feels valued and successful.

What do you like most about living here?

I love the sunshine, the sense of community and the opportunities for families and students. Arizona has truly become home for us.

Favorite community cause and why?

Supporting youth programs and education is most important to me because every child deserves positive opportunities, encouragement and people who believe in them.

When and why you moved here?

I moved to Arizona when I was a child. I grew up as a Dysart Unified School

• See **Young** on page 27

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Young

• From page 26

District student and came back to be an educator and a part of the people who helped grow me.

Where you lived prior to moving?

Wyoming

What do you like most about your job?

I love the relationships with students, families and staff while helping students grow both academically and personally. Watching students gain confidence and succeed is the most rewarding part of education for me.

If you could pick another occupation, what would it be?

If I were not in education, I would likely work in youth development, event planning or sports management because I enjoy leadership, organization and working with kids and families.

What are your interests and hobbies?

I enjoy spending time with family, coaching/managing youth sports, attending my son's activities, traveling, decorating/classroom design and being involved in school and community events.

Describe one of the happiest moments in your life.

One of the happiest moments in my life was becoming a mom. Watching my children grow and achieve milestones has been my greatest blessing.

What is your best and worst habit?

My best habit is always giving 100% and staying dedicated to the people and responsibilities I care about. My worst habit is sometimes taking on too much because I always want to help others.

What traits do you admire in others?

"My children inspire me every day because they remind me to work hard, stay positive and continue growing both personally and professionally."

Terry Young

Asante Prep Academy assistant principal

I admire kindness, honesty, work ethic, positivity, loyalty and people who genuinely support and uplift others.

Who is a person that inspires you and why?

My children inspire me every day because they remind me to work hard, stay positive and continue

growing both personally and professionally.

What is your guiding philosophy?

Lead with kindness, work hard, stay humble and always put students first.

What is your advice for today's**youth?**

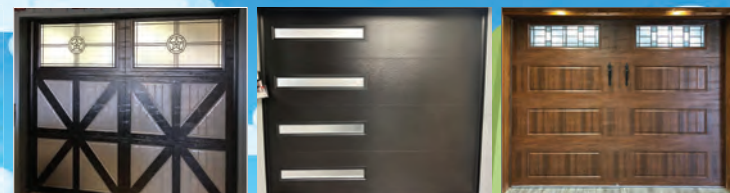
Believe in yourself, stay respectful, work hard even when things are difficult and remember that growth comes from challenges. Surround yourself with positive people and never stop learning.

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BRIEFS

DUI enforcement grant to help pay employee costs

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety is helping the city of Surprise offset costs for DUI enforcement.

The Surprise City Council on Aug. 4 approved a grant award of \$58,500 to help cover overtime and employee-rated expenses related to participation in DUI enforcement activities throughout the city.

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety manages federal grants and public awareness campaigns to develop, promote and coordinate programs to reduce crashes, injuries and deaths on the roads.

The federal safety funds come from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Pair of Surprise students now shining in St. Louis

Two Surprise students were named to the dean's list at Washington University in St. Louis.

Antonio Martinez and Olyvia Rue each earned a semester GPA of 3.6 or above and were enrolled in at least 14 graded units.

Both students are enrolled in the university's College of Arts and Sciences.

Police continue in human trafficking task force

The Surprise Police Department is continuing its participation in the Greater Phoenix Area Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force.

The Surprise City Council approved a memorandum of understanding between the

Police and FBI, which leads the task force of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies that focuses on investigating child exploitation and human trafficking.

The MOU will promote information sharing and coordinated investigations, and the city said it will also enhance collaboration of agencies to protect victims and hold offenders accountable.

Surprise's participation also brings access to specialized training and investigative resources to investigate child exploitation and human trafficking cases while improving victim identification, recovery and offender accountability.

Each participating agency remains responsible for its own personnel costs. Surprise's expenses will be funded through the Police Department's existing personnel budget.

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Local grad now one of Surprise's finest

Willow Canyon's Valdez trades Navy uniform for police badge

Evan Valdez was officially sworn in as one of the newest members of the Surprise Police Department on July 9.

This would be the second uniform the Willow Canyon High School graduate has worn in pursuit of service to others.

He entered Willow Canyon as a freshman in 2015 after moving from California. Football would be the way that he connected most and made friends. He played football all four years and was also on the cheer and track teams in his senior year.

The people who stand out the most from Valdez's time at Willow Canyon were his teachers and coaches who instilled work ethic and motivation.

After graduating high school in 2019, Valdez enlisted in the U.S. Navy and shipped off to boot camp at 17.

Service ran in his family. His grandfather and great grandfather were both in the Navy, and his grandfather on his Dad's side of the family served in the Army.

"I knew I wanted to serve a cause greater than myself and have a uniform that actually I can wake up and put on and be proud of," Valdez said. "I joined

the military for that. I joined the Navy specifically because I originally wanted to go special forces, but then the job I got into, I ended up liking it a lot more."

That rating was Aviation Boatswain's Mate (ABE). Valdez was stationed in Bremerton, Washington, aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, USS Nimitz (CVN-68).

He operated and maintained the complex hydraulic and steam catapults, arresting gear engines, barricades and launch consoles used to launch and recover aircraft on the flight decks of the aircraft carriers.

Flight deck operations are often described as one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Aircraft carrier flight decks feature roaring jet engines, spinning propellers and snapping steel arresting wires.

"It was loud," Valdez said. "It was very busy, a lot of people, long hours, very hot, working with steam catapults. So, it got pretty hot, especially on our first deployment, out in the gulf."

He deployed twice while enlisted, including a staggering 341 days at sea during COVID. It was during those deployments that Valdez found the most value in his service.

"My biggest memory would honestly just be serving with the brothers and



Willow Canyon High School graduate Evan Valdez is now a member of the Surprise Police Department. (Courtesy DUSD)

sisters that I made in the military. Being out there [on deployment], you're isolated and just having each other to talk to, experience new things, you just grow really close. Those are memories I'll live with forever, and those are life-long friends."

After five years in the military, Valdez moved back to Surprise to start a new chapter in his life. Service was calling again, this time closer to home. He applied for the Surprise Police Academy.

"I chose Surprise because this is my home," Valdez said. "My friends and family live here, and I want to protect the community that made me feel welcome, and also the community that my friends and family live in. Being a

police officer was always something I had been interested in, but I joined for the same reason as I joined the Navy. I wanted to have a uniform I can be proud to wear every day, and also it holds me accountable, and it's just serving a cause greater than myself."

Valdez said he is excited to work for the Surprise Police Department, working patrol and interacting with residents. He has a girlfriend who will shortly become a fiancée. He plans to stay with the department, working towards becoming a detective and continue to make Surprise his home.

"I'm very proud to be able to work for Surprise and be working alongside the community that I grew up in," he said.

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Exhibition expected to leave 'Lasting Impressions'

New WVAC display shows off art, printmaking process

Art lovers are invited to explore a free printmaking exhibition featuring original works by Arizona artists at the West Valley Arts Council Arts HQ Gallery in Surprise.

The free public gallery "Lasting Impressions" is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays until Sept. 10 at 16126 N. Civic Center Plaza

"The gallery did a phenomenal job hanging my work," said featured artist Daniel R. Combs, a West Valley Arts Council member. "I love how they displayed the original carved plates alongside the final prints. It really pulls back the curtain on the physical process behind the imagery."

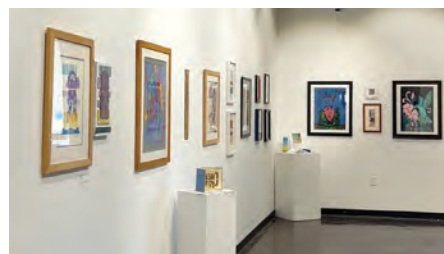
Unique exhibitions are celebrating the craftsmanship and creativity of



Daniel R. Combs is the featured artis for the "Lasting Impressions" gallery at the West Valley Arts Council Arts HQ Gallery through mid-September. (Courtesy West Valley Arts Council)

printmaking.

"Lasting Impressions" is designed for visitors to discover the techniques artists use to create original prints while exploring the beauty and versatility of a timeless art form.



The "Lasting Impressions" gallery at the West Valley Arts Council Arts HQ Gallery features 80 original works by Arizona artists. (Courtesy West Valley Arts Council)

"Lasting Impressions" features 80 original works by Arizona artists, offering an educational and visually engaging look at the diverse world of printmaking.

Visitors will experience everything from traditional linocuts and woodcuts to gel printing, silkscreening and other innovative printmaking techniques.

Printmaking is a centuries-old artistic process that combines creativ-

IF YOU GO

What: "Lasting Impressions" exhibition

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays until Sept. 10

Where: West Valley Arts Council Arts HQ Gallery, 16126 N. Civic Center Plaza

Admission: Free

ity with technical precision, allowing artists to produce original works through carefully crafted printing methods.

"Lasting Impressions" offers a rare opportunity to see the wide range of techniques used by contemporary local artists while gaining insight into the meticulous processes behind each piece.

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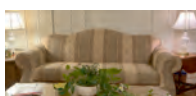
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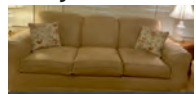
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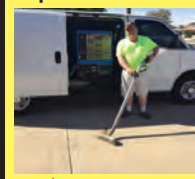
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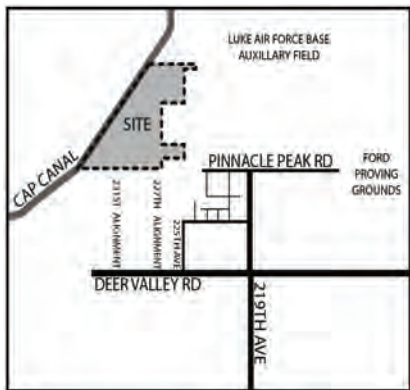
Public Notice

CITY OF SURPRISE
PUBLIC NOTICE

Take notice that at the date, time, and place listed below, the City of Surprise City Council will hold a Public Hearing at the request of Mark Reddie of RVI Planning and Landscape Architecture relating to the proposed rezone.

FS24-1191: A rezone, of approximately 422 acres, from Buena Vista Ranch Planned Area Development (PAD) and Rural Residential (RR) zoning districts to a combination of Residential Low Density (R-1), Residential Medium Density (R-2), Residential High Density (R-3), Open Space Conservation (OS-1), and General Industrial (I-2) zoning districts. The properties are located generally bounded by the CAP canal to the west, Pinnacle Peak to the south and the Happy Valley Road alignment to the north, with the eastern boundary generally following the 227th Avenue alignment.

PROJECT LOCATION



MEETING DETAILS

CITY COUNCIL

Date: September 1, 2026
Time: 6:00 pm.
Place: Surprise City Hall
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

At these meetings any member of the public may appear and be heard relative to this request or may submit written comments at any time prior to the Public Hearing. All written comments regarding this request will be made part of the record of the City. Any interested party may obtain an agenda 24 hours prior to the Public Hearing at the Surprise City Hall. Please note that this item will be placed on the next available agenda should the meeting be canceled or quorum be lost. Chris Sexton with the City of Surprise at 623-222-3134 or christina.sexton@surpriseaz.gov for additional information.

Publish: Phoenix Independent, August 7,
Surprise Independent, August 12, 2026/46903_1

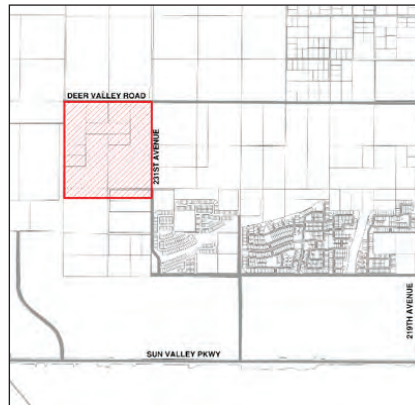
Public Notice

CITY OF SURPRISE
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Take notice that at the date, time, and place listed below, the City of Surprise City Council will hold a Public Hearing at the request of Mark Reddie of RVI Planning and Landscape Architecture relating to the proposed rezone.

FS25-0750: A rezone, of approximately 160 acres, from Rural Residential (RR) to Residential Medium Density (R-2) for properties generally located southwest of Deer Valley Road and 231st Avenue, known as Surprise 160.

PROJECT LOCATION



MEETING DETAILS

CITY COUNCIL

Date: September 1, 2026
Time: 6:00 pm.
Place: Surprise City Hall
16000 N. Civic Center Plaza
Surprise, AZ 85374

At these meetings any member of the public may appear and be heard relative to this request or may submit written comments at any time prior to the Public Hearing. All written comments regarding this request will be made part of the record of the City. Any interested party may obtain an agenda 24 hours prior to the Public Hearing at the Surprise City Hall. Please note that this item will be placed on the next available agenda should the meeting be canceled or quorum be lost. Chris Sexton with the City of Surprise at 623-222-3134 or christina.sexton@surpriseaz.gov for additional information.

Publish: Phoenix Independent, August 7,
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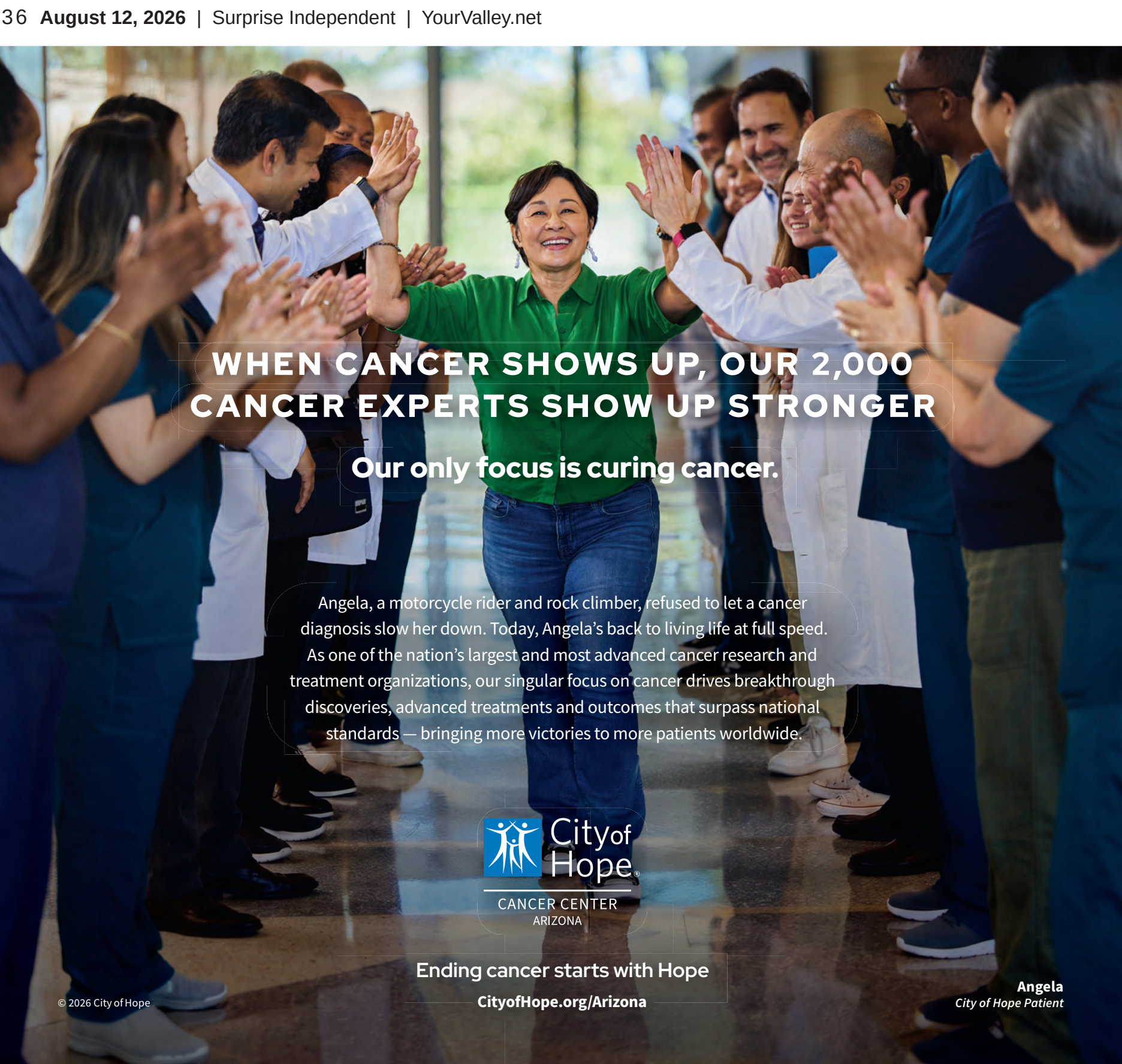
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