



Community

New kayak ramp draws location concerns; **6**



INDEPENDENT

Neighbors

Sun City pastor returns to Valley roots; **20**



August 26, 2026 Volume 66 Issue 34 Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Vial of Life can save Sun City lives

By Zev Black and Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

During an emergency medical situation with a loved one, having critical information ready can help save a life.

After her husband passed out on the kitchen floor, Sun City West resident Maryann Jefferies thought the worst. She lay down next to him, calling 911.

“I did not know what to do,” she said. “I was just beating on his chest, and when paramedics got there I was not able to say anything.”

Jefferies also has a lock box on the outside of her home but does not remember how emergency personnel got inside. Crews knew inside the refrigerator was a Vial of Life, since emergency service professionals in the West Valley are trained to look for the sticker on the

• See **Vial** on page 18



Aiden Donovan, a member of the Sun City Fire and Medical Department, demonstrates the department's new ice immersion technique during a training exercise. (Independent Newsmedia/Zev Black)

Sun City Fire and Medical adopts new heat stroke treatment

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As temperatures in the Valley rise, it is more important than ever to understand the risks of extreme heat. According to the 2025 Maricopa

County Annual Heat Report, 430 heat-related deaths were identified in 2025.

Time is crucial when suffering from a heat-related illness. The longer an individual's internal tempera-

ture is above 104 degrees, the higher likelihood there is of long term effects or even death.

“It's literally killing the brain cells,” Sun City Fire and Medical

• See **Fire** on page 5

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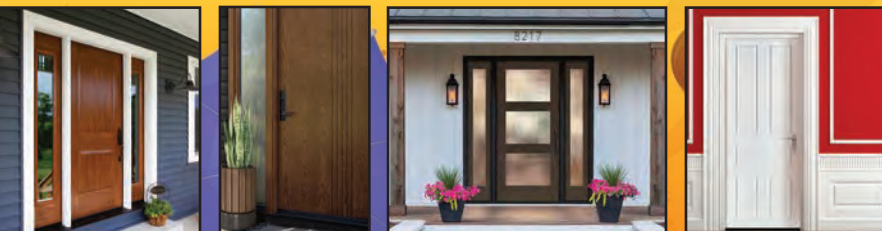
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GRANT

Nonprofit receives grant for drum project

Drum Arizona, a Sun City-based nonprofit organization, has received a Lifelong Learning Grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts to provide a hands-on Native American drum-making and painting experience for 25 adults at the Olive Branch Senior Center.

The November project, presented in recognition of Native American Heritage Month, will be conducted in collaboration with the Doing Grief Community Healing Project, founded by the Rev. Shea Darian.

This is the second time Dr. Lydia Woods, founder and executive director of Drum Arizona, has secured the grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts for a collaborative drum-making project.

Several years ago, Woods and

Darian worked together on a similar program through the Doing Grief Community Healing Project. Adults participating in that project made and painted their own drums as part of a creative experience centered on healing, grief, self-expression and community.

Under Woods' instruction, each of the 25 participants in the November program will make a personal 12-inch Native American-style drum. After constructing their drums, participants will select a Native American-inspired image and paint the image on their own drumhead.

Each completed drum belongs to the participant who creates it.

"This is much more than an arts and crafts project," Woods said.

"There is something very mean-

ingful about making a drum with your own hands, painting an image that speaks to you and then hearing the voice of that drum when you play it for the first time."

The project will culminate in a Native American drum circle facilitated by Woods and Drum Arizona, during which participants will have the opportunity to play the drums they have made.

The collaboration between Drum Arizona and the Doing Grief Community Healing Project brings together two organizations that have previously used creativity and shared experiences to encourage healing and connection. Darian's work through the Doing Grief Project and Woods' experience using drumming as a tool for bringing people together complement one another in

the grant-funded program.

Holding the sessions during Native American Heritage Month will also provide participants with an opportunity to learn about and celebrate Native American cultural traditions while experiencing the communal nature of drumming.

At the conclusion of the November project, 25 adults will leave Boswell Senior Center with more than a finished piece of artwork. Each will take home a drum made and painted by his or her own hands — and the experience of having joined those individual drums together in one circle and one shared rhythm.

The project is scheduled for early November and spots fill up quickly; RSVP by calling 623-465-6000 or emailing Connect@DoingGrief.org.

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Fire

• From page 1

Department EMS Chief Kyle Henson said. "If you can't get them cooled fast enough, you get anoxic and they lose their ability to have daily functions."

To help combat this, the department is adopting a new body cooling technique from its Phoenix counterpart. When an individual is suffering from heat stroke, on-scene crews can now use a mixture of ice and water to rapidly cool the patient's body.

According to firefighter Charlie Lyon, when the crew arrives on scene, they ask themselves a series of questions:

- Are they tracking us?
- What do they look like?
- What does their environment look like?
- Does it look like they've been outside for a while?
- Are they still sweating? Are they not?
- How red is their skin?
- Are they responding to us?
- What's their level of cognition if they are?

"That will kind of start to clue us in on how serious and how quickly we need to move," he added.

If needed, the crew is instructed to get a base on the ground, unzip a big blue bag and pour four to five bags of ice in it.

Simultaneously, the rest of the crew is getting the patient prepped with IV before using a scoop stretcher to get them in the bag on top of the ice base.

After the patient is placed in the bag, three to five more bags of ice along with water will be placed on the individual's chest, groin and surrounding areas. Water is added to make the mixture colder.

"Ice itself is not the best for cooling because there's so many air pockets," Sun City firefighter Marcus Brewer said. "It's actually a really good insulator. If you go to the Eskimos, they would use an igloo in order to insulate because of the air pockets inside that actually cause it to insulate and actually stay warm inside."

The patient's arms should remain out-

side the bag to allow the crew to continue monitoring the patient and maintain access to all IV lines.

Brewer said the on-scene crew need to be prepared for anything that could happen to the patient.

"I want us to be intelligent, be prepared," he said. "This is no different than a respiratory emergency where I'm thinking 'they're in respiratory distress and failure is on its way. What would I do if they went into arrest?'"

The goal is to get the patient's internal temperature down to 101 degrees, but not under 100 degrees because they will continue to cool down after being removed from the ice slurry.

"We don't want to send them into hypothermia, which is another deadly, deadly indication which comes with all sorts of other things like coagulation problems and stroke," Brewer said. "We're trying to prevent that as best as we can."

Once they get to the emergency room, the crew will pull the patient out of the ice and transfer them to the hospital staff who will continue care.

According to Brewer, crews should not use the ice immersion for a septic patient. He added that if someone is down in their apartment but the thermostat is reading 78 degrees, that person is likely not having an environmental emergency so the on scene medics would not perform the ice immersion.

Every unit is instructed to have an ice chest and water bottles that will be checked after every tour, according to Brewer.

Henson said Phoenix was having a 70% mortality rate when the individual was deeply unconscious and had an internal temperature greater than 104 degrees. Now, thanks to this new technique, the opposite is true.

"I think that's what drove it so heavy," Henson said. "The first trials were so dramatic. People were going to the morgue and now they're getting discharged neurologically intact. It was a big deal."

This program was made possible by a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield. According to Henson, the department re-

ceived \$14,100 from the grant.

Department training largely kicked off Aug. 18 at station 131, although a couple members who had previously been trained have already been able to use the technique three times. All three patients were discharged from the hospital within two days.

Lyon, who participated in the training, is excited about the new technique.

"It's helpful, especially because we've seen an uptick in it recently," he said. "I think just being able to run through it and see how it should be implemented live is really useful going into a call."

He added that everything needs to "move a little quicker" when it comes to heat related incidents.

Before the ice bags, the department was using anything they could to cool down individuals, including cold packs, water bottles and saline bags.

"It was nowhere near the level of surface area that we are able to cover now," Lyon said. "That's really encouraging that we can show up on scene and what was previously past the point of return is someone that's savable now."

There can be warning signs to heat exhaustion like dizziness, nausea, muscle cramps, shortness of breath and increased heart rate. Lyon said if you're feeling any of these symptoms, it might be time to get inside.

He acknowledged that heat is just part of living in Arizona but said there are ways to help mitigate its effect.

"We all live in Arizona so we need to go out and enjoy our lives still, but maybe shift that a little bit earlier or a little bit later in the day," Lyon said.

"Drink more than you need you think if you are going to be out and you are going to be active."

For more information, go to www.scfmd.az.gov or call 623-974-2321.

Reporter Zev Black can be reached at zblack@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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RECREATION



Avid kayaker and Sun City resident Lynda Frerichs stands on the new ramp installed at Viewpoint Lake. (Independent Newsmedia/Zev Black)

New Sun City kayak ramp draws location concerns

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

In late July, the Recreation Centers of Sun City installed a new kayak dock at Viewpoint Lake, 10626 W. Thunderbird Blvd. While she admitted the new launch point is a great ramp, avid kayaker and Sun City resident Lynda Frerichs said the location doesn't make sense.

Before moving to Arizona, Frerichs lived on a lake in Georgia where she kayaked all the time. When she got to Sun City, she bought an inflatable kayak and organized a group who share the same love as her.

When the group kayaks on View-

point Lake, its members park at the end of N. 105th Avenue, in a small parking lot around 10 feet away from the boat launch that Frerichs said was there before she moved to Sun City 12 years ago.

She said this is extremely convenient for the group while the new launch is not.

"It's too difficult for people who have their own kayaks," she said. "I have one girl who Kayaks with a hard kayak, two pieces; that's too heavy for someone that's upper 70s to 80s to carry over here."

She added it takes "several trips"

• See **Kayak** on page 16



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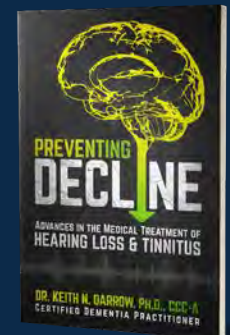
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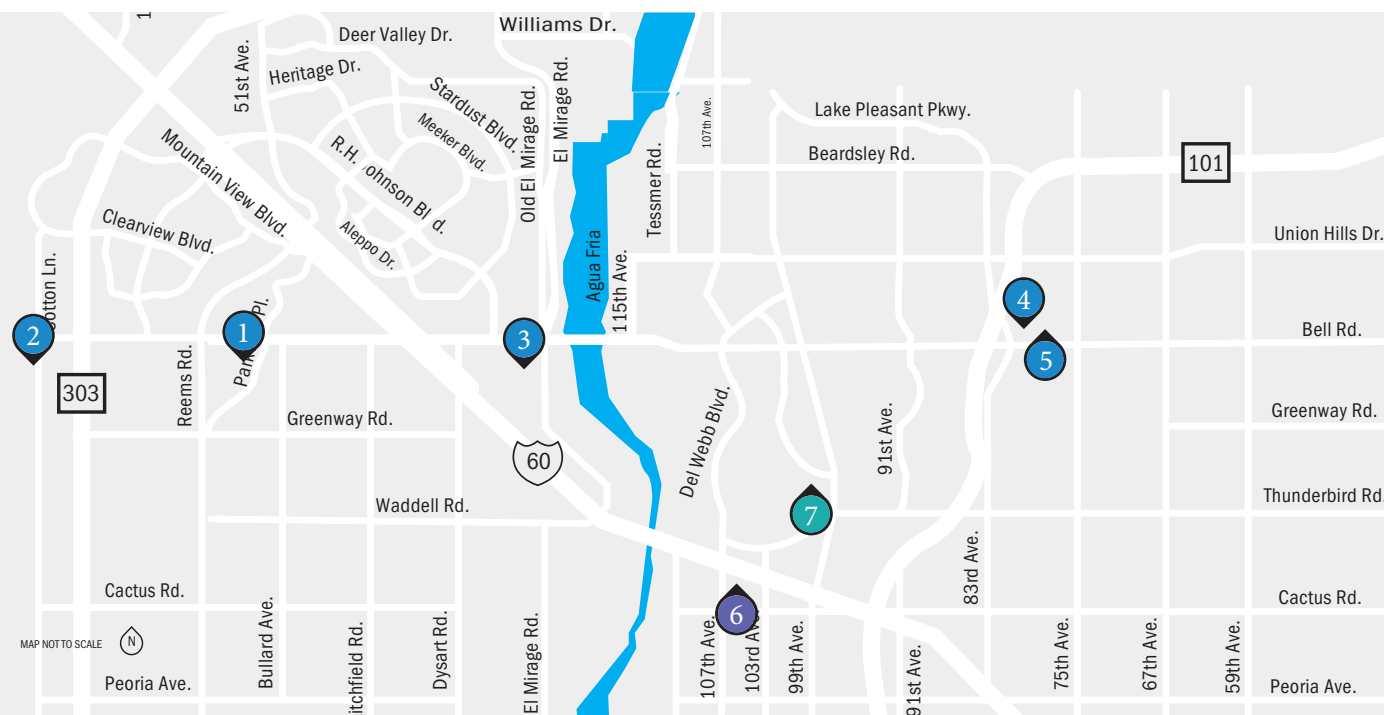
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BUSINESS MOVES



OPENINGS

1 Southern Steer Butcher experienced a milestone day Aug. 6 for the grand opening of its location at 16853 N. 145th Ave., Suite 161. Owner Scott Strelitz and General Manager Damon Anderson helped cut the ribbon in a ceremonial event with city leaders. Visit facebook.com/p/Southern-Steer-Butcher-Surprise-61584567974316.

2 Take 5 Oil Change recently announced the grand opening of three new Arizona locations, including new spots at 16771 W. Bell Road and 16590 W. Cactus Road. Each location has three service bays, and customers can remain comfortably in their car and receive a high-quality oil change in about 10 minutes. Visit take5.com/locations.

3 Following its June soft opening, **AZ Turn & Burn RC** got the official ceremonial opening treatment Aug. 5 with a ribbon cutting. AZ Turn & Burn RC celebrated the expansion of its business into the adjacent suite at Crossroads Towne Center at 12851 W. Bell Road, Suite 114. Visit azturnandburn.com.

4 PartyZona, 8026 W. Bell Road, is now open in Arrowhead Plaza. The store, which is taking over the old Party City store, sells all sorts of celebration needs. The store opens at 9 a.m. every day while closing at 8 p.m. Monday–Thursday, at 9 p.m. on Friday, at 7 p.m. on Saturday and at 5 p.m. on Sunday.

5 Marshalls, 7974 W. Bell Road, has opened its doors in Arrowhead Marketplace, replacing the former OfficeMax space. It is three doors down from the Trader Joe's.

ANNIVERSARY

6 Pinnacle Mobility Scooters, 10659 Grand Ave., suite 9, is approaching its one-year anniversary Saturday Aug. 29. Bill and Amy Kremer first started the business to help Sun City's residents stay mobile, independent and confident.

SPECIAL EVENT

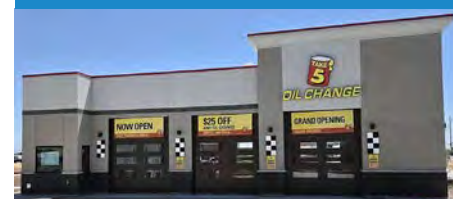
7 Independent Newsmedia's Sun City Senior Expo is 9 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 23, at the Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave. Explore a selection of products and services, access essential health screenings, connect with local and national vendors and enjoy free giveaways, door prize drawings and entertainment. Businesses interested in a sponsorship can call 888-665-3848 or email AZADS@iniusa.org.



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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.

What Sun City should know about EPCOR's rate proposal

EPCOR has filed a major water rate case with the Arizona Corporation Commission. For Sun City residents, the proposal involves more than the size of the next water bill.

Sun City residential customers face a substantial proposed increase. Residents naturally will focus on that number. But another important question is what costs Sun City customers are being asked to pay and why.

Sun City is a mature, essentially built-out community. Other parts of EPCOR's water system continue to experience substantial residential, commercial and industrial growth requiring new water supplies, wells, pipelines, storage and other infrastructure.

For more than a decade, Sun City District ratepayers have opposed efforts to combine historically separate water districts for rate-setting purposes, including through the courts. A central concern has been that consolidation can shift costs among communities.

That history remains important. EPCOR now proposes further consolidation of its water districts. Before the commission approves that proposal, the evidence should clearly show how costs would be allocated among the districts and what Sun City customers would receive in return.

Sun City customers should pay the full and fair cost of reliable water service. But if they are being asked to share costs originating elsewhere, residents deserve to know what those costs are, why Sun City should share them and what measurable benefits

LETTERS

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

Sun City receives.

The commission should therefore examine not only the proposed rate increase, but the cost allocation behind it.

The principle is straightforward: those who create costs or receive the primary benefits from an investment should generally bear an appropriate share of those costs.

Sun City residents have fought for years to ensure they pay no more than their fair share.

This case should provide the evidence necessary to determine what that fair share actually is.

Greg Eisert
SUN CITY

Greg Eisert has represented Sun City and Youngtown ratepayer interests in electric, water and wastewater proceedings before the Arizona Corporation Commission since 2012, and has participated in related appeals through the Arizona Supreme Court. This is part one of two; next week will focus on a new physical connection between the Sun City and Sonoran water systems.

Go, Bernadette — 'Make the House Great Again'

In response to Epson Brewer's letter about Congressional District 8 as seen in the Aug. 12, 2026, edition of the Sun City Independent, I say, "game on!"

I am a military veteran and a former snowbird who is itching to get

out on the hustings and canvass for Bernadette Greene-Placentia.

Bernadette will help "Make the House Great Again." She will ensure the House of Representatives acts as a co-equal branch of government. She will end Abe Hamadeh's rubber stamping operation and tackle this economic crisis which grows by the day.

Abe claims the Democratic Party is going communist. Sounds like McCarthyism to me. I got news for Abe — if it was not for Democrats there would be no Social Security, no Medicare and no voting rights. All were passed by a Democratic Congress.

Incidentally, what is communist about calling for a ban on the sale of assault weapons?

Finally, next time you see an Abe poster, ask yourself if he believes the 2020 presidential election was stolen. If you think he would say, "yes," then go ask him: "How did you get elected in 2024?"

Go, Bernadette: Make the House Great Again!

Steve Grogan
SUN CITY

Bernadette Greene-Placentia is seeking to unseat incumbent Abe Hamadeh in CD 8, which includes parts of Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise.

Kudos to Hamadeh for Stop Insider Trading Act support

After years of hearing politicians pay lip service to fighting corruption only to sell out to the highest bidder the minute they reach Washington, I can't tell you what a breath of fresh air it is to see Congressman Abe

• See **Letters** on page 12



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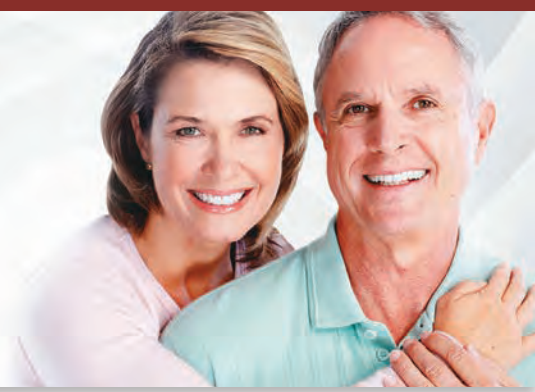
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HEALTH

West Valley health center joins HealthyU Clinics

The Surprise office of Arrowhead Health Centers is now part of HealthyU Clinics, which announced the acquisition of locations in Glendale and Scottsdale as well.

HealthyU Clinics completed the acquisition of the location at 17061 N. Avenue of the Arts, Suite 100 on July 28.

"We are excited for this opportunity

to bring Arrowhead Health into the family," said Varesh Chaurasia, chief executive officer of HealthyU Clinics. "The providers and staff are deeply dedicated to providing comprehensive and quality care in the Valley. Joining HealthyU Clinics makes it possible for their patients to access an even more extensive pool of resources to help them further main-

tain their health and well-being.

The other two Valley offices to make the switch over are at 16390 N. 59th Ave., Glendale, and 2629 N. Scottsdale Road, Suite 101, Scottsdale.

Arrowhead Health Centers has operated since 1997.

The care teams and staff at their three locations will remain the same.

"The acquisition by HealthyU Clinics helps current and future patients further personalize their care and take control of their health by providing seamless and connected access to a larger network of primary and specialty providers along with behavioral health services," the company said in a release.

Visit healthyuclinics.com.

Letters

• From page 10

Hamadeh of Arizona's 8th Congressional District deliver on that promise.

Instead of focusing on his own stock portfolio, he chose to invest in the people of his district.

He stood up to colleagues more

interested in personal gain and voted for H.R. 7008, the Stop Insider Trading Act.

The U.S. House passed the bill on July 22. It bans members of Congress, their spouses and their dependent children from buying individual stocks while in office, requires advance public notice before any sales and imposes meaningful penalties for

violations.

Congressman Hamadeh didn't just talk about cleaning up Washington; he actually took action to make it happen.

In an institution too often driven by self-interest, he put principle first and voted to stop members of Congress from enriching themselves at the public's expense. That kind of

integrity deserves recognition.

Thank you to Congressman Hamadeh for showing what real public service looks like

Nikki Colletti
GLENDALE

Congressional District 8 includes parts of Glendale, Peoria, north Phoenix, Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise.



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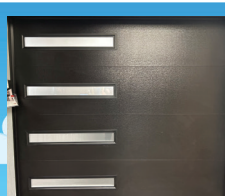
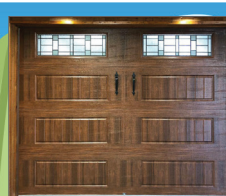
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Knights host upcoming food drive

The Knights of Columbus Council 11809 will host an upcoming food drive to support Valley View Community Food Bank.

The drive will take place from 9 a.m.-noon Thursday, Sept. 17, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church parking lot, 19002 N. 128th Ave. and the Sun City West Foundation Parking Lot, at the intersection of R.H. Johnson and Stardust Boulevards.

Canned goods, boxed meals and non-perishable food items are needed and monetary donations will be accepted.

Peoria Chapter #59 Order of Eastern Star to host Tricky Tray event for charity

Residents are invited to a Tricky Tray event 7:30 p.m. Aug. 26 at the Sun City Masonic Center, 18810 N. 107th Ave., Sun City. Peoria Chapter #59 Order of Eastern Star hosts the event with all proceeds benefiting AZ Square and Compass Foundation for Children.

Admission fee is \$7, which includes refreshments and five tickets. Additional tickets are \$3 for five, \$5 for 10 and \$10 for 21.

Prizes include a Kitchen Aid standing mixer, a 46-piece tool set, Shark Mess Master Wet/Dry Vacuum, Magic Bullet and more.

Kayak

• From page 6

when someone is using an inflatable kayak.

RCSC Director of Operations Mike Dirmyer stated in an email that the new ramp was installed to give lake users a specific access point.

"The location was selected after considering a variety of factors, including the physical characteristics of the lake, shoreline conditions, existing infrastructure, safety, access to the water and the lake's multiple recreational uses," he stated.

He added the lake is multi-use and, because of that, all decisions must be made with all members in mind.

"We recognize that members may have different preferences regarding the location of amenities, and we appreciate the feedback we receive," he stated.

Frerichs doesn't think the ramp

should be moved at this point, and Dirmyer confirmed the RCSC doesn't have any plans to do so. However, she does believe something else can be done.

"I think the best thing they could do is add a couple kayaks," Frerichs said. "Even if they added two a year to see if that would benefit the entire community."

She added the kayaks could be stored right on the dock for members to use and, if the RCSC did this, she would certainly use the ramp. Her biggest concern isn't that the ramp exists; it's the location of it and the money the RCSC spent on it. Dirmyer did not respond to a question asking how much the ramp cost.

For more information about the ramp, call 623-561-4676.

Reporter Zev Black can be reached at zblack@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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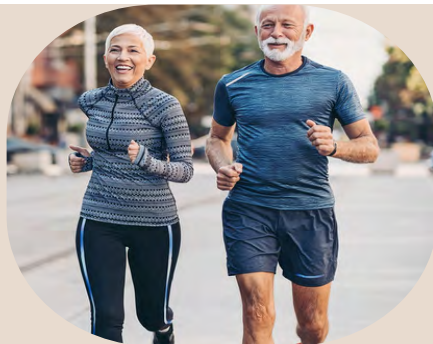
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Vial

- From page 1

window or outside the refrigerator, according to Staci Glass, vice president of philanthropy at Sun Health.

"The crew knew where he had to go, who his doctors were and the medications he was on, which I think is just really important," Jefferies said.

Sun City Fire and Medical Chief Rob Schmitz stated in a text message that every second matters during a medical emergency.

"Having access to important information such as medications, medical conditions, allergies, emergency contacts and physicians can give our crews a much clearer picture of the patient and help us make better decisions about their care," he stated. "It can be especially valuable when someone is unconscious, confused, seriously ill, or lives alone."

A Vial of Life provides personal identification, medical conditions, a list of medicine, allergies, emergency contacts and doctor information in an easy-to-find location.

Instead of spending valuable time trying to piece together a patient's medical history, our crews can quickly review the information and focus on treating the patient," Schmitz stated. "Ultimately, it can help us provide more informed care and get the patient to the appropriate medical facility more efficiently and in a medical emergency, 'time matters.'"

The Sun City Posse works with Vials of Life by handing them out to residents at events and by filling out the information sheet that actually goes in the vial.

Posse Cmdr. Arlene Kluizenaar stated in a text message that the group supports the program because it "provides important medical information for Fire Medical and other first responders so that they can treat someone quicker and more efficiently."

Kluizenaar, a former New York paramedic, stated she would look for medical information in pill bottles or boxes before the Vial of Life was popular. She added that all the information on the sheets is confidential, yes can be crucial for saving a life.

"Our residents can feel confident that the information that they give on the information sheet is kept confidential, it is essential information that can help the first responders take care of the patient and it may even help to save someone's life," she stated. "The information should be reviewed frequently to make sure it is up to date and it is also a good idea for the resident to review the information with their medical provider."

Sun Health Director of Communications Madeleine Goff said this program promotes safety for seniors and using the Vial of Life is available to anyone.

Schmitz encouraged all residents, but especially those who live alone, to get a Vial of Life.

"I would say, absolutely get one," he stated. "If you live alone, there may not be anyone there to tell first responders about your medical history, medications, or who should be contacted in an emergency... The goal is simple: give firefighters and paramedics the information they need when you may not be able to give it to us yourself."

This program is made possible through members in the community and donations. The vials are free to anyone in the West Valley at sunhealthwellness.org/vial-of-life-and-file-of-life or by calling 623-471-9355

"Part of what Sun Health does is go out and train first responders on how Vial of Life works," Glass said.

Glass said Sun Health is distributing about 5,000 Vials of Life a year, adding the group is looking for continued support.

For more information, go to sunhealthwellness.org.

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CHURCH

New Sun City pastor returns to Valley roots

By Zev Black
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

His family's roots in the Valley date back to the 1940s, when his grandfather moved to Glendale to build homes. Now, more than 80 years later, Pastor Steven Wagenknecht has returned to the Valley as the new pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church, 9925 N. 103rd Ave.

Wagenknecht's father was a pastor, which he said was a big reason as to why he wanted to pursue the career.

"As I was a teenager, and even into adulthood, I realized that there was something special in our house," Wagenknecht said. "There was love, there was care, we got along pretty well. I got two broth-

ers, so we did our fighting ... but it was just a peaceful home."

He added that he's given that impression to his children as well.

Wagenknecht, who is fluent in Spanish, has spent time on missions in Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico. He was also a pastor in Casa Grande and Weslaco, TX. He now wants to interchange a preaching with a pastor at a Spanish church in the Valley.

He said two of his biggest strengths are connecting and communicating with people.

"I try to make sure I'm not just lecturing in the sermon," he said. "When I have 15 minutes of lecture, I want to engage and have the

• See **Pastor** on page 22



New Sun City pastor Steven Wagenknecht. (Independent Newsmedia/Zev Black)

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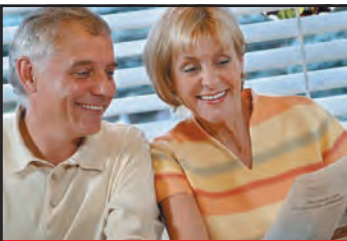




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Sun City language club seeks teachers

The Sun City World Languages Club, formerly the Spanish Club, is currently seeking volunteers to teach beginning Spanish and beginning American Sign Language for the fall session.

Classes meet once a week at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave., and run from the week of Oct. 12 through early April 2027. Some teaching experience is preferred but not required. Interested individuals should contact Clyde Thorne, World Languages Club president, at clyde.thorne@gmail.com for more information.

The World Languages Club promotes language learning and cultural understanding through language classes and social and cultural events throughout the year.

Pastor

• From page 20

people mentally participate even if they're just sitting there."

Wagenknecht added that he thinks he can improve at listening.

"Making sure I'm not assuming what people are thinking," he said. "Just listen and catch onto what they're asking and what they're really needing."

He added that he is really looking forward to getting to know the Sun City community, saying residents have told him that there are many great activities to do in the area.

"It's kind of neat being able to meet people in the community," Wagenknecht said. "Outside of the church, that's what I would say I look forward to doing."

He went on to say that the membership of the church is aging so he's excited to connect with the younger community members. One of the church council members has been there for 25 years and is "getting tired" according to Wagenknecht.

Another is 91, though Wagenknecht made it clear that he doesn't look 91 to him. He wants younger people to step into leadership posi-

tions at the church.

He is proud of his career, but he said he is most proud of being a father to his five children.

"Being able to do that while also pastoring a congregation," Wagenknecht said. "My wife knows that she's not in second place, but sometimes it looks like that. Sometimes there's just times where she says 'you've got to go take care of people in the hospital.'"

Going off of that, he wants people to know that if they want to share something, he will make himself available.

"If people want time, I'm here," he said.

"Pastor is busy, but if there's someone who's in need or there's a bible question or just 'Pastor, I need some advice. What would God like me to do?' I would want to let them know that I'll make time to be able to answer the question, give them guidance in their loneliness, hold their hand and connect them with other people here at Our Savior Church."

For more information about the church, go to oursaviorsuncity.org.

Reporter Zev Black can be reached at zblack@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.

AUTHOR

Resident publishes new book

Sun City resident Dr. Jeanne Blanchet, an author and lecturer, recently published her twenty-third book: "The Monk Who Wrestled with God."

In it, she invites readers into the world of Martin Luther—a man torn between devotion, doubt and a destiny he never sought. With the vivid immediacy of lived experience, this novel follows Luther through the triumphs, trials and soul-searching questions that shaped a revolution. The novel offers readers a journey into the heart of a German monk/priest who dared to challenge both himself and the world.

This work of historical fiction is



Dr. Jeanne Blanchet

suitable for preteen and high school readers as well as adults. Published by Outskirts Press, it is available in both paperback and e-book formats on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and in bookstores.

Local book signings will be held in the near future.

CHORUS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS



The Sun City Women's Chorus, the oldest chartered musical club in Sun City, is looking for ladies from Sun City and other West Valley communities who love sing. The chorus is opening its 2026-27 season with a meet and greet 9 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 3, at the Fairway Recreation Center, 10600 W. Peoria Ave. There will be a light breakfast and information about the chorus. Singers don't have to audition. Practices are 8:45-11 a.m. Thursdays in the Fairway

center's music room. Membership is \$20 a year or \$10 a half year. The first regular fall practice will be Sept. 10. Contact Sue Wilson at 636-292-9832 for more information. Seated are Velda Jensen, director, Terrie Phillips, vice president, and Margaret Biggs, publicity; standing are Chris Peters, former president, Sue Wilson, president, and Mary Westphal, treasurer. (Submitted photo/Margaret Biggs)

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SUN CITY POMES HELP AT FOOD BANK

The Sun City Poms recently lent a hand at the St. Mary's Food Bank by helping people pick out food at their "grocery store." Members were able to talk with those who were struggling and got a better feel for what they were going through. The food selection was thanks to donations from vendors who brought in frozen meats, dairy, produce, canned goods and pastries. Pictured in back are Sharen Valentine, Shea Stoiber, Jan Desmond and Cathy Reel; in front are Julie Yak and Deborahanne Wicher. (Submitted photo/Jan Desmond)



John 'Jack' Richard Russell

On May 13, 2026, John 'Jack' Richard Russell, 92, went peacefully to his rest to join his beloved wife, parents, brother and sister. The second of four children, Jack was born in Ecorse, Michigan on November 9, 1933 to Edward and Clara Russell. After graduation from River Rouge High School and a stint in the steel mill,

he served in the U.S. Army from 1954 – 56, attaining the rank of specialist Third Class with the 867th Field Artillery Battalion. After his Honorable Discharge, Jack joined his high school sweetheart, Margie Walters, in Arizona and soon married. He began his construction career as a 'hod carrier' and over the years rose to the position of Superintendent of the largest masonry company in Arizona. At work, Jack was a strong leader and fierce advocate for his men, many of whom became lifelong friends.

Jack was a devoted husband to his wife Margie and father to their daughter Kim. After his retirement, he became a full-time caregiver for Margie, with singular dedication and devotion until her passing in 2010 after 54 years of marriage.

An avid hunter and fisherman, Jack instilled that love of the outdoors to many friends and family members on numerous hunting and fishing

trips. When in his boat, if he turned his baseball cap backwards, you'd better hang on, you were in for a ride!

Jack was preceded in death by his wife, parents, brother Bob, nephew Mark, and sisters and brothers in law, and closely followed by his sister Judy. Jack leaves behind his loving daughter Kim, brother George, nephews Eddie, Bobby, Dave, Jack (Diana), Georgie (Pauline) and Tommy (Kris), nieces MaryLou, Janie, Connie, Kate, Laura (Tracy), Lisa (Glenn), Lora (Bob), Polly and Shannan (Patrick), 'adopted' nephews/sons Jim, Mike, Benny and Scott, many great-nieces and nephews, and friends too numerous to mention.

A service will be held at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona, 2929 E. Pinnacle Peak Rd. on November 6, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, a memorial to the American Legion Post 29 Service Officer would be appreciated.

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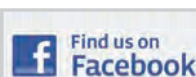
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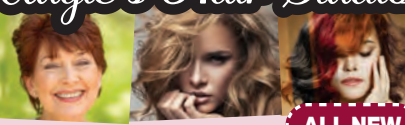


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HEALTH

Church hosts dementia workshop

Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church, 13658 W. Meeker Blvd., will host Dementia Tidbits, a free educational program presented by Hospice of the Valley at 11 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 10.

Attendees will learn practical techniques that can improve communication and reduce frustration, including how to use short, simple phrases, gain a person's attention respectfully, incorporate visual cues and gestures and avoid interactions that may create anxiety or confusion.

"Many people are surprised to learn that dementia affects much more than memory," said Julie Killebrew, MSN, Health Education Facilitator at Shepherd of the Hills. "When families understand what's happening and learn a few simple communication techniques, they often discover ways to reduce frustration and create more positive interactions with the people they love."

The free program is open to all. To register, call 623-584-2280 or online at shepherdumc.org.



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This owl occasionally visits a Sun City backyard. The homeowners call it Orville. Another also stops by sometimes — its name is Wilbur. (Submitted photo/Linda Norman)

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