

Neighbors

Teens climb
to new
heights; **4**



TOWN OF PARADISE VALLEY INDEPENDENT



Horses

Arabian
Breeder finals
returns; **26**

September 9, 2026 Volume 43 Issue 36

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Arizona Attorney General special agent talks scams

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Paradise Valley Police Department partnered with the Arizona Attorney General's Office to raise awareness of scams targeting Arizona residents.

On Wednesday, Sept. 2, Supervising Special Agent Annalisa Madsen of the Attorney General's Office spoke with residents about what to look out for, what to do if residents are targeted by these scams, and how her department can help if Arizonans fall victim to a scam at PVPD's Coffee with a Cop event.

PVPD Chief Freeman Carney spoke to the packed auditorium about why they continue to share the signs and dangers of falling for a scam.

"We do this about two or three times a year, and there's a reason for that," Carney said. "It's one of the biggest crimes we have. It's the biggest crime any city has."

• See **Scams** on page 12

Meet Paradise Valley Town Hall's new intern

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For Melissa Leal-Esquivel, local government is appealing for a simple reason: She can see the impact of her work in the community.

She joined Paradise Valley Town Hall roughly three weeks ago as part of the Marvin Andrews and Jane Morris Local Government Fellowship, an Arizona State University program that places graduate students pursuing public administration or public policy degrees with local governments to gain hands-on experience.

• See **Intern** on page 20

Melissa Leal-Esquivel at Paradise Valley Town Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2026, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)



New Website for Homesellers

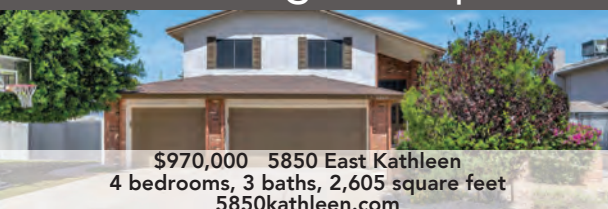
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\$970,000 5850 East Kathleen
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5850kathleen.com



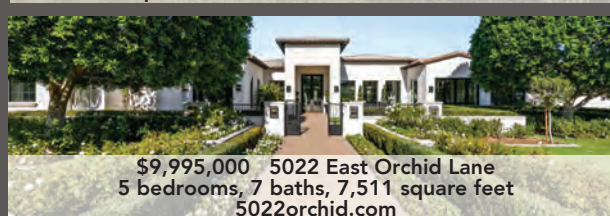
\$2,895,000 3308 East Stella Lane
46,200 square foot lot - Plans Available for this Home



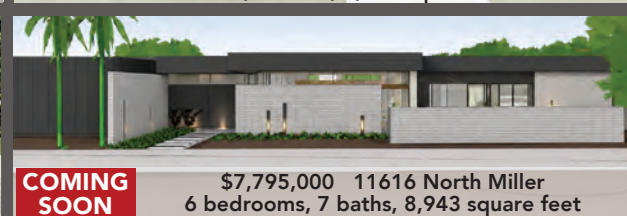
\$7,300,000 7102 East Kalil
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 8,200 square feet



\$7,295,000 7347 North Red Ledge
5 bedrooms, 6 baths, 7,300 square feet
7347northredledge.com



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



COMING SOON

\$7,795,000 11616 North Miller
6 bedrooms, 7 baths, 8,943 square feet



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



\$9,295,000 9790 North 56th Street
4 bedrooms, 5 baths, 8,144 square feet



NEW LISTING

\$7,995,000 5922 East Cheney
4 bedrooms, 5 baths, 5,581 square feet
5922cheney.com



JUST SOLD

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



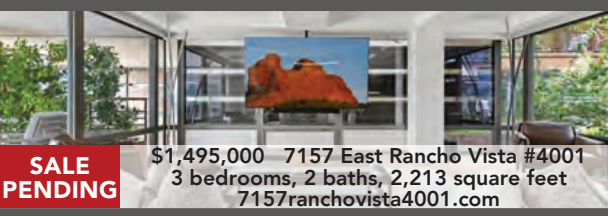
NEW LISTING

\$1,549,000
2626 East Arizona Biltmore Circle #17
3 bedrooms, 3 baths, 2,436 square feet



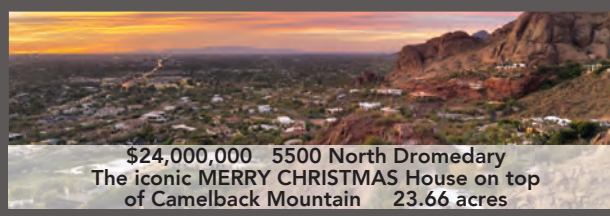
SALE PENDING

\$1,950,000 34253 North 92nd Way
4 bedrooms, 5 baths, 3,552 square feet
34253north92ndway.com



SALE PENDING

\$1,495,000 7157 East Rancho Vista #4001
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7157ranchovista4001.com



\$24,000,000 5500 North Dromedary
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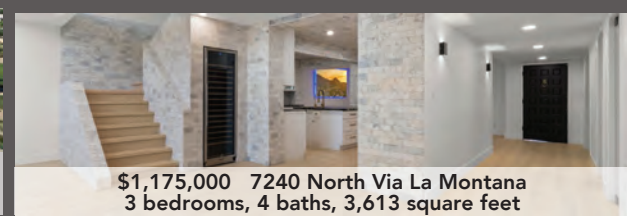
\$7,500,000 9735 East Kemper
5 bedrooms, 7 baths, 7,742 square feet



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



\$3,840,000 4642 North Alta Hacienda
1.09 acres Phoenician Golf Course View Lot,
\$1,000,000 under appraisal! Altahaciendalots.com



\$1,175,000 7240 North Via La Montana
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THE MOST EXPENSIVE WORD IS *LATER*

BY GREG HAGUE

Over the years, I have come to believe that "later" may be one of the most expensive words in the English language. I've learned that an important part of making a decision is knowing whether time is working for you or against you. Sometimes waiting is smart. It can bring clarity or a better opportunity. Other times, every day you wait makes the situation worse.

The challenge is knowing whether time is working for you or against you.

But when I step back from business and look at life, I realize something more important. Time is not on our side. Several years ago, my friend Bruce was trying to convince me to join him and some buddies on another motorcycle trip to Mexico. I had ridden Baja with them before, and those trips were some of the best times of my life. But this time I was busy. Too busy, I told him.

Bruce reminded me of the giant roadside signs we used to pass on our rides, the ones advertising a "Mystery Spot" or some strange attraction down a dirt road. I would see the sign, think it sounded interesting and keep riding because we had somewhere to be. I could always stop next time. Bruce's point was simple. We spend much of our lives doing exactly that.

Life does not promise a next time.



I still did not take that trip. And there was never another one. The trip before it became the last time I would ride through Mexico with those friends, eating shrimp, exploring Baja and doing something I assumed we would all do again. I just did not know it was the last time while it was happening.

Eventually, there is a last time for everything, and we rarely recognize it when it arrives. Tomorrow has shown up so reliably that we begin treating it like a guarantee. Miss dinner this week and there is probably next week. Skip the vacation this year and there is probably next year. Put off the phone call today and there is probably tomorrow. Most of the time, we are right, and that is how the habit of "later" becomes so easy.

Then comes the one time we are wrong. You do not know when you are having the last ordinary afternoon with a parent, the last summer when all the kids are still living at home, the last lunch with an old friend, or the last time you will hug someone you love. It looks like every other moment until it becomes the one you cannot get back. Later just never arrives.

What makes the word later so dangerous is that it does not sound like a refusal. Because postponement feels temporary, it rarely feels costly. After work settles down. After the holidays. After we have more money.

After life becomes less complicated. But life is remarkably good at replacing later with never.

So I think about Bruce's Mystery Spot whenever I catch myself saying "later." There are decisions where patience pays. There are decisions where waiting costs you. And then there are moments in life where you may never get another chance.

If you knew you could not do it later, would you do it now? If the answer is yes, pay attention.

Because later feels free when we use it. The bill only comes due when there is no more later.

That is what makes later so expensive.

Greg Hague CEO, 72SOLD

ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Arizona law to tighten mandatory reporting requirements in schools

As the new school year ramps up this summer, an Arizona law that will tighten rules for mandatory reporting in an effort to help children suffering from neglect or abuse will become effective Sept. 12.

The bill was signed into law by Gov. Katie Hobbs during the last legislative session.

Read online at [YourValley.net](https://www.yourvalley.net)

Arizona Fall League announces new MLB affiliates for 2026

After another round of musical chairs, all 30 MLB teams have found a new seat for the upcoming Arizona Fall League season.

Each of the six teams in the Fall League fields prospects from five MLB teams, with most teams changing affiliations each year. The new affiliations for the 2026 season were announced in late August, along with the league's 2026 schedule.

Read online at [YourValley.net](https://www.yourvalley.net)

Arizona school overrides and bonds: What voters need to know

Arizona voters will decide more than candidates in the Nov. 3 general election.

Depending on where they live, some voters will be asked whether their local school districts should be allowed to collect additional property taxes for salaries, classroom programs, technology, buses, buildings and other expenses.

Read online at [YourValley.net](https://www.yourvalley.net)

Area teens climbing to new heights

By J. Graber

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Jackson Day first went to a friend's birthday party at a rock climbing gym when he was eight-years-old and has climbed to new heights since then.

At 10, he started rock climbing competitively, and by 15 he has reached the podium in 15 regional or divisional championship events, including four regional titles and two divisional titles. He has competed at the USA Climbing Youth National Championships for the past four years and has finished on the podium twice. This year will be his third year on the USA Climbing Youth National Team. He was also an alternate on the National team this year to go to the world championships.

Competition has taken him to events from Chicago to Portland, Oregon.

"It's definitely fun," Jackson said. "I can see it not being fun when you first get into it but the more you get into it you understand how to move your momentum and go to the flow."

Like Day, Ella Grossman was introduced to climbing at a friend's birthday party at nine-years-old. She had been a competitive gymnast prior to that but fell out of love with it, and a local climbing team was persistent in recruiting her. They eventually wore her down and she joined.

At first it was just for fun, but after going to some competitions, she stepped up her game.

She went to her first Youth Nationals in Reno, Nevada, in 2021. Throughout her time in youth competition, she's been on the podium four times in bouldering championships, seven times in lead championships including two divisional championship titles and has qualified for nationals for five years. This year at the Nationals in Salt Lake City, she placed third in



Jackson Day, 15, has competed at the USA Climbing Youth National Championships for the past four years and has finished on the podium twice. (Courtesy @adlewis)

lead and fourth in bouldering making the U.S. Youth National Team for both disciplines. She's also competed in Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

"I have a very strong upper body so I like power climbs and strength-based climbs ... I've been described as a very graceful climber," Grossman said.

Grossman just turned 18, is a product of Saguaro High School and will soon start attending the Barrett Honors College at ASU, so she is no longer eligible for youth competitions. She's not sure where her path will take her next.

What she likes most about the sport is the variety of challenges it presents because the climbing holds are never in the same place twice.

"In climbing you can train as hard as possible and you can build muscle memory for movement but you'll show up at a competition and you never know what you're going to get. It's fun to turn around and see that puzzle and decide as you go and apply your skill set to that."



Ella Grossman, 18, has reached the podium four times in bouldering championships, seven times in lead championships including two divisional championship titles and has qualified for nationals for five years in the youth level. Having just turned 18, she's not sure where her climbing path will lead. (Courtesy @gajdaphotography)

Day figures it's easier to get past the not so fun part of climbing by starting out young, when you're lighter but not as strong either, because you learn how to swing your body and take the path open to you.

Though a Scottsdale resident — he's a sophomore at Scottsdale Preparatory Academy — Day mostly trains four days a week at gyms in Tempe and Gilbert these days.

Any more than four days a week and the skin on his hands and feet tend to start getting torn away, he said.

Grossman trains up to five times a week at gyms in Tempe, Gilbert and Chandler, and she lifts weights a couple of days a week, too.

Day only sparingly trains with weights because he says it trains the muscles to only lift when what they need to get that particular job done as opposed to whatever challenge you might find on the walls.

There are three disciplines in climbing: bouldering, lead and speed.



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ASM to open Scottsdale facility in 2027

By J. Graber

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

With companies like the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company building a new facility in Phoenix, the Valley is quickly turning into a global hub for microchip manufacturing, and Scottsdale will soon be part of that picture.

ASM, a global company founded in the Netherlands that makes machines that make semiconductor chips, announced plans in September 2024 to move its North American headquarters from Phoenix to Scottsdale, and that vision could be complete by early next year, according to a spokeswoman for the company.

The company tentatively plans to open the doors on its 400,000-square-foot building earmarked for administration and research and development uses sometime in the first quarter of 2027.

"As ASM's largest R&D center worldwide, the new Scottsdale facility will serve as our U.S. flagship hub for innovation, bringing together our people, currently distributed across multiple Valley locations," the company said in an unattributed statement to the Daily Independent. "By uniting our scientists, engineers, and corporate support teams in a collaborative environment, we can accelerate our work in materials discovery and continue to drive the future of semiconductors. We are excited to strengthen ASM's global innovation network from Arizona, where for more than 50 years our teams have been advancing materials science and helping turn breakthrough discoveries into the technologies that power the world."

The company's investment on the new facility at the corner of Mayo Boulevard and Miller Road is expected to exceed \$500 million.

ASM currently has more than 1,100 employees in Arizona. The company had said in 2024 that it intends to add another 500 jobs in the future, but a spokeswoman for the company has since said that number could change.



ASM, which makes machines that make microchips, is expecting to open the doors to its 400,000-square-foot, \$500-million North American headquarters building in Scottsdale sometime in the first quarter of 2027. (Courtesy ASM)

The average salary for the new jobs was predicted in 2024 to be \$110,000 annually.

"It's a huge win for us," said Scottsdale Economic Development and Tourism Director Kevin Burke, who hopes more microchip companies will follow suit and move to Scottsdale. "It's not the tip of the iceberg because it will be pretty hard to match ASM in terms of a quality of a win, but it is indicative of what we are trying to accomplish here over the next."

That's why Burke, Mayor Lisa Borowsky and City Councilwoman Jan Dubaukas are flying to Taiwan Aug. 30 for the Semicon Taiwan exhibition in an effort to woo other semiconductor companies here.

To offset water use, ASM has purchased and given the city 600 acre feet, or 195 million gallons, of long-term water storage credits to cover the company's water usage for the next 20 years.

ASM built the infrastructure around the new facility, for which the city has reimbursed it \$6.4 million. City officials are hoping to get at least several million

dollars for that reimbursed by the state, Burke said.

ASM also established a two-year partnership with the Scottsdale Unified School District to support and expand the Sisters in STEM program.

The partnership includes program sponsorship, STEM pathway support for students, and scholarship funding. Two scholarships have been awarded to date through the partnership.

Also, ASM participates in annual science, technology, engineering and math events held each September as part of its community engagement efforts. The initiative is designed to increase science, technology, engineering and math education opportunities and strengthen ASM's engagement with the local community.

ASM was founded in 1968, has a presence in 15 countries and has been in the Valley since 1976.

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.



Wendy Lentz

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9290 E Thompson Peak NORTH SCOTTSDALE	\$3,100,000
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5275 N Camelhead Rd PHOENIX	\$2,550,000
--------------------------------	-------------

OPINION

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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.

Is the Scottsdale Unified board sufficiently independent?

Nearly half of school-age children living within SUSD boundaries are enrolled elsewhere. At the same time, recently rebuilt or renovated district facilities provide up to over three times as much space as needed.

Meanwhile, SUSD's 11th grade academic performance — the highest grade included in Arizona's statewide testing program — has fallen from first among several nearby comparison districts to fifth; nearby charter elementary/middle schools also substantially outperform SUSD. Yet SUSD's operating expenditure per pupil exceeds those of districts and charters outcompeting it.

Another serious concern is SUSD safety. Recent survey data have shown substantial parent and student concern about bullying, violence, theft and related discipline problems. SUSD's response has been reactive (closing schools, minimizing transparency and goals), instead of proactively raising achievement and parent satisfaction.

Academic and enrollment goals have been trivial, non-competitive and rarely achieved. Yet the district continues to promote itself as Arizona's top academic performer and says it is "engaging all students in world-class, future-focused learning," while limiting public exposure to achievement (trends, school level, competitive comparisons) and hiding discipline data.

Why has stronger corrective action been so slow? Since 2020, three of SUSD's five governing board members have been candidates endorsed by the Scottsdale Education Association. When a majority of the board owes important electoral support to an employee organization, the public is entitled to question whether the board is sufficiently independent and willing to impose demanding goals, transpar-

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ent performance reviews and meaningful accountability.

Dramatic change is needed at SUSD.

Lloyd Eskildson
SCOTTSDALE

New rule: The river gets the last word

Arizona needs to stop pretending growth and water scarcity are separate conversations. They are the same conversation. Every new subdivision, business park and resident needs the one thing the desert cannot manufacture: water.

The growth machine offers a comforting slogan: "Arizona is not running out of water. We are running out of cheap water." That is like standing in front of an empty refrigerator and saying, "Relax. We just need to buy the expensive food."

For decades, the Southwest treated the Colorado River like a bank account with guaranteed deposits. We kept withdrawing while the deposits shrank. Now the river is forcing a financial reckoning.

Rio Verde Foothills was Arizona's warning.

Residents depended on hauled water filled at Scottsdale's standpipe. When worsening Colorado River conditions triggered Scottsdale's drought plan, that connection was severed. A shortage measured in reservoir elevations suddenly reached neighborhood driveways.

The lesson should have been obvious: water planning must come before growth planning.

Phoenix deserves credit for using water more efficiently. But efficiency does not repeal arithmetic. A more efficient house still needs water. Millions of additional residents still require additional supply.

Agriculture deserves scrutiny too, especially thirsty crops grown for export. But turning farms into subdivisions is not automatically progress. Water insecurity should not become food insecurity.

For a century, Arizona asked, "How much water can we find for the growth we want?"

We should be asking, "How much growth can the water actually support?"

That is not anti-growth. It is sustainability, and sustainability is real prosperity.

You cannot keep adding straws to a glass that is getting smaller.

The Colorado River does not attend ribbon cuttings, read economic forecasts or care about slogans. It delivers what nature provides. The river gets the last word.

Rusty Childress
RIO VERDE

Corporate America choosing profits over customer service and trust

I'm a retired CEO who deplores how so many huge national corporations squeeze every penny of profit out of consumers to satisfy their Wall Street-obsessed bosses.

Out of force of habit, and because they have driven under so many small local businesses, I have continued to deal with a few of those companies. Too many of them give me constant reminders that they prioritize short-term profits over customer service, trust and long-term loyalty.

♦ See **Opinion** on page 24

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REPRESENTED BUYER & SELLER



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



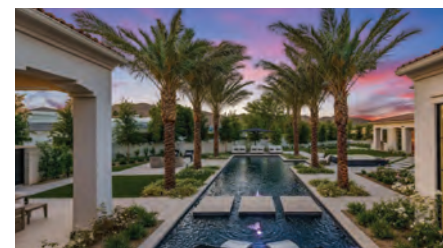
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SOLD: \$16,250,000
5001 N WILKINSON ROAD | PARADISE VALLEY, AZ
REPRESENTED SELLER



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



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



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FROM THE COVER

Scams

• From page 1

Madsen said phone and text scams are increasingly preying on people's emotions, often attempting to isolate victims from friends and family.

Scammers tell victims not to hang up or tell anyone what is happening while posing as government agencies, debt collectors or family members in trouble. They then demand payment through cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin, gift cards or wire transfers.

Madsen recommends avoiding fraud by not clicking links sent by text, hanging up when a call seems suspicious and contacting the person or agency directly using a verified number.

"Just hang up," she said. "You don't have to be nice."

She also recommends establishing a family code word for emergencies, never paying with gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency, and avoiding sharing personal information.

Other warning signs include unexpected job offers or contest winnings, as well as online romantic partners who ask for money.

According to the latest FBI data, the average loss in a cryptocurrency scam is about \$62,000, Madsen said.

"That could be someone's full savings," she said. "That could ruin people."

Under 2025 legislation, if fraud is reported to the Attorney General's Office with a police report, the victim has made the store aware of the scam and the fraud is reported to the cryptocurrency ATM company within 30 days, the victim is legally entitled to reimbursement.

"Time is everything with these kinds of crimes," Madsen said. "It has to be super quick."

The legislation also reduced daily transaction limits to \$2,000 per day



Supervising Special Agent Annalisa Madsen of the Attorney General's Office warns community members of the dangers of online scams at the Paradise Valley Police Department Coffee with a Cop event on Wednesday, Sept. 2, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)



Paradise Valley residents listen to a presentation about scam awareness at the Paradise Valley Police Department Coffee with a Cop event on Wednesday, Sept. 2, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

for new customers and \$10,500 for existing customers of Crypto ATM machines as well as added new signage warning users about crypto scams.

Although the new legislation will not stop people from using cryptocurrency to scam others, Madsen said it will make such scams more difficult. The goal, she said, is to make the effort outweigh the potential reward while protecting victims from losing everything if they do fall for a scam.

Another problem her agency faces in stopping bad actors is that they are

operating from all over the world and outside her jurisdiction.

"I used to have a lot of issues and do a lot of search warrants on call centers that were here locally. Now ... it's in Africa, China, Russia," she said. "It's blown outside the United States."

Another issue is that first-time offenders often receive probation rather than jail time.

"I hate it when they get probation, especially for a large crime where they've ruined people's families and taken all their money, and now the



Paradise Valley Police Department Chief Freeman Carney speaks to the crowd at the Paradise Valley Police Department Coffee with a Cop event on Wednesday, Sept. 2, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

person has to sell their house and they don't have anywhere to go," she said. "To me, that's egregious."

On the other hand, Madsen said she has seen judges reject plea agreements and impose sentences longer than what was originally negotiated.

"It kind of is all over the board," she said.

Advisory Committee on Public Safety member Charlie Herf asked whether legislation could be changed to increase sentences for these types of crimes.

"Make the risk greater than the reward," he said.

Madsen said increasing sentences would be a worthwhile issue to raise with legislators.

The PVPD hosts a Coffee with a Cop event on the first Wednesday of each month where they invite community organizations to better inform the public of important topics, give residents the chance to speak with and get to know the police officers serving them, and enjoy complimentary coffee and breakfast.

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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BUSINESS

New Harry & Izzy's restaurant opens in Paradise Valley area

Indianapolis restaurant marks its first expansion outside Indiana

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A new restaurant has opened at the redevelopment of the former Paradise Valley Mall, adding an Indianapolis restaurant brand to the growing lineup of new restaurants, shops and other businesses to the area.

Harry & Izzy's opened Wednesday, Aug. 26, at 12770 N. Tatum Blvd., marking the restaurant's first location outside Indiana. The 8,300-square-foot restaurant is part of the redevelopment of the former mall site.

The restaurant serves steaks, seafood, sandwiches, appetizers and its signature St. Elmo Shrimp Cocktail, along with cocktails.

For Paradise Valley residents, the opening adds another dining option to the redevelopment as the former Paradise Valley Mall continues to take shape, said Partner and Vice President of Business Development Chris Clifford.

"As we continue to grow our restaurant group, we have felt like we were maxed out in Indianapolis, and we're looking for an opportunity to span our brand outside of the state of Indiana," Clifford said. "There were quite a few cities that we were looking at, but Phoenix was at the top of the list and then we had the opportunity to go into this amazing development in Paradise Valley Mall."

Clifford said the restaurant has



Harry & Izzy's opened its first location outside Indiana on Aug. 26 at the Paradise Valley Mall redevelopment. (Photo submitted by Harry & Izzy's)



The new restaurant is 8,300 square feet and seats 340 people, with a 2,400-square-foot patio and outdoor bar. (Photo submitted by Harry & Izzy's)

hired 160 Valley residents and that the company is excited to contribute to the local economy.

"It's been great to meet so many great people out there, and I feel very at home in Phoenix," Clifford said.

"It feels very Midwest to me. People talk about Midwest hospitality and how friendly people are, and I feel that way about Phoenix."

Wendy VanVelzen, general manager at Harry & Izzy's new loca-

tion, said the restaurant's move to the Paradise Valley area represents an important step for the Indianapolis-based brand as it expands beyond its home state.

"Harry & Izzy's will celebrate 20 years of success in 2027, so opening our first restaurant outside Indiana at this point in the brand's history is especially meaningful," VanVelzen said. "We are proud to bring the experience our guests have come to know and love to Paradise Valley and introduce Harry & Izzy's to an entirely new community."

VanVelzen also said she is looking forward to building the restaurant's local team as it opens in the Valley.

"From our talented culinary team to our dedicated service staff, every team member shares a commitment to creating memorable experiences and making every guest feel genuinely welcome," she said.

The new Valley location has seating for 340 guests, including a 2,400-square-foot patio and outdoor bar.

The opening also brings a familiar Indianapolis name to the Valley. Harry & Izzy's is part of Huse Culinary, the group behind the Indianapolis institution St. Elmo Steak House, and former Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning is a partner in the restaurant.

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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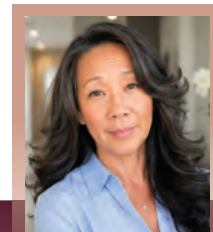
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Each of Scottsdale Unified School District's five high schools will host a town hall meeting to discuss the district's \$375-million bond request on the Nov. 3 ballot. (Courtesy Richard N. Horne/Wikimedia Commons)

SUSD to hold town hall meetings on \$375M bond request

Scottsdale Unified School District officials will hold a series of town hall meetings to discuss the bond project to be voted on during the Nov. 3 general election.

If approved by voters, the proposed \$375 million bond program would fund capital improvements across the district, including school facility renovations, learning environment enhancements, technology upgrades, safety and security improvements, transportation replacements, and other infrastructure needs that support students and staff throughout Scottsdale Unified.

The District's previous bond program was approved by voters in 2016 and has been substantially utilized to address district-wide capital priorities.

Bond funds may only be used for

voter-approved capital projects and cannot be used for teacher salaries, employee benefits, or day-to-day operating expenses.

Community members are invited to learn more and attend upcoming informational meetings. A meeting was held at Coronado High School on Sept. 1:

- Desert Mountain High School, 12575 E. Via Linda, Sept. 15, 6 - 7 p.m.

- Saguaro High School, 6250 N. 82nd St., Sept. 17, 6 - 7 p.m.

- Chaparral High School, 6935 E. Gold Dust Ave., Sept. 23, 6 - 7 p.m.

- Arcadia High School, 4703 E. Indian School Road., Sept. 29, 6 - 7 p.m.

For more information, visit sUSD.org/bond.

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FROM THE COVER

Intern

• From page 1

The fellowship is in its 20th class, with 12 fellows working with local governments for two years at a time. Paradise Valley is participating in the program for the first time. Leal-Esquivel previously spent a year with the city of Tolleson through the fellowship before moving to Paradise Valley for her second year.

She first heard about the fellowship shortly before the application deadline and decided to pursue it despite the tight timeline. She completed the lengthy application and secured multiple letters of recommendation because she knew the opportunity was rare and one she could not afford to miss.

"I really liked that you could see the impacts of the work you're doing immediately in your community," she said. "I really like that aspect of it."

That sense of community has continued since she arrived at Paradise Valley Town Hall, where she said staff immediately made her feel welcomed and included.

"They're willing to help you, because they know not only that you're capable, but because they want to," Leal-Esquivel said. "It's very interesting to learn kind of all the different characters that are in the office and the personalities and all of that."

She has also been struck by how much responsibility falls on the town's relatively small staff, giving her the opportunity to learn about many aspects of local government and gain a wide range of experience.

"People wear a lot of hats here, which I think is great," she said. "They get a lot of experience in things that maybe other people in other cities don't."

Leal-Esquivel said the involve-



Melissa Leal-Esquivel participates in the weekly staff meeting at Paradise Valley Town Hall on Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2026, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

ment of Paradise Valley residents has also stood out to her. She knows residents attend council meetings, speak with town officials and take an interest in what is happening in their community.

"People care about the place they live in," she said. "People care about Paradise Valley, and the residents really, really do care ... there's nothing better than a motivated people."

That connection between residents and local government is part of what has drawn Leal-Esquivel toward a career in public service.

"It's a good opportunity to help people," she said. "It's an honorable job."

Leal-Esquivel is not the only fellow to find a place on the town's team. Erin Sweeney, another member of the fellowship cohort, spent the previous year working with Paradise Valley and has continued with the town part time while Leal-Esquivel takes over the fellowship placement.

Sweeney said she had a similar experience when she first arrived at

• See **Intern** on page 22

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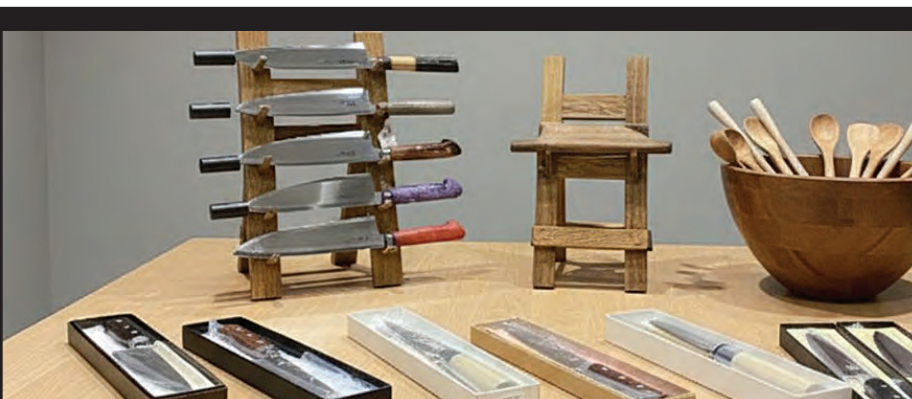
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Maná performs on stage. (Photo provided by Live Nation)

Latin legends Maná bringing 2026 tour to Valley

Iconic Mexican rock band Maná has announced 19 new dates for the 2026 leg of its Vivir Sin Aire Tour, including a stop in the Valley.

The tour will arrive in Phoenix at Mortgage Matchup Center on Sept. 12, 2026.

Maná has unveiled a new touring production featuring expanded video elements and an on-stage waterfall.

Formed in 1986 in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Maná brought Spanish-language rock to the mainstream, blending classic rock, reggae, and pop with

Latin rhythms. With 11 albums and over 50 million copies sold, 1.3 billion streams a year on Spotify and 12.1 billion all time views on YouTube, Maná has set the standard for Latin rock.

Their groundbreaking album “Dónde Jugarán los Niños” is the best-selling Latin rock album of all time. For nearly 40 years, the band’s live performances have taken them to more than 30 countries.

Tickets for the Phoenix stop available at mana.com.mx.

FROM THE COVER

Intern

• From page 20

Town Hall.

“It felt very much like I was just part of the team right away,” she said. “They let me sit in on executive team meetings and participate and encourage me to speak up if I had thoughts on any of the topics that were being raised.”

Both fellows said the town’s small size creates opportunities to work across departments and gain a broader understanding of local government.

“Everybody’s very cohesive, and I do think that the department

works together well,” Sweeney said. “There’s a kind of a spirit of collaboration and people aren’t afraid to bring in somebody else.”

Leal-Esquivel is a first-generation college student from Mesa pursuing a master’s degree in public administration at Arizona State University. She also earned bachelor’s degrees in political science and anthropology from ASU.

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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Climbers

• From page 4

The climbers stay close to the ground and don't use a harness in bouldering. Lead takes the climbers higher — up walls that reach 55 feet — and speed is the same thing but it's a competition to do it the fastest.

Day and Grossman both particularly excel at Lead.

"He has his own style," Day's coach Michael Proctor said. "I think a lot of it comes from the fact that he started climbing so young. His tenacity on the wall has led to a slower climbing style, but I think over the years he's really developed into a really well-rounded climber. (He's) not super flashy, pretty strong and static but he can also be dynamic when he wants to be."

Day's also developed into a mentor for younger climbers.

"It's fun to work with the little kids," Day said. "If I'm at the competition it's not too high stress, it's always nice to help them out."

One of the more common mistakes

younger climbers tend to make is not trusting their feet. They're often afraid their feet will slip off the climbing holds.

"If you trust it and fully commit to it, most of the time it won't slip, but it feels really sketchy," Day said. "And also just using your feet more, and not just all upper body because then you get tired a lot faster."

Meanwhile Grossman is a coach for a youth team, and she, too, loves working with younger climbers.

If there's any advice she would give to someone who is considering trying climbing, it's "Just do it."

Climbing has a strong and welcoming community, which makes it easier to learn, she said.

"I've found some of my closest friends and honest a second family there," Grossman said.

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OPINION

Opinion

• From page 8

I recently received an email from one of them. The "no reply" email itself demonstrated their lack of respect for me. It announced a switch to a four-week billing cycle instead of monthly and said it would take effect without my permission. The announcement didn't explain whether this was a price increase. But if my math is correct and they charge the same amount every four weeks that I had been paying monthly, it will be a "hidden" 8.3% price increase.

Since I wasn't permitted to reply to their email, I called to ask. It was answered by a robot that insisted I waste my time providing a lot of useless information before it finally put me on hold. I was not given the courtesy

of an estimate of how long the wait would be, or the option of leaving my number so they could call me back at their convenience (if ever). I finally had to give up.

Did I hang up with warm and fuzzy feelings for this huge and uncaring corporation? Heck, no! The only alternative they've left me is to leave them. I hope more consumers will join me.

If corporate America can't be honest about their pricing and won't accept an email or answer their phone when we try to contact them, let's just hang up on them. And take our business with us.

Joe Smyth is a retired journalist and former CEO of Independent Newsmedia, and the author of "America's Broken Politics."

Joe Smyth
SCOTTSDALE

Whiskers & Wine to raise money for shelter animals

For one October evening, some of the Valley's favorite restaurants, wineries, breweries and distilleries will gather at DC Ranch with a shared purpose: helping homeless pets find their way home.

Foothills Animal Rescue will host Whiskers & Wine, 6-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 21, at The Homestead Community Center at DC Ranch, 18600 N. 98th St, according to a press release.

The event pairs local tastings with live music, a curated silent auction and raffles benefiting cats and dogs in need.

Proceeds from the event support the full continuum of care for animals, including nutritious food, safe shelter, medical treatment, rehabilitation and adoption services.

Event highlights include:

- Sample offerings from local restaurants, wineries, breweries and distilleries gathered in one lively setting.

- Explore food tastings, the silent auction and raffles indoors, with select beer and spirits tastings outside.

- Enjoy live entertainment and a relaxed atmosphere alongside friends, clients and fellow animal lovers.

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Arabian National Breeder Finals returns in September

The Arabian Horse Association of Arizona will celebrate its 16th anniversary of the Arabian National Breeder Finals at WestWorld of Scottsdale, 16601 N. Pima Road.

The free show will feature 250 horses and will run Sept. 16-19, according to a press release.

The continued partnership with the Emirates Arabian Horse Global Cup, now in its second year, brings the return of a small breeders' competition with guaranteed prize money. The Emirates Arabian Horse Global Cup coordinates and supports a series of global championships to encourage breeders and owners of Arabian horses around the world.

The Arabian National Breeder Finals competition consists of a series of different performances called classes, where some of the best Arabian halter and performance horses in the world will compete for over \$100,000 in prize money and the title of Finals Champion.

This year's schedule includes halter horses, liberty and native costume classes and a plethora of other exquisite halter and performance classes.

For more information, visit scottsdaleshow.com.



The Arabian National Breeder Finals returns to WestWorld of Scottsdale with over 250 horses competing for \$100,000 in prize money. The show is free. (Courtesy Avalon)



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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
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