



Community
Girls youth lacrosse team debuts in Arrowhead area; **4**



INDEPENDENT

Sports

Flag football QBs dominate NW Valley; **18**



October 2026 Volume 32 Issue 10 Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Arizona Theatre Matters plans local festival

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For a few years, Arizona Theatre Matters has steadily, quietly built up its in-person presence as Glendale's only theater company while breaking new ground and winning fans the world over through its online performances.

In February, the locally based theater troupe makes its presence known in its home city.

Arizona Theatre Matters will present the Glendale International Fringe Festival Feb. 12-28, 2027, with six productions and 50 performances — all free to the public — at Glendale Main Library and Foothills Library, along with digital broadcast and livestream access.

Jeanmarie Simpson, the founding artistic director of Arizona Theatre Matters, credited Ivy Jarvis, a programming librarian at the main library, for providing the nonprofit's first permanent home in the main li-

• See **Theater** on page 16

Deer Valley Unified candidate Q&A: Enrollment



Candidates address declining enrollment, future growth near Loop 303 and TSMC, and how the district should balance both challenges



See each candidate's answer for one question inside on page 5

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Four candidates are vying for two open seats on the Deer Valley Unified School District Governing Board in the Nov. 3 general election. David Alvarado, Paul Carver, Kristi Cooper and Julie Stockwell are seeking four-year terms on the five-member board, which oversees

district policies, budgets and educational priorities.

To help voters learn more about the candidates and their positions on issues facing DVUSD, the Independent asked each candidate to respond to five questions addressing enrollment and atten-

• See **Election** on page 5



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COMMUNITY

Arrowhead girls youth lacrosse club grows quickly

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Brandon King thought youth girls lacrosse could gain traction in the West Valley.

He did not expect it to happen in less than a month.

King is the coach of the new girls teams at Arrowhead Warriors Lacrosse Club. It started a series of three free-to-try practices Sept. 2. The first had seven girls, while the third had 20.

"The response really has been incredible. Most of this club is brand new to lacrosse. We have a few girls that played last year whether that was in girls or boys, but our entry into the league will truly be growing the game, and the parents have been so active and involved," King said. "It's really exceeded anything I dreamed of for the first fall."

Lou Toth, president of the Glendale-based club, said the club tried to start a girls team last season with some girls playing with the Warriors boys team.

Seven or eight girls showed up last year but not all of them could have played in the same age group. So some of these girls played in the boys league, while others left for other girls teams in the Valley.

"We didn't have quite enough to join the league," Toth said.

As of Sept. 16, 17 girls have signed up for the fall league, which started Sept. 19.

Arrowhead Warriors will field age 8 and under and age 10 and under teams. Toth said the 8 and under league only permits four players on the pitch at a time.

• See **Lacrosse** on page 12



Emilia, a player with Arrowhead Warriors girls 10U lacrosse team, takes off with the ball as coach Brandon King leads a drill Sept. 15 at Foothills Park in Glendale. and Coach Jana is in the background. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)



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FROM THE COVER

Q&A

• From page 1

dance boundaries, district finances, special education and other matters affecting students, families and employees.

The Independent is presenting the first question in our five-part series, which can be viewed in its entirety at yourvalley.net/glendale-independent.

Question #1

DVUSD faces declining enrollment in some parts of the district while significant residential growth is expected around the Loop 303 and TSMC area. How should the district prioritize current declining enrollment while preparing for residential growth within district boundaries over the next decade?

David Alvarado

DVUSD should manage today's declining enrollment without losing sight of tomorrow's growth. The district's own long-range planning anticipates continued enrollment declines in some established communities through roughly 2031, while significant residential development is expected near Loop 303 and TSMC.

The answer is disciplined, school-by-school planning — not a one-size-fits-all approach. The district should regularly evaluate enrollment, building capacity, boundaries, transportation costs, and facility utilization, and consider boundary adjustments or repurposing underused space where appropriate.

At the same time, I would not support spending millions on new capacity simply because growth is projected. Major capital decisions should be

tied to measurable enrollment triggers and credible demographic data. The district should establish clear thresholds for adding capacity, changing boundaries, leasing space, or repurposing facilities.

Most importantly, the public deserves regular reporting that compares actual enrollment with projections. We should neither ignore declining enrollment nor prematurely spend for growth that has not yet materialized.

Paul Carver

DVUSD is keenly aware of the challenges a District our size and age have concerning the ebbs and flows of enrollment numbers in individual schools. To that end a Committee composed of Community members and Staff was commissioned in the Spring of



Paul Carver

2025 to address this very concern. This is done through the analysis of current boundary lines between schools and what the District should consider changing them to using Demographer reports and historical analysis. This Committee's work can be found on the District website at <https://www.dvUSD.org/our-district/committees/long-range-planning-committee>.

DVUSD will utilize several phases in this committee to ensure we are maximizing building space to demonstrate good stewardship of resources. With the introduction of all the growth surrounding TSMC it will be vital for DVUSD to be prudent in managing our growth and needs.

Kristi Cooper

Currently, 13 DVUSD schools are operating below 50% capacity. The auditor general pointed out that districts could have saved millions annually by reducing excess capacity. In contrast to what is currently happening in Deer Valley, the district needs

to develop a committee that includes all parents from EVERY potentially impacted school to determine how we



Kristi Cooper

can substantially decrease excess capacity and keep transportation times reasonable for all students.

The solution may include boundary changes or combining schools and selling buildings to purchase school buildings where they are needed. It's also possible that a combination of both is the right solution. This problem needs to be tackled with community involvement. We cannot continue to invest in buildings instead of students!

Julie Stockwell

The district has worked meticulously to analyze growth and decline around all areas of the district and has multiple boundary adjustments proposed that would help mitigate both overcrowding as well as underenrollment. The current school board has had many questions about this process, so the district continues



Julie Stockwell

to meet with community members to include as many voices as possible in decisions that will always mean change for some families, which is difficult no matter the outcome. I absolutely support this process.

IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 5: Voter registration deadline

Oct. 7: Ballots mailed and early voting begins

Oct. 23: Last day to request a replacement ballot by mail

Oct. 27: Last day to mail back your ballot

Nov. 3: General election

ON YOURVALLEY.NET

Chick-fil-A coming to Bell Road corridor

Another Chick-fil-A is on the way to Glendale after the city's planning commission unanimously approved a conditional-use permit for the fast-food restaurant with two drive-thru lanes at 5664 W. Bell Road.

Chick-fil-A will be built on the current site of Family Dental Station. Ownership of Family Dental said the practice will move into a bigger location.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/2pe8w693>

Glendale council backs battery storage facility project

On Sept. 22 the Glendale City Council unanimously approved a planned-area development amendment clearing the way for a battery energy storage system on the northeast corner of Olive Avenue and Cotton Lane.

During its Aug. 27 meeting, the Glendale Planning Commission voted 5-1 to recommend the amendment allowing the project on a 37-acre section of the larger, 255-acre Parkway 303 West planned-area development.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/bdn7uxde>

Volunteers pack meals in stadium on 9/11 Day

Around 1,400 volunteers helped pack meals Sept. 11 at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, as part of a national 9/11 Day event.

Another 120 volunteers helped organize and support the operation, said Barb Harris, the founder of PR Consultants Group. Meals will go to Phoenix-based St. Mary's Food Bank or Mesa-based United Food Bank.

Read online:

<https://tinyurl.com/29u8sb26>

BUSINESS

Meet Your Business: Tiki Plumbing

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Name: Jesse Guerrero

Business Name: Tiki Plumbing LLC

Contact Information: Jesse Guerrero, 5814 W. Muriel Drive, Glendale. Call 623-606-3020

Cities served: Mostly Glendale and Peoria.

Hours of Operations: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Weekends are reserved for emergency calls

Personal Background Highlights: I am an avid pool player who has won multiple titles and trophies in my 20 years of playing pool. I am a BCA Worlds 2022 and 2023 nine-ball champion.

Professional Background: I have 21 years of plumbing experience, all here in the Valley. I started when I was 18 and will be doing plumbing until I retire.

What do you do?: I've been a firm believer that every person wants a friendly, knowledgeable plumber who will tell them the upfront cost first. We will always be transparent, explain in great detail what to expect, and do all the work with a smile.

What do you like most about doing business here?: It's always sunny. Most days we can do our work and we don't have to worry about it raining or snowing. Our work is hard enough and I can only imagine what it would be like to not bring mud/snow into someone's home. We wear protected booties for our shoes, and we have to change those daily.

What was your previous occupations and why did you leave?: In my younger days I worked in a few restaurants. I started off as a busboy and moved all the way up into management. I learned many valuable lessons serving other people and believe everyone should learn customer



Jesse Guerrero owns Glendale-based Tiki Plumbing. (Submitted photo)

service in this way. The customer is always right! I left the restaurant business to pursue an exciting career in plumbing.

What changes would you like to see in the area?: Phoenix is constantly growing and honestly, I'd like for us to slow down a bit. Our freeways need a little time to catch up, and we went from an affordable state to one of the most expensive states to live in. This will always be my home, just hope I can retire in it.

What are you promoting?: I am promoting Tiki Plumbing. A honest, reliable plumbing service who will do what they say they will do and enjoy doing it.

What are you excited about and why?: I am excited to offer a different style of plumbing to customers. I know that a lot of times people are on guard, due to multiple companies trying to overcharge people. In a way I feel like I am trying to set a new standard, where there are no surprises and clear communication about the cost. No stacking cost, just a honest cost that works best for the company and the customer.

What is your favorite community and why?: Sun City! I like to eat. I will be honest, I've had customer send

me home with freshly baked cookies more times than I can remember. I also love to sit and just hear some old stories. These customers have lived life for sure and they have been around the world, gone on crazy adventures, built things, and seen things I've only dreamed about.

When and why did you start your business/employment here?: I've always liked being promoted or going up in a company, so ownership would always be on the table. However this opportunity was only granted due to working for an amazing boss for more than 10 years. I was offered the company and was not fully sure how I would be able to buy the company and take over all responsibilities it offered. With the generosity of my previous boss and some people I met along the way, it became a reality. It felt meant to be. I also knew that the only way to repay my previous boss, for all the years of employment was to help him retire. So I jumped on the opportunity with open arms.

Where did you work before and why did you leave?: I was managing a small Italian restaurant. I did love the customer interaction here and was quite content where I was. For me I like to problem solve, and once everything gets streamlined, my mind tends to look for something else to fix. Ultimately I believe this is what drove me into plumbing. There is always something to fix and even if you have fixed it before, it feels completely new.

Your family: I come from a quite large family of eight brothers and sisters. Our bloodline comes from Hawaii, however my father was born and raised on the island of Guam. My family is scattered all over the country now from California, Colorado, Oregon and back to Hawaii. Lahaina is where most of them live now.

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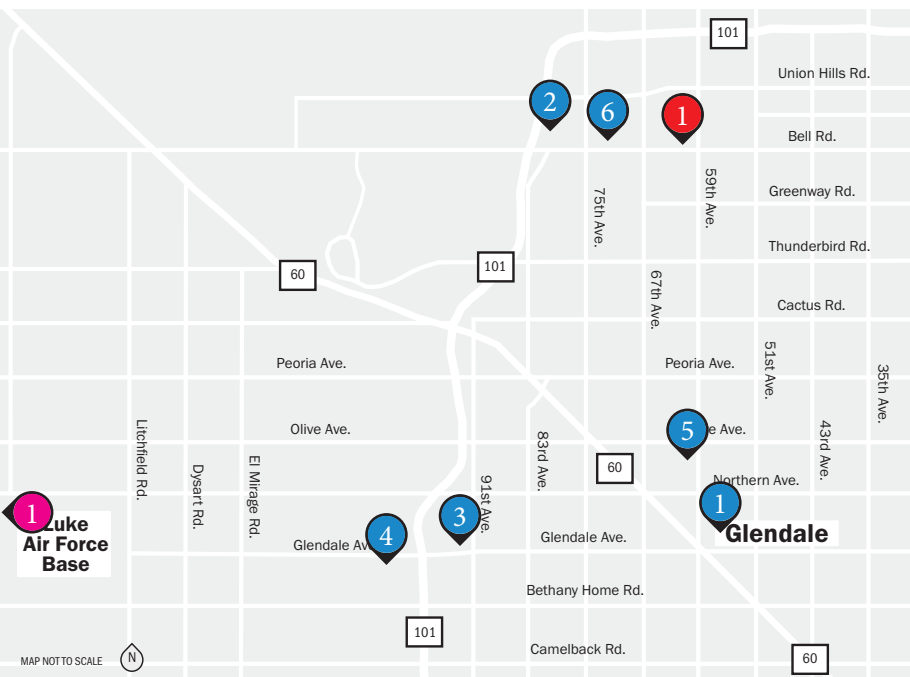
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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

NOW OPEN

1 Almost three years after moving out of the city boundaries to the Pendergast Elementary School District offices in west Phoenix, the **Glendale Chamber of Commerce** is heading back home to downtown. Its new location is at 7031 N. 57th Drive, the former home of Grumpy's Arcade. The move began Sept. 17 and is expected to finish Oct. 1.

2 **Impact Gymnastics** is growing into the West Valley. The Phoenix-based gym is taking over the Flames Gymnastics location at 8154 W. Bell Road, Suite A-2, rebranding it Impact Gymnastics – Arrowhead. The soft opening was the week of Sept. 14-17 and introduced a limited class schedule, followed by a full Monday-through-Saturday schedule starting the week of Oct. 5. A grand opening celebration is planned for Oct. 16.

3 **OrthoArizona**, one of the largest physician-led orthopedic groups in the Southwest, opened another flagship location Sept. 2: a \$25 million, 50,000-square-foot orthopedic center at 9070 W. Glendale Ave., adjacent to Westgate and State Farm Stadium. The center combines musculoskeletal care, an on-site ambulatory surgery center, physical therapy and imaging including MRI in a single building.

4 **Tory Burch** recently opened at Tanger Outlets Phoenix outlet mall at 6800 N. 95th Ave. It is now open next to Coach in a newly renovated 4,029-square-foot space. The store features a mix of ready-to-wear, shoes, handbags, accessories and more.

5 **Genoa Healthcare** celebrated the opening of its newest pharmacy inside EMPACT Suicide Prevention Center in Glendale on Wednesday, Aug. 26, expanding access for individuals receiving behavioral health



ORTHOARIZONA



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care. It is located inside EMPACT's office at 7834 N. 59th Ave.

6 **Arizona Hair Co.** moved from 51st Avenue and Cactus Road to Glendale on Bell Road. Formerly the site of Floyd's 99 Barbershop, the address is 7410 W. Bell Road, Suite 310. Arizona Hair opened in August.

MOVING

1 Chick-fil-A will be built on the current site of **Family Dental Station**. Ownership of Family Dental said the practice will move into a bigger location west of 60th Avenue and Bell in January.

LAND DEALS

1 Lincoln Property Co. announced the sale of the final two Class A industrial buildings at its **Park303** logistics park in late August. Purchased by a leading global investment manager, the transaction achieved the highest two-building industrial sale price in Arizona history, a total of \$170 million, according to Vizzle. It also represents the last of four buildings sold at Park303, a 210-acre, 3.75 million-square-foot, LEED-certified logistics campus developed by Lincoln along the Loop 303 freeway and Glendale Avenue.



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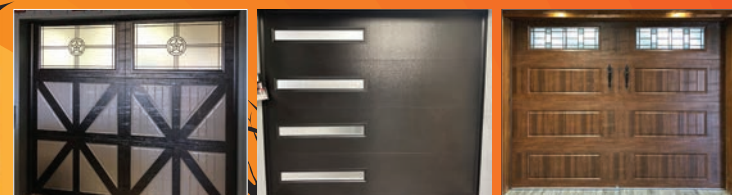
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Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month.

Two submissions in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

Speak Up

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

Corrections

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

Retired educator backs Deborah Howard for LD 27 House

Growing up, I became aware of political parties and the line between Democrats and Republicans was clearly delineated. My parents were Republicans but didn't hesitate to vote the other party when the issues warranted it.

As I became eligible to vote, I really tried to compare my values and priorities to those of the candidates. It became apparent that the closer the race was to my home, the more important the decision. State senators and representatives make policies that may directly affect me, and my vote was integral to a positive outcome.

For me, the Arizona Legislative District 27 races are very vital to the future of my neighborhood and state. I'm a retired public-school educator (high school English teacher and guidance counselor. I have a vested interest in education due to my grandkids, but also considering the effect public schools has on our community and quality of life.

Translated to Arizona public education funding, money does matter. It helps ensure decent teacher salaries, adequate supplies and safe, comfortable facilities. The bottom line is that Arizona is nearly at the bottom in per-pupil funding for education nationwide.

Deborah Howard is a strong advocate for Arizona public schools. She is not a one-issue candidate, but education is at the top of her agenda. Deborah knows the effects public education has on many facets of our state and Arizonans quality of life. When you vote in the upcoming

LETTERS TO THE NEWSROOM

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

election, vote Deborah Howard, LD 27 candidate for Arizona House of Representatives. She cares about our future and will work hard to make our lives better.

Julie Skrzypek
GLENDALE

Legislative District 27 includes parts of Glendale, Peoria and Phoenix.

Rep. Lisa Fink: Vote Andy Biggs for governor

Arizona has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to elect a conservative governor who will fight for our values in the West Valley and deliver results for our entire state.

Andy Biggs has shown he has the experience, the character and the vision to Restore the American Dream in our state and help Arizona reach its full potential.

While only serving in my first term at the Legislature, it didn't take long for me to see Katie Hobbs is simply not up to the task of leading our state. From her three vetoes of a \$1.4 billion tax cut to her opposition of legislation that would make our state healthier and protect our medical freedoms, Hobbs has been a roadblock to Arizona getting back to growth and prosperity.

She has attacked the rights of

♦ See **Letters** on page 12

Speak Up

Read what local residents are saying about hot-button issues. Below is a list of comments from people on social media.

Deer Valley Unified eyeing 2 new schools as growth approaches

"Higher taxes." — Larry Stolar-ski

Volunteers pack Glendale stadium to prepare meals on 9/11 Day

"A big thank you to all the volunteers!" — Teresa S.

Lisa Fink endorses Andy Biggs in a letter to the editor

"Right, and he voted to deny Arizonans the right to vote for the president of the United States. And was in on the scheme to create fake electors to reverse the results of the election. He should be in jail." — Keith Troxler

Glendale gas prices rise, except at one Circle K

"There is a former Shell station on Thunderbird south of 83rd Avenue now charging \$ 6.99 a gal for diesel an unleaded is high too! What are Truckers and businesses supposed to do?" — Gilbert Paul Collazo



Lisa Fink

SPONSORED CONTENT

Medicare And You™

Medicare's Annual Enrollment: Let's Get Ready for 2027



Jim Schmidt, Medicare And You™

By Jim Schmidt

*Trusted & Seasoned Medicare
Authority, Advocate, & Advisor*

Welcome Back! Here we are, every fall, Medicare gives beneficiaries a window to take a fresh look at their coverage, and that window is about to open. Starting **October 1st**, plans can now be discussed for the upcoming year. From **October 15th through December 7th** is when folks change make changes if desired. The Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) allows anyone already on a Medicare Advantage plan or a PDP to review their current plan, compare it against the 2027 offerings, and make changes if that is in your best interest, and it makes sense for the year ahead. Any change you make during this window takes effect January 1, 2027.

Here's what I want every one of my clients, also for everyone that en-

joys these monthly articles touches to understand: Your plan is not going to be the same plan next year. Carriers adjust their benefits, drug formularies, provider networks, premiums, copays, and out-of-pocket maximums every single year. A plan that was a perfect fit for you in 2026 may look anywhere from slightly to significantly different in 2027. That's exactly why this season matters, and why doing nothing can quietly cost you money and access to the doctors and medications you count on.

Your ANOC letter is your first clue! Please do not disregard this letter delivered via USPS.

By September 30, your current plan carrier is required to mail you an **Annual Notice of Change (ANOC)**. This is one of the most important pieces of mail you'll receive all year, and I can't stress this enough. The ANOC spells out exactly what is changing on your plan for 2027 — premium adjustments, changes to your prescription costs, network updates, and benefit modifications. Too many people set it aside unopened. If yours has arrived, hold onto it. If you'd like a second set of eyes to make sense of it, that's precisely the kind of conversation I'm here for.

Not on Medicare yet? This window isn't your only door.

If you're aging into Medicare — turning 65 — or you're retiring and coming off an employer group health plan, the October 15 to December 7 window does not apply to you the same way. You have your **very own election period** built around your specific situation: an Initial Enrollment Period when you turn 65, or a Special

Enrollment Period when you leave employer coverage. In other words, you're not on the clock with everyone else, and you haven't missed anything. You're safe. When you're ready to talk through your options and time everything correctly, I'm ready when you are — there's no rush and no pressure.

The smartest way to prepare.

Here are the steps I'd share with anyone getting ready for this season. **First**, gather your ANOC letter, your current plan card, and a simple, up-to-date list of your prescriptions and the pharmacy you use. **Second**, jot down the doctors and specialists you never want to lose. **Third** — and this is where I come in — sit down with a seasoned, trusted **local** Medicare broker before you make any decision. Not a call center, not a rushed online quote, but someone who knows the local market and its trends, knows the carriers, and knows you.

That last point is the heart of what I do. With more than two decades in this field, I don't guess — I take the guesswork off your plate entirely. I'll review your current coverage line by line, compare it against every 2027 option worth considering, and tell you honestly whether you should stay put or make a move. Sometimes the best advice I give a client is "your plan still fits — don't change a thing." If anyone tries to change your plan, don't walk away from them...run away from them because they most likely are either unfamiliar and uneducated, or they are being self-serving for a new piece of business and a commission. Other times, a small adjustment saves real dollars or protects access to a doctor you can't imagine switching. Either way, you'll know, and you'll

walk into the new year with clarity.

Let's talk — even if it's just a question or two.

You don't need to wait for a problem to reach out. Whether you want a full plan review, a walk-through of your ANOC, or simply have a quick question rattling around, my door is open. I've built my practice on being that consistent, dependable resource my clients can count on today and for all the years to come — and that's a promise, not a slogan. The Annual Enrollment Period runs October 15 through December 7. Let's make sure your 2027 coverage is working as hard for you as you worked to earn your retirement.

Next Month's Article:

Come November, continued vigilance, what to look for, knowing your rights, and where to seek out assistance. If your mailbox feels heavier and every other commercial promises you the moon, you are not imagining things. Annual Enrollment brings the wolves in sheep's clothing right out into the open, counting on the noise to rush you. I will show you the red flags, and why a plan waving "shiny add-ons" at you is not the same as one that stands on its own. Remember, you never have to sign anything today, and you never have to figure it out alone.

About the Author:

Jim Schmidt is a trusted Medicare Advocate herein Arizona, since 2006. Jim never charges a fee for those that are in need or reach out to him. Contact Jim any time at 480-296-3900 or JimSchmidt@MedicareAndYou.Reviews

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Lacrosse

• From page 4

Teams for older ages typically have 15-16 players on the roster.

King arrived in Glendale from Ahwatukee, where he coached the girls team. His wife is also on the board of directors for the girls league.

Their daughter's school closed, so the family decided to move. King quickly partnered with the Arrowhead Warriors, and Sydney King brought her experience to the team.

"Honestly without the support of Lou and the Arrowhead Warriors club, this wouldn't be possible. It's an insane amount of work just to run the practices, rosters and games," King said. "I don't know if people realize how much work goes into just getting to that point. The insurance, having the apps set up, the money needed, the gear, etc. They are an established well-run club, and they were ready to launch the girls club. Without that base of support, there is a 0% chance we'd have this for fall."

King gave the Warriors a dedicated girls coach to teach the game to the kids.

"It was good to have somebody that could lead that charge. I only have a son. I've got a niece, but she doesn't want to play lacrosse," Toth said. "It was good to find somebody that had a daughter that wanted to play."

This sport is made for new girls to join, King said. The primary goal is to focus on building on the 8U and 10U teams as the foundations.

"Surprisingly it's a sport that girls can have success in on day 1. It looks a bit intimidating, but once they scoop that first ball they see 'oh I can do this.' Now, there is more to the game as they grow and evolve, but at 8U and 10U if you can scoop you can play," King said.

The Arizona Girls Youth Lacrosse league has games every Saturday through the end of October.

Arrowhead practices at Foothills Park, 19703 N. 57th Ave., Glendale.

"My only goal is for the girls to have fun, feel supported, and fall in love with the sport. Everything else past that will just be a bonus," King said. "We of course still need to recruit, but the best recruiters will be the girls themselves telling all their friends how much fun they have this fall."

Letters

• From page 10

parents and tried to take away the educational choice that so many Arizona families depend on for the unique needs of their children. She's failed to responsibly manage our water and she remains under criminal investigation for a pay-to-play scheme benefitting a political donor instead of protecting bureaucrats and kowtowing to special interests, Andy Biggs will stand with Arizonans first.

As a former state Senate president, he's written multiple conservative state budgets that cut taxes and put our state on strong financial footing.

He'll defend school choice, he'll protect the medical freedoms of Arizonans and he'll invest in public safety to keep communities in the West Valley safe.

Andy has laid out a clear ethics and transparency package to show the specific steps he'll take to root out corruption, protect taxpayers, and keep foreign interests from impacting our elections.

Now is the time for West Valley conservatives to unite and coalesce behind a proven conservative leader. Please join me in supporting Andy Biggs for governor.

Lisa Fink
GLENDALE

Incumbent Rep. Lisa Fink is seeking re-election in Legislative District 27.

EDUCATION



Hillcrest Middle School in Glendale is among the campuses that could be affected by proposed Deer Valley Unified School District attendance boundary changes. The Governing Board could vote Oct. 6 on options that would reassign students from surrounding school attendance areas to Hillcrest beginning in the 2027-28 school year. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

DVUSD boundary decision pushed until October

Board members ask for updated enrollment data

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Deer Valley Unified School District's lengthy process of redrawing attendance boundaries in its northern

neighborhoods appears to be nearing its conclusion, but a final decision will have to wait until this month.

The Governing Board voted Sept. 22 to table proposed boundary changes until its next meeting, on Oct. 6, giving members time to review updated enrollment projections before deciding on changes that could affect Glendale schools beginning in the 2027-28

• See **Boundary** on page 14

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Boundary

• From page 13

school year.

The district's Long Range Planning Committee recommended two proposals intended to address overcrowding and underenrollment.

Option A would reassign approximately 151 students from areas currently served by Inspiration Mountain and Stetson Hills schools to Las Brisas Elementary School and Hillcrest Middle School. Option C would incorporate those changes while adding another area currently assigned to Stetson Hills.

Heather Mock, deputy superintendent of fiscal and business services, said the committee also considered whether students from the developing Paseo Heights neighborhood could be reassigned from Desert Sage Elementary School to Las Brisas.

However, Desert Sage is projected to operate at approximately 44% ca-

IF YOU GO

What: DVUSD governing board meeting

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 6

Where: DVUSD Governing Board Room, 20402 N. 15th Ave., or streamed live at youtube.com/@dvusdboard/streams

capacity without those students. Reassigning the neighborhood could leave the school below 50% capacity, Mock said. Transportation also presented challenges. Mock said some proposed boundary changes could roughly double bus routes by moving students from K-8 schools to separate elementary and middle school campuses. Option A, however, was the only proposal supported by the district's transportation department because it could be implemented using existing buses and staff without adding routes.

Board member Kim Fisher questioned approving boundaries before receiving updated enrollment projections, citing state average daily membership figures suggesting a districtwide decline from last year of approximately 925 students.

"I just think there's ... we're pushing it without adequate data," Fisher said.

Mock clarified that average daily membership, used for school funding, differs from actual enrollment figures used by the district's demographer.

She noted that Inspiration Mountain's enrollment was 48 students above projections, while Las Brisas remained substantially underenrolled.

Board member Stephanie Simacek also questioned the timing of deciding Sept. 22.

"We're having the presentation to night. I don't understand why we're voting on it tonight at the same time," she said, emphasizing the need to review information and hear community input.

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FROM THE COVER

Theater

• From page 1

brary auditorium.

“Ivy has worked very hard to accommodate us. And I just can’t get over her patience,” Simpson said. “I’m like, ‘Can we get 250 performances next February?’ I literally started at 250 because that’s the standard of more fringe festivals, which is insanely huge. She just said, ‘That’s a lot.’ We whittled it down.”

Simpson grew up in rural Pinal County and began her theater career in 1972 in Toronto.

She is best known for her play “A Single Woman,” about the life of Jeanette Rankin. She starred in the 2008 film adaptation of the play.

Arizona Theatre Matters began in 2012 in Tucson.

“We were always struggling to find venues. In Tucson, it’s just impossible. Everybody is sympathetic about the concept of needing access. However, nobody’s helpful,” Simpson said. “We tried to retrofit by going to Arizona Theatre Company and Phoenix Theatre Company. There will be a finite number of performances that will have a sign language interpreter.”

Its productions include free online theatre built from the beginning for blind, deaf, hearing and sighted audiences.

Simpson said she grew tired of contemporary theater companies halting efforts to make shows more accessible. “It’s crawling along at a glacial pace, and I’m done waiting,” Simpson said.

The company and upcoming festival are milestone moments for Glendale, a city looking to shed a label as an artistic and cultural desert.

Arizona Theatre Matters was one of more than 30 applicants for the city’s performing arts grant program. Glendale Arts and Culture Adminis-



Arizona Theatre Matters conducts its final rehearsal of a reading of “Even Unto Death” at the Glendale Main Library Auditorium in October 2025. Actors on stage are, from left: Eric Darling-Bond, Dineta Williams-Trigg, Kiley Bishop, Debra Lyman, J.P. Clemente, Nathaniel Tilden and Eric Banks. Sign language interpreters on the floor are Jerriann Skinner, left, and Judy Robbins.

trator Christopher Taylor thanked the Main Library staff for their continued partnership with this program.

“Every arts, music and performing arts program brings us one step closer to establishing Glendale as a viable destination for engaging and entertaining events, and the Fringe Festival is continuing this great momentum,” stated Taylor in an email.

Simpson moved to Glendale and Arizona Theatre Matters came along. The company had a shoestring \$25,000 budget for the first three years and little luck finding a venue in the Valley.

Brelby Theatre Company was the source for theater in Glendale, staging productions at 7154 N. 58th Drive downtown. Simpson was going to play a nurse in Brelby’s performance of “Shakespeare in Love.”

“I have a relationship with Brelby because they were three miles from my house when we moved here, before we moved to the retirement community where we now live,” Simpson said.

Then COVID-19 and by the time it reopened, the renamed Brelby Productions no longer had a long-term home in the city.

Brelby Productions pivoted to a primarily online production model focusing on web series.

Arizona Theatre Matters took its productions online during COVID and found community across the globe.

“Then COVID happened and we moved to completely online and digital shows. We started our YouTube Channel and it went from 640-something subscribers to over 120,000 over the course of COVID,” Simpson said.

Simpson credited production manager Kevin Tye, who works in a Mesa-based studio, for breathing life into the productions going out to this global audience — which now gets in on the plays.

“The Tempest,” included actors in Thailand, Canada and other states. Some frequent collaborators still drive up from Tucson.

Arizona Theatre Matters now presents productions in Glendale and online with sign language available. If potential patrons find that distracting from the play, so be it.

“We don’t need to be all things to all people. There’s plenty of people that need what we do,” Simpson said.

The relationship with Brelby remains. For families, Brelby Productions premieres a new, all-ages work created especially for the Glendale International Fringe Festival.

Actor Mike Zimmerer will play S.

Brian Willson in “On Track” at the fringe festival. Written, directed and developed for two decades by Simpson with Wilson’s consent and cooperation, the play showcases the life of the Vietnam veteran, attorney and peace activist, who lost both legs in 1987 when he was struck by a munitions train he was attempting to stop in an act of nonviolent protest.

“My opinion is that it is a theater company, and one of its priorities, if not the guiding priority, is the importance of access. So in that sense, one of the main priorities is theater advocacy and maybe audience advocacy as well,” Zimmerer said.

A series of six weeks of workshops two days a week was the company’s first involvement with the Glendale Public Library.

Ivy said the theater company’s commitment to accessibility dovetails with Glendale Library’s mission.

“The problem I would like to work through is, it’s hard to promote some of this to our community in a way that lets them understand what is being offered,” Jarvis said. “A lot of what we offer as a library isn’t typical for a library.”

A direct partnership with a city library venue gives Arizona Theatre Matters an advantage.

“Glendale (libraries) is spectacular, when it comes to accommodation and hospitality and accessibility,” Simpson said.

This will be the company’s first fringe festival. All six productions clock in at less than 60 minutes, Simpson said.

Fringe festivals are typically non-union sanctioned. Simpson will not consider a nonunion setup.

“We’re the only professional theater in the West Valley, and we are a professional theater. Every show in the fringe is free, but every performer is compensated handsomely for each performance,” Simpson said.

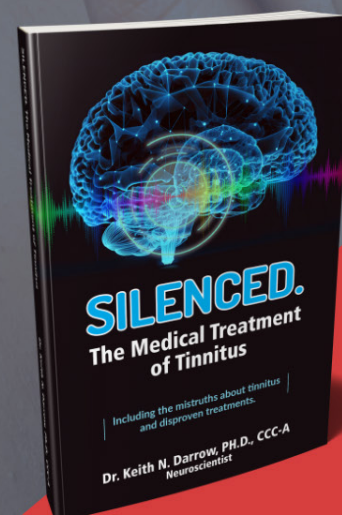
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Mountain Ridge junior quarterback Amiaya Tice leaps a bit while throwing downfield as Canyon View senior Mariah Murphy rushes during the season opening game for both teams Sept. 15 at Mountain Ridge High School in Glendale (Courtesy Lee Myers Photography/For Independent Newsmedia)

NW Valley flag football quarterbacks take flight

Tice takes Mountain Ridge airborne

Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Girls flag football, with its 7-on-7 set up, is inherently a quarterback's game.

As its fourth year as an official Arizona Interscholastic Association begins, those passes are traveling further in the air and receivers' route concepts are more sophisticated. Two transfers from the Class of 2028 are reshaping the landscape north of Loop 101.

Amiaya Tice transferred in from Northwest Christian for a 2025 sophomore season as Mountain Ridge's starter. In early January, Liberty became the state flag football epicenter after Marlie Phillips transferred in from Chandler Hamilton after throwing an eye-popping 104 touchdowns or the undefeated 6A state champions.

Tice threw 43 touchdown in her

Mountain Ridge debut last fall. She said she needs to improve against pass rush pressure and more complicated coverages.

"They didn't have it there so I transferred here. It was amazing," Tice said. "I knew something about the game, but it was my first time doing high school sevens. It was definitely different and took me some time but I definitely got it toward the end and it was a lot easier as the team connected."

The spring semester was then-sophomore Phillips's first time attending classes in person since fifth grade.

She spent years studying online through the Chandler Online Academy and traveling 50 miles one way to Hamilton for practice and games.

"There's a lot of mutual respect around here that I really like. I had to come in and earn it. It wasn't given on day one," Phillips said. "I'm super

• See **Flag Football** on page 20

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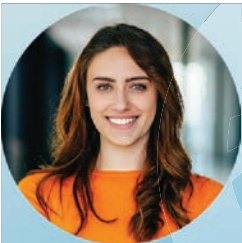
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THINGS TO DO

OCT. 1

Ballet Under the Stars

Ballet Arizona makes its return to Glendale. This free, family-friendly performance brings professional ballet into the heart of the community. Set against the backdrop of Glendale's historic park, the evening will feature a program of classical and contemporary works performed by Ballet Arizona. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and blankets. Beginning at 5, guests can enjoy activities including live music, and outdoor games.

Sahuaro Ranch
Historic Park
9802 N. 59th Ave.
7 p.m.

OCT. 23

Gifts & Goodies

The Halloween celebration is returning to Glendale's Westgate Entertainment District for an evening full of family-friendly activities, costumes, candy and spooky entertainment. Guests can trick-or-treat, or compete in costume contests and enjoy interactive activities. This year's event will also feature animal expert and multi-format personality Corbin Maxey, who will present a live 45-minute animal show featuring a surprise lineup of animal ambassadors.

Westgate Entertainment
District
9400 W. Hanna Lane
5-7:30 p.m.

Flag Football

• From page 18

grateful for this opportunity.”

Meanwhile, the local veteran looms with another team capable of winning the 6A West Valley Region. O'Connor senior Kylie Pruitt is a third-year starter who threw for 3,314 yards and 29 touchdowns as the Eagles reached the 6A quarterfinals.

“Over the years I’ve learned defenses so much more,” Pruitt said. “Knowing my receivers and building that chemistry with them changes the game so much.”

Settling into the 7s game

Phillips is building that rapport with her receiving corps during the offseason.

Liberty will have to wait until mid-October to see the results.

“It was a real surprise. At first it was trying to figure out what the deal was. Then we just embraced

it after that. When she showed up, it’s been a blessing ever since. She’s amazing young athlete,” Liberty Coach Josh Ahlvin said.

Tice said in her second year with the Mountain Lions she needs to improve against pass rush pressure and more complicated coverages.

“They didn’t have it there so I transferred here. It was amazing,” Tice said. “I knew something about the game but it was my first time doing high school sevens. It was definitely different and took me some time but I definitely got it toward the end and it was a lot easier as the team connected.”

Tice has several new receivers to work with after the graduation of Cameron Mailloux, Kaliyahna Baldwin and Peyton Yankovich.

Mountain Ridge Coach Whitney Warmus said Azul Mondragon-Lopez is a stud athlete, playing three sports and that Emily Scott came back faster and changes di-

rections is uncanny. Seniors Allie Jensen and Tahlia Hempen play club ball with Tice.

“We have Tahlia Hempen in the slot. She’s an amazing receiver and knows how to read defenses. Allie Jensen on the wide out. We just have powerhouse receivers. We have Lauren Laaker. The receivers are amazing,” Tice said.

Coming from 5-on-5 club flag football was a big step because the 7s field is wider, Tice said.

Tice came in with good throwing mechanics and a strong arm, Warmus said.

“It definitely was a learning curve for her. It’s a bigger field — a way bigger field. With sevens there’s a lot more people on the field. Now there’s more spacing and you need to utilize that spacing,” Warmus said. “I think she’s one of the best running quarterbacks in the state. Her technique throwing is great.”

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