



Things to do

Annual Día de los Muertos Festival
Oct. 24-25; **12**



INDEPENDENT



Neighbors

80-year-old retiree volunteers at school; **11**

October/November 2026

Volume 6 Issue 10

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

New Frontiers offers adults learning without tests



By Tom Blodgett
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

There are no grades, no attendance sheets and no final exams at New Frontiers for Lifelong Learning.

What its members do have is a fall catalog with more than 80 classes, along with hiking and bicycling groups, book discussions, outings, lunches, volunteer opportunities and plen-

ty of chances to meet someone new.

For longtime member Allan Zisner, the group's president, that combination is the point.

"Just come and have a good time," Zisner said. "No attendance is taken. There's no test afterwards. Just have a good time. Share with your knowledge, what you know."

New Frontiers, a peer-led organization with

• See **Learning** on page 4

Allan Zisner speaks about the New Frontiers for Lifelong Learning program while, from left, Ray Banks, Gloria Bruce, Jacki McDugle, Carol Stantion and Merri Marx listen in. (Independent Newsmedia, Tom Blodgett)

Council OKs notice of intent to raise utility rates

By Janet Perez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Mesa City Council has approved a notice of intent to raise water, wastewater and solid waste fees, a monthly increase of about \$6 for the average homeowner.

The city is also looking to increase rates for its electric and natural gas customers.

The notice, unanimously passed by the council on Oct. 5, has started the clock on a 60-day public notice period.

The council will be holding a public hearing and acting on the proposed rate hikes for water, wastewater, solid waste, electricity and natural gas when it meets on Dec. 8.

"If council wanted to adopt a rate higher than what is in the notice, council would need to first adopt a new notice of intention for that rate," Mayor Mark Freeman said. "In other words, this notice is the maximum

• See **Utility Rates** on page 15

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Learning

• From page 1

longtime ties to Mesa Community College, held an orientation for new members Sept. 25 at the college's Red Mountain campus. The gathering offered a glimpse of an organization that mixes continuing education with recreation, volunteering and social connections for adults in the East Valley.

New members described arriving at New Frontiers by different paths, but repeatedly mentioned a desire to keep learning, meet people or remain active.

Connie Brown said she found the organization while searching for seminars and discovered a New Frontiers program on the Navajo Code Talkers.

"It was amazing," she said. "But I'm just looking for learning situations."

Those opportunities range widely.

The fall schedule includes about 83 classes, according to organizers, with subjects including history, textiles, personal finance, estate planning, travel and current affairs. Some are one-time programs while others run for several sessions. Classes are offered both in person and online. View the fall schedule at newfrontiers.mesacc.edu.

There also are book groups, games, two levels of hiking, bicycling and a social calendar that can include tours, restaurant gatherings and other outings.

New Frontiers curriculum coordinator Suzanne Brown — no relation to Connie Brown — put the membership count at 173. Brown said that was about 20 ahead of the organization's membership at the same point last year.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, membership had reached about 400, Zisner said. The organization lost about half its membership during the pandemic but quickly moved its programming online before gradually returning to in-person activities.

Jacki McDugle, a retired college instructor, joined New Frontiers shortly



Allan Zisner encourages people to come to New Frontiers for Lifelong Learning to come out for a good time. (Independent Newsmedia, Tom Blodgett)

before that disruption.

After her husband died, McDugle and a friend followed through on an idea they had discussed about getting involved with the organization. They attended an open house in January 2020 and joined. Within months, the pandemic shut down in-person activities.

"I could not believe this group," she said. "They switched to Zoom overnight almost."

She stayed, eventually becoming heavily involved herself.

For McDugle, New Frontiers offers some of the things she enjoyed about education during her career without the less appealing parts of teaching.

"We're having fun," she said. "I don't have to grade any papers, no matter how many classes I facilitate. I don't have a test to give. I don't have any papers to take home."

New member Ray Banks came to the Phoenix area in 1986 after previously living near London and in Chicago. His wife of about 38 years recently died.

Banks told the group he was happy to be there as members went around the room introducing themselves and explaining what had brought them to New Frontiers.

Other newcomers were looking ahead to a different stage of life.

Cynthia Ellsworth, a Mesa native, retired a couple of years ago after spending 45 years working at the

same resort in the hospitality industry. She enjoys bicycling and traveling and learned about New Frontiers through friends.

"I'm enjoying my time off," Ellsworth said.

Jennifer Denton brought another set of interests.

Denton grew up in New York's Finger Lakes region and became a nurse before turning to travel nursing, which eventually brought her to Arizona. She told the group she is interested in history, nature and books and also has an interest in helping young people aging out of foster care.

Although retired from nursing, Denton said retirement has not exactly ended her professional role.

"I don't consider myself retired because I seem to be a consultant for a lot of people," she said.

Connie Brown is not retired at all.

Brown, originally from Florida, came to Arizona through her career with America West Airlines and now works in real estate. She and her husband adopted two daughters from China when they were in their 40s, and she still has children in college and graduate school.

Her schedule nevertheless gives her flexibility to explore New Frontiers.

"I really wanted to get involved with a group for lifelong learning," Brown said.

She said she loves history and travel and is interested in trying the organization's less strenuous hiking group, tours and other activities.

The mixture of education and social interaction is deliberate.

Zisner said classes can lead to conversations between people with similar interests and sometimes to friendships that continue after a session ends.

"You meet somebody, you start yacking together and you say, 'Let's go for lunch,'" he said. "And that's part of it, meeting other people, getting out of your comfort zone a little bit."

The social committee typically

• See **Learning** on page 16



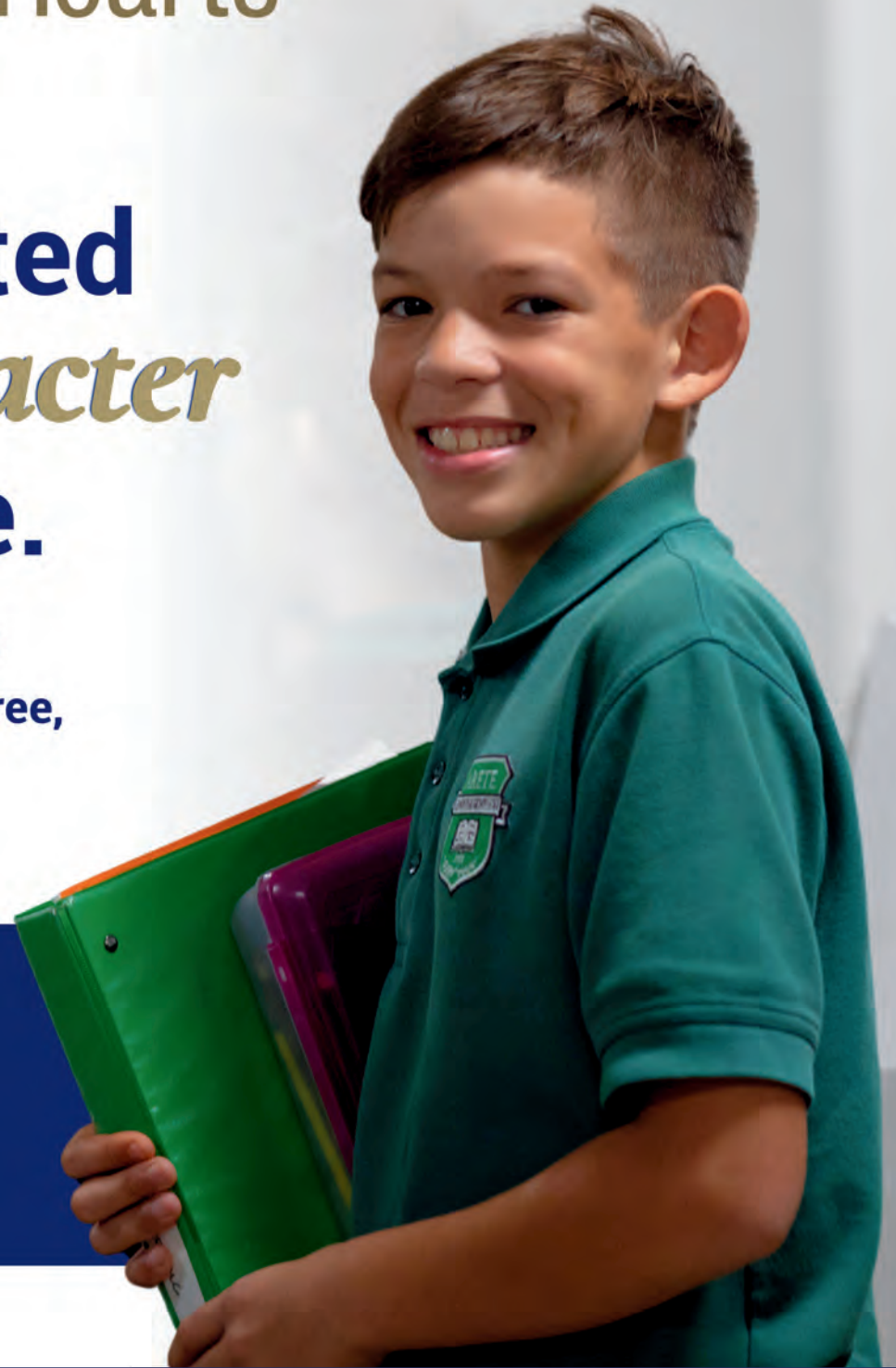
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COMMUNITY

Early voting begins for Nov. 3 General Election in Mesa

Early voting began Oct. 7 for the Nov. 3 General Election. Mesa voters will consider four city ballot questions. Residents in District 5 will vote in a District 5 council member runoff.

City ballot questions are:

- Question 1: general obligation bond to enhance public safety
- Question 2: general obligation bond to enhance transportation improvements for safer and less congested streets

- Question 3: charter amendment for section 209 (a) relating to council meeting procedures and public notice

- Question 4: charter amendment for section 211 relating to ordinance posting and publication

To learn more about the Mesa ballot measures and general election information, visit mesaaz.gov/elections and review the 2026 General Election Publicity Pamphlet.

For questions, contact the Mesa City Clerk's Office at 480-644-2099 or clerk.info@mesaaz.gov.

Mesa voters will also decide on several items for Mesa Public Schools:

- Four candidates — Joshua Chilton, Jennifer Echols, Jason Smithson and Rachel Walden — are competing for two board seats.

- Mesa residents will have the option to approve or deny Proposition 419 — a bond for MPS of over \$449 million for infrastructure, technology and transportation improvements — and Proposition 420, which allows the district to sell, lease or exchange roughly 23 acres of property that is currently vacant.

For information on the MPS propositions, go to <https://www.mpsaz.org/o/mpsaz/page/prop419>



When criminal charges are filed with the Mesa Municipal Court, the Victim Services Unit reviews the case to identify victims and notifies them of their rights, case status and court dates. (City of Mesa)

Mesa victim services unit gets \$475K in federal funds

By Janet Perez

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Mesa will receive \$475,000 in federal grant funds to help support victim services.

The Mesa City Council recently unanimously voted to enter into a contract with the Arizona Department of Public Safety to receive federal funding through the federal Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Grant Program.

The funding award was on the council consent agenda which is handled through one motion and vote.

The \$475,076 in funding will cover a one-year period for fiscal year 2026.

"VOCA grant funds will support 40% of the total victim services program costs for the city of Mesa Prosecutor's Office Victim Services Unit," according to a staff report.

Program costs include salary and

employee-related expenses for 11 victim services staff, including six victim services assistants, one senior victim services assistant and four victim notification clerks, the report continued.

"Historically, the Victim Services Unit at the Mesa City Prosecutor's Office has been largely funded by the VOCA grant and previously received \$510,012 in grant funding for fiscal year 2025," the report stated.

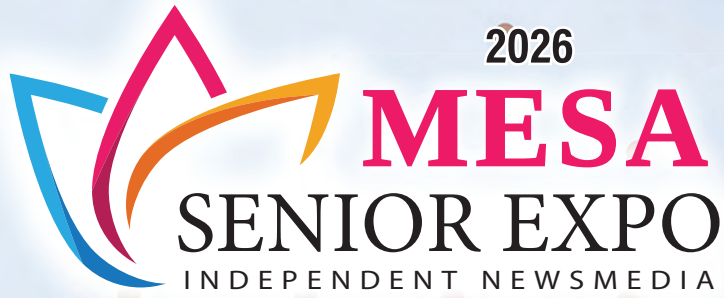
However, due to "concerns about the stability of the Crime Victims Fund balance," which was established in 1984, the 2026 VOCA amount for Mesa dropped by 7%.

For fiscal year 2027, DPS, through the federal government, is awarding Mesa a one-year non-competitive renewal grant for the same amount as this fiscal year, which will continue to cover about 40% of total program costs for the city prosecutor's office.

"Our Victim Services Unit provides essential educational, advocacy, safety and community support services to tens of thousands of crime victims every year," the report stated. "Without the guidance, advocacy, and support offered by Victim Services, some crime victims in Mesa may never fully exercise their victims' rights or participate in the justice system in a meaningful way."

In fiscal year 2026, the unit served 14,847 victims.

"The funds provided by this grant will help the Victim Services Unit continue to provide critical services to victims, supporting them through the criminal justice process, ensuring they have full knowledge of and access to their victims' rights, and assisting them in attaining full restoration after victimization by addressing safety, healing and economic needs," the report continued.

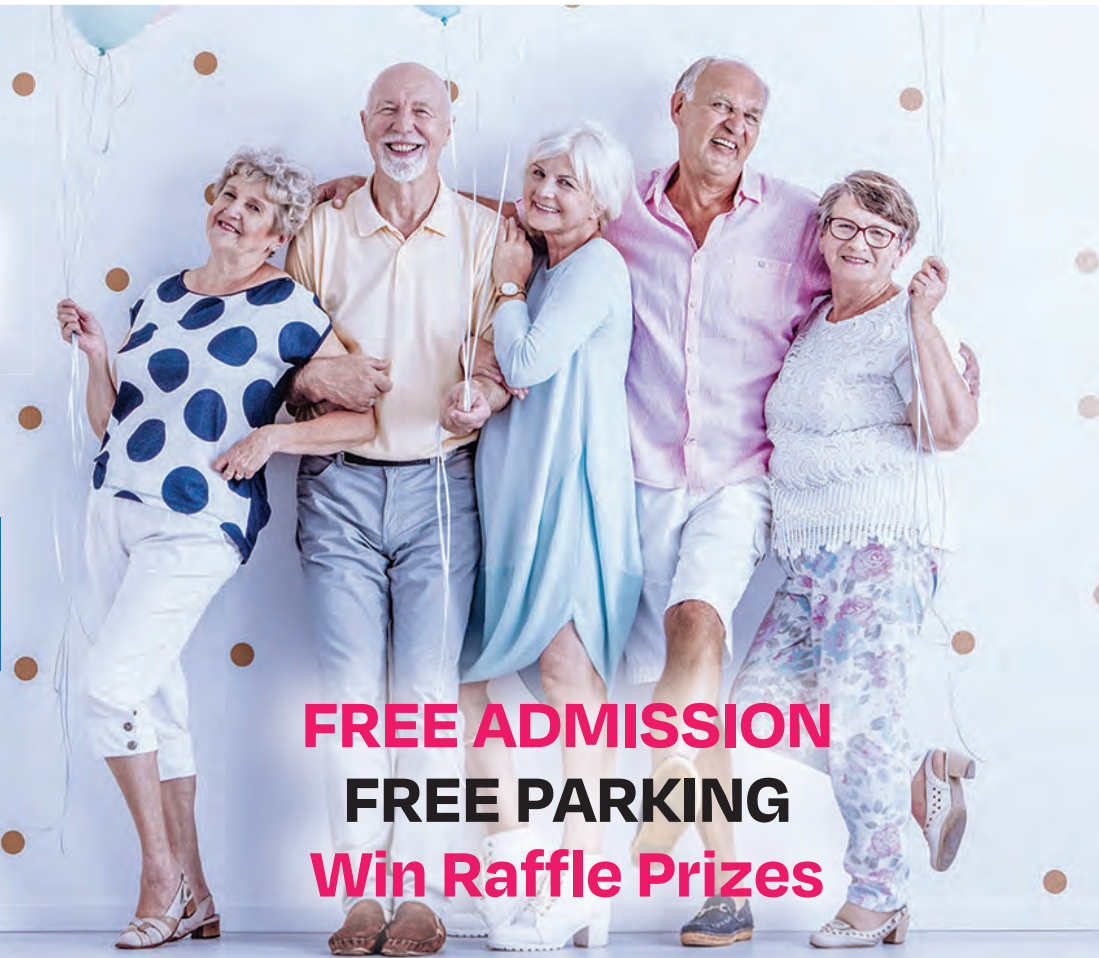


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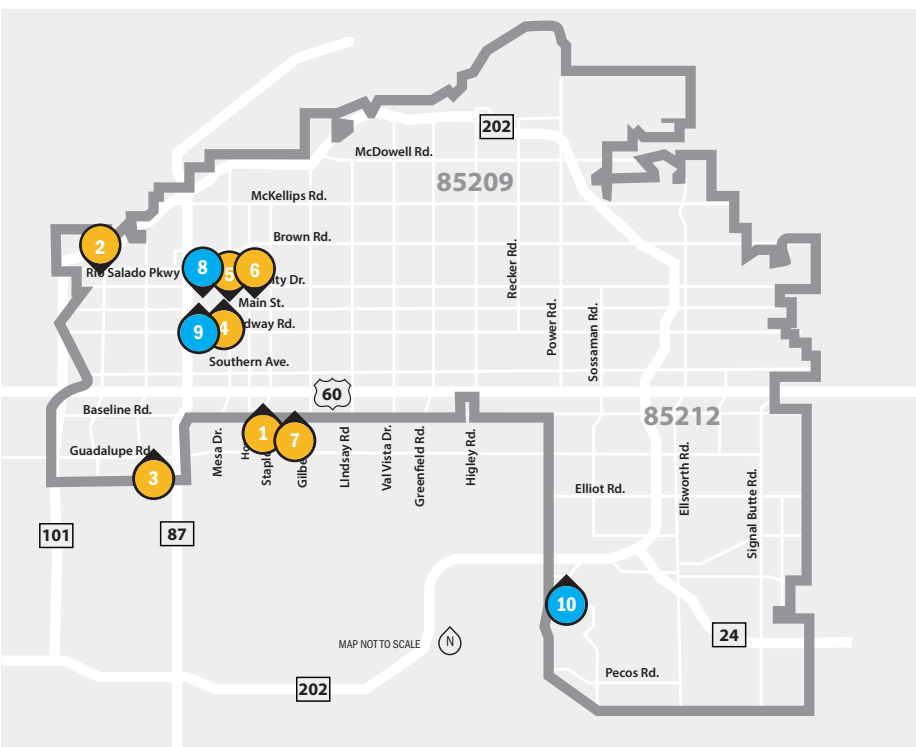


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BUSINESS MOVES



Compiled by Richard H. Dyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

LIQUOR LICENSES

The Mesa City Council on Sept. 28 voted to recommend the Arizona Department of Liquor License and Control approve the following licenses as part of its consent agenda in which all items are voted on through one motion and vote:

1 • A new series 12 restaurant license for **Ox Korean BBQ**, a Mesa restaurant that serves lunch and dinner. The license is for MS Korean BBQ LLC, 1622 S. Stapley Drive in Mesa. Junyan Liu is the agent. There is no existing license at this location.

The Mesa City Council on Oct. 5 voted to recommend the Arizona Department of Liquor License and Control approve the following licenses as part of its consent agenda in which all items are voted on through one motion and vote:

2 • A new series 10 beer and wine store license for **Blue Dragon Smoke & Vape**, a Mesa smoke shop. It is for Blue Dragon Smoke & Vape LLC, 430 N. Dobson Road Suite Nos. 100-101 in Mesa. Jeffrey Craig Miller is the agent. There is no existing license at this location.

3 • A new series 12 restaurant license for **Harbor Seafood & Cajun House**, a Mesa restaurant that serves lunch and dinner. Then license is for Pufferfish LLC, 2711 S. Alma School Road Suite No. 14. Jeffrey Craig Miller is the agent. The existing series 12 restaurant license held by Haedod One LLC will revert to the state.

4 • An ownership transfer of an existing series 7 beer and wine bar license is being sought for **The Sacred Pint**, a Mesa bar. The license is for The Sacred Pint 214 LLC, 214 W. Main St. in Mesa. Jennifer Laurel

McCartney is the agent. The existing series 7 beer and wine bar license held by The Sacred Pint LLC will revert to the state for modification.

5 • A new series 12 restaurant license for **Altar by Pinnacle Brewing**, a Mesa tap room that serves lunch and dinner. The license is for Pinnacle Brewing Co., 104 W. Main St. Suite No. 101 in Mesa. Robert William Wilson is the agent. There is no existing license at this location.

6 • A new series 12 restaurant license for **Buddha's Brew Coffee Café**, a Mesa café that serves breakfast and lunch. The license is for Old Town Ink Mesa LLC, 710 E. Main St. in Mesa. Michael Joseph Schreier is the agent. There is no existing license at this location.

7 • A new series 12 restaurant license for **Shima Sushi**, a Mesa restaurant that serves lunch and dinner. It is for Sushi Nakano Inc., 1902 E. Baseline Road Suite No. 5 in Mesa. Leo Nakano is the agent. There is no existing license at this location.

NOW OPEN

8 **Stage 12 West**, formerly known as 12 West Brewing on Main, held its grand opening Oct. 2 at 12 W. Main St. in Mesa. The venue combines high-fidelity sound, immersive laser displays and elevated dining in the heart of West Mesa. It has live music, sensory-driven visuals and a chef-crafted menu. Entrees include grilled salmon fillet, BBQ pulled pork sandwiches and vegetarian pasta primavera, alongside shareable favorites including spicy chicken wings, loaded nachos, and a bruschetta trio. Desserts include chocolate lava cake, classic cheesecake, and apple crisp, the release states. Stage 12 West also features its

9 speakeasy downstairs called **Jo-lie's Secret** celebrated its grand opening Oct. 9.

The city of Mesa, Hilton and VIVO



LIQUOR LICENSES



STAGE 12 WEST



HILTON

Development Partners held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Sept. 28 for the dual-brand **Tempo by Hilton**

10 **Gallery Park and Homewood Suites Phoenix/Mesa Airport**. Located at 5057 S. Power Road, the four-story, 174-room hotel combines two Hilton brands. Tempo by Hilton Gallery Park features 70 rooms for business and leisure travelers, while Homewood Suites Phoenix/Mesa Airport offers 77 extended-stay suites. The project marks the Phoenix-metro area debut of Hilton's Tempo brand and expands Hilton's presence in Mesa.

If you have a new business that has just opened, is under construction or is celebrating an anniversary, please email rdyer@iniusa.org



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Balance Problems

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DEVELOPMENT



Thirty two- and three-story units are planned in five buildings. (City of Mesa)

30-townhome development planned along canal

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A 30-unit townhome development is planned along the Roosevelt Water Conservation District canal north of the northwest corner of East Brown Road and North Greenfield Road in Mesa.

The Mesa Planning and Zoning Board on Sept. 23 voted 4-3 to recommend the Mesa City Council approve rezoning 1.9 acres from single residence-35 to multiple residence-3 with a planned-area development overlay and approving a site plan review. Dissenting were Vice Chairperson Jeff Pitcher and board members Jeff Trexler and Troy Peterson.

Two- and three-story units are planned in five buildings. Two amenity areas are planned, one with a



The landscape plan for a new Terrible's gas station and convenience store includes mulga and date palm trees. It also includes valentine emu bush, green cloud, sage, lantana and red yucca shrubs. (City of Mesa)

swimming pool and a ramada.

Nineteen people against the project voiced their opinions during a public hearing at the board meeting or on submitted comment cards. Concerns included privacy with buildings taller than single-family homes to the west, the new development contributing to traffic and congestion on Greenfield Road, and likely overflow parking west of the canal.

Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/2ju57umu>

Terrible's convenience store planned

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A Terrible's convenience market and accessory service station is planned south of the South Crismon Road and East Hampton Avenue intersection in Mesa.

The Mesa Planning and Zoning

Board on Sept. 23 voted unanimously as part of a consent agenda with other item to recommend the Mesa City Council approve rezoning the 1.3-acre property from planned employment park with a planned-area development overlay to limited commercial and approve a site plan review and special-use permit.

The landscape plan includes mulga and date palm trees; and valentine emu bush, green cloud, sage, lantana and red yucca shrubs, Staff Planner Jennifer Merrill said during a study session prior to the meeting.

Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/2n9j866s>

2 cases continued, 1 withdrawn at adjustment board meeting

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

All four items on the Mesa Board

of Adjustment's Oct. 7 consent agenda were passed in a 5-0 vote with Board members Jessica Sarkissian and Spencer Tippetts absent.

Only the minutes from the Sept. 2 study session and public hearing were approved.

The three other agenda items were to:

- ♦ Continue to a date uncertain a substantial conformance improvement permit application for an RV service building on 5.8 acres at 2038 N. Country Club Drive. The permit is seeking deviations from certain development standards for the expansion of an existing automobile/vehicle sales facility.

- ♦ Continue to the Nov. 4 meeting a special-use permit request for 1.8 acres at 521 E. Lehi Road. It would allow the combined gross floor area of all detached accessory buildings or structures to exceed 100% of the gross floor area of the primary building and a detached structure to exceed the height of the primary building.

- ♦ Administratively withdraw a request for a minor modification to an existing planned-area development overlay for 0.18 acres at 3750 S. Hassett to allow for an increase to the maximum building coverage for one lot in a single-residence subdivision.

Read more at <https://tinyurl.com/3acy924c>

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NEIGHBORS

Sunland Village East resident volunteers at school

By Tristan Chavez

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For 18 years, Barbara Mack — affectionately known by students and staff as “Grandma Barb” — has made the 1-mile walk from her doorstep in Sunland Village East in Mesa to Boulder Creek Elementary School to volunteer and support student learning.

With an infectious smile, a signature hat, and an unyielding positive attitude, the 80-year-old retiree spends four mornings every week giving students one-on-one encouragement that helps drive student success.

A former paraprofessional from Minnesota, Grandma Barb moved to Sunland Village East with her husband nearly two decades ago, but just after arriving, she felt a strong desire to stay connected to local children.

“I was only here a couple weeks be-

fore I said, ‘I’ve got a little too much time on my hands,’” Barb recalls. “I heard there was a school down the road and asked if they wanted a volunteer. This school was so welcoming, comforting, and friendly right from the start that I thought, ‘I can do this.’ It’s the best job I’ve ever had.”

Barb has spent most of her volunteer time assisting second-grade teacher Mrs. Shannon Olson, helping students with reading, working through math games, practicing money and telling time, and guiding them through retakes on assignments.

Barb shares that she is driven by the “aha” moments when a struggling student understands a concept.

Just last school year, Barb says she worked with a small group of students struggling with numbers and the alphabet. Through patience, setting routines,

and using educational games, each of the students completed the school year reading and performing math at grade level.

“How fulfilling can a job ever be than that?” Barb said.

Shannon Olson notes that Barb’s impact goes far beyond academics, instilling accountability, confidence, and warmth in every student she touches.

“She’s amazing,” says Olson. “She’s just a ray of sunshine on campus.”

Grandma Barb shares a message for everyone, her lifelong philosophy passed down to her from her father — share happiness and recognize that small acts of kindness can create a big impact.

“Try to appreciate people, because they have so much potential and so much love,” Barb says.

Tristan Chavez is a Gilbert Public Schools communications specialist.



Barbara Mack, also known as Grandma Barb, helps a student at Boulder Creek Elementary. (Boulder Creek Elementary)



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OCT. 28**John Scofield**

The three-time Grammy Award winner has occasionally detoured from the traditions of straight-ahead jazz, exploring a blend of funk and jazz. Electrospective will rely on interpretative input from Scofield alum and super funk drummer/producer Adam Deitch (Lettuce), multidimensional Larry Goldings (Scary Goldings, James Taylor) on keyboards, and legendary bassist Oteil Burbridge (Dead & Co., Tedeschi Trucks, Allman Brothers).

7:30 p.m. at the Ikeda Theater at Mesa Arts Center, 1 E. Main St. Tickets start at \$52.50 at mesaartscenter.com.

NOV. 7**Rock and gem show**

Rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, jewelry, cabachons, gemstone knives, used lapidary equipment and more will be available 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Apache Junction Rock and Gem Club, 2151 W. Superstition Blvd. Plenty of parking available at the church at Superstition and Ocotillo.

For information, email ajrgctreasurer@gmail.com or go to www.ajrockclub.com.

NOV. 11**Parade**

The theme for the 19th Annual East Valley Veterans Parade is "Freedom Ain't Free, Nifty 250" in honor of our nation's 250th anniversary and 250 years of American military service.

It traditionally attracts more than 90 entries and is attended by thousands along Center Street and First Street in downtown Mesa. 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Go to evvp.org.

NOV. 14**Veterans fundraiser**

Voyager, a Journey tribute band, is performing at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9399's annual veterans fundraiser concert in Apache Junction. All proceeds are used to assist area veterans and their families.

Tickets for adults are \$25 at VFW Post 9399, 133 N. Saguardo Drive in Apache Junction, where it will be held at 7:30 p.m., with doors open at 6 p.m. Bring your own lawn chair to sit on.

THINGS TO DO**Día de los Muertos Festival Oct. 24-25**

The 20th anniversary celebration of the Día de los Muertos Festival is Oct. 24-25 at Mesa Arts Center, 1 E. Main St.

The free two-day celebration features cultural performances, live music, food and drinks, a community altar, a colorful Mercado and more. Plus, enjoy an expanded Saturday evening street party featuring free performances by QVLN (Quetzal Guerrero) at 7 p.m. and Grammy and Latin Grammy award-winning artist Lila Downs at 8 p.m.

For those with sensory sensitivities, Relaxed Hour returns 11 a.m.-noon Oct. 24-25. Enjoy a calmer festival experience with fewer crowds, face painting, hands-on art activities, meet-and-greets with festival performers and more, before the festival officially begins.

Go to mesaartscenter.com/dia-de-los-muertos-festival.



The free two-day celebration features cultural performances, live music, food and drinks, a community altar, a colorful Mercado and more. (City of Mesa)

Vertuccio Farms has corn maze, fall festival

Vertuccio Farms' 5-acre corn maze gets a patriotic makeover for America's 250th. (Vertuccio Farms)

Vertuccio Farms in Mesa is welcoming families back for its 28th Annual Fall Festival, a month-long celebration of America's 250th birthday running Oct. 2-31.

This year's theme, "Rooted in America and the Pursuit of Happiness, Growing Since 1999," honors our nation's 250 years and the farm's 28 years of fall tradition.

Admission is \$17 per person, with kids 2 and under free, and includes a 5-acre corn maze, the new Hen House Hustle, a petting zoo, and more. Guests can save more with \$2 off for a nonperishable food bank donation, \$3 off for military and first responders and \$2 off for seniors, all with ID where required. Leashed dogs are welcome. Parking is free.

Vertuccio Farms, 4011 S. Power Road in Mesa, is open 3-9 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday; noon-7 p.m. Sunday; and closed

Monday and Tuesday except Oct. 26 and 27, when the farm is open 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Last admission is sold one hour before closing. Go to <https://vertucciofarms.com/>

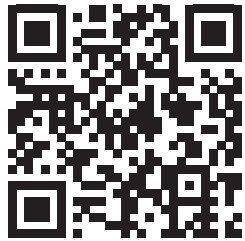
Vertuccio Farms' 5-acre corn maze gets a patriotic makeover for America's 250th, plus a new digital game that turns every twist and dead end into part of the challenge. Get lost in maze-crazed fun for the whole family.

After a run on pumpkins last year, Vertuccio Farms has a record harvest this season, with plenty of pumpkins in our barn to pick for fall porches, tables and mantels. Shoppers can also buy pumpkins in the farm's pumpkin barn without paying the festival admission fee.

There's something for every age at the Fall Festival, from the Mega Slide to the Jump Pads to the Ropes Course, a longtime favorite.

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SPORTS



Competition at the 2026 APP Arizona Open will be open to all pickleball skill levels from 3.0 to pro, across a wide range of age brackets. Players are encouraged to sign up quickly to secure their spots with registration open through late October. (Metro Creative)

Association of Pickleball Players hosting tourney

The Association of Pickleball Players Tour's 2026 APP Arizona Open is set to take place Nov. 12-15 at the sprawling Arizona Athletic Grounds campus in Mesa.

It will be at 6321 S. Ellsworth Road in Mesa.

Beyond a pickleball competition, the event will have something for everyone, with chances for spectators and participants to test their skills, food and drink, official merchandise, giveaways, and a Championship Court to showcase the world's top pickleball players competing for gold medals and cash prizes in front of a national television audience, according to a release.

Competition at the 2026 APP Arizona Open will be open to all pickleball skill levels from 3.0 to pro, across a wide range of age brackets. Players are encouraged to sign up quickly to secure their spots with registration open through late October at <https://www.theapp.global/tour-schedule/2026-app-arizona>.

"We're beyond excited to return to Mesa, one of our favorite

tour stops, for the fourth time," APP Tour Founder Ken Herrmann said in the release. "Arizona is a premier destination for pickleball players and home to some of the world's best players, and we can't wait to see their talents on full display this November in front of great crowds and a national television audience."

With the event taking place shortly after Veterans Day, the APP will celebrate military members and veterans over the four days of festivities. Tickets will be free for service members through the APP's tour-wide partnership with the Veteran Tickets Foundation, also known as Vet Tix, a non-profit organization that provides free tickets to currently serving and veterans of all branches of the US military and their families,

Whether you're a first-time

pickleball player, a hardcore competitor, or simply looking for a fun day out with the family, all are welcome at the APP Tour. Just bring your paddle.

Pickleball Hall of Fame to induct 5 in Gold Canyon

Pickleball competitors Matt Wright, Lucy Kovalova and Dave Weinbach will be inducted into the Pickleball Hall of Fame at November ceremonies in Gold Canyon.

Also to be inducted are contributors Marsha Fresno and Linda Laymon.

The Class of 2026 honors five individuals whose extraordinary contributions have helped shape the growth, competitive excellence and integrity of pickleball,

• See **Sports** on page 17

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Utility Rates

• From page 1



Mayor Mark Freeman

potential rates that council could adopt at the Dec. 8 meeting, but we are not adopting any rates tonight."

If the rate hikes are approved, the increases will become effective on Feb. 1.

For a typical household that uses 6,000 gallons of water per month, the increase in water, wastewater and solid waste rates would be \$5.92. Mesa has a combined total of 162,330 residential and business water service connections.

Electric rates would increase by \$3.66 and natural gas would go up by \$2.35.

Mesa provides electricity to more than 18,000 residential and commercial customers in a 5.5-square-mile-area, including downtown Mesa, according to the city's website.

The city provides natural gas service to more than 82,000 homes and businesses in Mesa and the Magma service area, a 235-square-mile system located in parts of Queen Creek, San Tan Valley and Pinal County.

The rate increases are only for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

"We want to be able to come back to council (and) make those slight

adjustments year-over-year rather than waiting a couple of years and then coming back to council and making some significant changes," Mesa's Management and Budget Director Brian Ritschel told the council.

Last year, the council adopted a water and wastewater capacity fee, which is a one-time charge for new or upsized meters.

"One of our focuses was growth paying for growth. It took a significant burden of some of our growth projects, for instance, the Signal Butte water treatment plant expansion, off of this forecast and recording it separately and having those capacity fees pay for that growth. So that was a heavy burden off these rate payers," Ritschel said.

Despite the proposed rate increases, the city pointed out in a statement that Mesa homeowners' overall costs are still among the lowest in the Valley.

"The city's FY 2026-27 comparison of property taxes, city sales tax, solid waste, water and wastewater costs ranks Mesa third lowest among the Valley cities compared," according to the statement.

Only Scottsdale and Chandler rank lower.

Residents can learn more about the rate increases and provide input during the 60-day comment period by visiting mesaaz.gov.

To voice your opinion on this story, connect with us at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.



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Learning

• From page 4

plans three activities a month, including a restaurant lunch, an informal “study hall” gathering and a tour or outing, social committee chair Joanne Handlong said at the orientation.

Members also can volunteer in the community. New Frontiers participants help with food distribution, volunteer at performing arts venues and support the Mesa Community College student food pantry. The organization’s holiday luncheon includes food donations, while proceeds from a raffle benefit United Food Bank.

New Frontiers also is undergoing a change of its own.

After more than 30 years associated with Mesa Community College, the organization recently incorporated separately as a nonprofit while maintaining its relationship with the college. Suzanne Brown said the change gives New Frontiers greater ability to develop partnerships and offer programs in additional locations.

“We still are good partners, but it allows us to grow and reach a higher potential,” she said.

The organization holds in-person programs at both Mesa Community College’s Red Mountain and Southern and Dobson campuses, seeking to make classes accessible to members from different parts of Mesa, Gilbert and elsewhere in the East Valley.

Membership costs \$75 for 12

months, with additional semester enrollment fees. Brown said most programming carries no additional charge, although members may have to pay admission costs for certain outings or their own restaurant bills.

She described New Frontiers as serving people who continue living independently throughout the community rather than limiting their social and educational opportunities to those offered within a retirement development.

“We’re building community for those of us that are still living in the community,” Brown said.

And members themselves help determine what that community offers.

People can suggest classes, volunteer to lead them or join committees that handle curriculum, membership, communications and social activities. Zisner encouraged newcomers to first explore the organization and then decide how much — or how little — they want to become involved.

The essential requirement is curiosity.

As McDugle put it, New Frontiers can accommodate people whose interests range from recreation to navigating the challenges that come with growing older.

“If your focus is on having fun, we’ve got classes for that,” she said. “If you’re worried about aging, we’ve got classes for that. We just have a wide variety.”

Go to newfrontiers.mesacc.edu.

To voice your opinion on this story, connect with us at AzOpinions@iniusa.org.



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Sports

• From page 14

according to a release.

The Class of 2026 will be formally inducted during the Pickleball Hall of Fame Induction Banquet Nov. 13 at Gold Canyon Golf Resort & Spa, 6100 S. Kings Ranch Road in Gold Canyon as part of Pickleball Hall of Fame Induction Weekend.

The celebration is to include the Pickleball Hall of Fame Induction Banquet; Pickleball Hall of Fame Benefit Screening of The Power of Pickleball; on-court recognition during the APP Mesa Open event at the Arizona Athletic Grounds, 6321 S. Ellsworth Road in Mesa; and opportunities for fans to celebrate and interact with the inductees throughout the weekend.

With 36 distinguished members,

the Pickleball Hall of Fame celebrates the individuals whose excellence, innovation, leadership, and service have defined the history of our sport. Representing both competitors and contributors, the Hall of Fame recognizes those whose lasting achievements have helped shape pickleball's remarkable growth while preserving its legacy for future generations.

The Pickleball Hall of Fame Selection Committee, co-chaired by 2018 Hall of Fame inductee Fran Myer, carefully evaluates each nomination submitted by the nomination committee to ensure every candidate meets the Hall of Fame's standards for sustained excellence, lasting impact, and significant contributions to the sport, the release states.

Go to <https://pickleballhalloffame.global>.



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RELIGION



Donors of all types are needed to help patients in emergencies and for planned treatments for cancer and blood disorders. (Metro Creative)

Vitalant blood drives planned at Mesa churches

Seven Mesa churches are hosting Vitalant blood drives in November.

Donors of all types are needed to help patients in emergencies and for planned treatments for cancer and blood disorders. The need is great-

est for type O, the most transfused and most compatible when there's no time to test a patient's blood type, it states at <https://www.vitalant.org>.

They are:

- 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 1 at St. Bridget Catholic Church — Collins Hall, 2213 N. Lindsay Road in Mesa.
- 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 1, at Bethlehem Lutheran Church



Mexican food and a BBQ are planned. Also, rides and bouncers, live entertainment, a raffle, games and prizes at the Queen of Peace Catholic Church's annual parish fall festival. (Metro Creative)

Mesa, 2745 N. 32nd St. in Mesa.

- 8 a.m.-noon Saturday, Nov. 14, at LDS Citrus Heights Stake — Culture Hall, 2549 N. 32nd St. in Mesa.

- 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 22 at Holy Cross Catholic Church — Wellens Hall, 1244 S. Power Road in Mesa.

- 7:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. Sun-

day, Dec. 6, at All Saints Catholic Church's Seton Hall, 1534 N. Recker Road in Mesa.

- 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, at Christ The King Catholic Church's Presentation Hall, 1551 E. Dana Ave. in Mesa.

- 7-11 a.m. Monday, Dec. 21,

- See **Religion** on page 19



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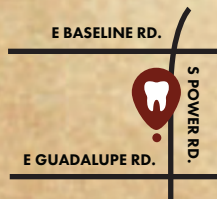
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Religion

• From page 18

at LDS Mesa Arizona Lehi Stake's Cultural Hall, 2220 N. Harris Drive in Mesa.

Queen of Peace Catholic Church hosts festival

Queen of Peace Catholic Church is hosting its annual parish fall festival Sunday, Nov. 1.

It is 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. at the church, 30 W. First St. in Mesa.

Mexican food and a BBQ are planned. Also, rides and bouncers, live entertainment, a raffle, games and prizes.

"We are very excited and grateful to have you join us for our annual fall festival this year. We hope that you look forward to this family focused event and enjoy the new additions. Whether you are a parishioner or non-parishioner, you're welcome to

join the fellowship and fun," it states at qop.org.

'Slice of Gratitude' pie social at First Christian Church

First Christian Church of Mesa is hosting a pie social in November to celebrate love, laughter and faith.

"A Slice of Gratitude" will be held at 11 a.m. after worship Sunday, Nov. 23, at the Fellowship Hall at First Christian Church of Mesa, 805 N. Country Club Drive.

"We're so thankful for you, our amazing church family. Join us after worship ... for 'A Slice of Gratitude' — a pie social to celebrate the love, laughter and faith we share as a congregation. Bring a pie to share — homemade or store-bought, we love them all. Enjoy a sweet time of fellowship, connection and delicious treats," it states at mesadisciples.org

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REAL ESTATE

August home sales up 2.6% in Mesa over a year ago

INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Single-family home sales in the greater Phoenix area continued to rise, up 3.8% year-to-date through August compared with 2025. Pending sales slipped slightly, down just 1.1%, and new listings dipped 2.8%, according to data from Phoenix Realtors.

Greater Phoenix overall outpaced the rest of the country. Nationally, home sales dipped 1.7% from the previous month, while year-to-date sales were up 2.4%.

Mesa year-to-date numbers show closed sales up 2.6%, pending sales down 34.8% and new listings down 4.4%. The median sales price in Mesa is down 2% to \$490,000.

“Looking at the year-to-date numbers, homes are selling in the market,” said Sammy Glassman, board presi-



The median sales price for homes in Mesa is \$490,000, which is down 2% from August 2025. (Independent Newsmedia, Arianna Grainey)

dent of Phoenix Realtors, said of greater Phoenix. “As an individual month, however, August showed its traditional summer softness. Sales tend to pick up as we head into fall.”

Year-to-date trends move upward

Although August was very slow in 2026 compared with 2025, consistent

with the seasonal pattern of the past decade, results for the first eight months of the year show a steadier trend.

So far in 2026, 43,194 homes have sold, with another 42,768 deals pending. That’s nearly 86,000 homes at those stages compared with fewer than 85,000 in the same period last year.

Even though the median sales price of a home notched up slightly to \$483,000 from 2025’s \$480,000 in year-to-date data, the affordability index remained flat at 73. At that level, the affordability index indicates that the typical household earns about three-quarters of the income needed to afford the median-priced home. Homes are sitting on the market longer; year to date, that’s 78 days, compared to 73 last year.

For information on Phoenix Realtors, go to <https://www.phoenixrealtors.com>.

MESA HOUSING BY THE NUMBERS

New listings: 435 (-4.4%)
 Pending sales: 262 (-34.8%)
 Closed sales: 360 (+2.6%)
 Days on market until sale: 66 (-10.8%)
 Median sales price: \$490,000 (-2.0%)
 Average sales price: \$548,815 (-2.0%)
 Percent of list price received: 98.3% (+0.4%)
 Inventory of homes for sale: 1,138 (+0.4%)
 Months supply of inventory: 2.9 (-3.3%)
 (Percent change reflects year-over-year data for the indicated month).
 Source: Phoenix Realtors market report for August 2026

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THINGS TO DO

Celebrate Día de los Muertos at cemetery in Mesa

Mountain View Funeral Home and Cemetery will turn into a lively celebration of color, culture and remembrance during its free Día de los Muertos event on Saturday, Nov. 7.

Families are invited to the 4-7:30 p.m. event at 7900 E. Main St. in Mesa to explore vibrant ofrendas, enjoy folklórico dancing and music, grab a bite from local food trucks, and celebrate the loved ones whose stories still bring people together, according to a release.

Created in partnership with Futuro Insurance, the celebration grew from a desire to give East Valley Hispanic families a welcoming, respectful place to honor a tradition that carries generations forward.

At the heart of the evening are the ofrendas, temporary altars that families create to remember relatives and friends who have died. Families may reserve an altar at no cost and make it their own with photographs, candles, marigolds, favorite foods and drinks, treasured keepsakes, and the little details that summon a familiar smile, a favorite saying, or a life well lived.

“Día de los Muertos is really about keeping the people we love close by sharing their stories and remembering the moments that made them special,”



At the heart of the evening are the ofrendas, temporary altars that families create to remember relatives and friends who have died. (Metro Creative)

Elisa Krcilek, vice president of Mountain View Funeral Home and Cemetery, said in the release. “We’re grateful to offer a space where families can come together, celebrate those memories, and honor their loved ones with joy and respect.”

The celebration will feature folklórico dancers, music, face painting, storytelling, food trucks, raffle baskets, and prizes for the most decorated altars. Guests are also invited to take the stage in their finest Día de los Muertos-inspired attire. New this year, a food truck serving hot drinks will offer a welcome bit of warmth as the November evening cools.

The event is free and open to the public. For information or altar-reservation details, visit mountainviewfuneralhomeandcemetery.com/event/dia-de-los-muertos-4 or call 480-832-2850.

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