



Education

Students get jump on firefighting skills; **20**



INDEPENDENT

Event

Families dive in for Pumpkin Splash; **23**



October 28, 2026 Volume 29 Issue 43

Your Nonpartisan Community Newspaper • YourValley.net

Be informed: Dysart's bond and board candidates on Nov. 3 ballot

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Voters in the Dysart Unified School district will have three candidates to choose from for two vacant seats on the council this year.

Contenders in the Tuesday, Nov. 3, general election for the two four-year seats are William Coniam, incumbent Dawn Densmore and Lisa Everett. The candidates are vying for seats currently occupied by Jennifer Drake, whose term expires next year, and Densmore, who was elected first in 2018 and again in 2022.

While Densmore has been seated alongside current board members, Coniam and Everett have been sitting in the audience at the board meetings. Coniam blends in with attendees as Everett has been outspoken during public comments to challenge and hold the present board accountable for its decisions.

• See **DUSD** on page 5



HUNDREDS GATHER FOR GAIN NIGHT

See story on page 6

(Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

Mayor, council hear about Rinchem, ICE detention facility concerns

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A presentation and discussion on possible hazards in the community blew up about the Rinchem chemical storage facility and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement warehouse, after a presentation to the Surprise City Council.

Following up to a June 16 request by Councilman Patrick Duffy, staff was asked to research and discuss

the possibilities of a catastrophic event and what that would look like with a chemical storage facility within the city. City council members heard a presentation during their Oct. 20 meeting at City Hall about the Rinchem property, dating back to 1999 when the site was annexed in to the city.

In 2020, the site was rezoned from light industrial to general industrial purposes, which allowed for more

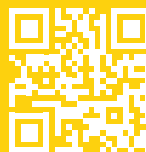
uses under the zoning district. It was approved by council as part of a larger rezoning application that required a public hearing, said Trevor Fleetham, city planning manager.

Fleetham added that the site plan and reports were approved in 2022 to be in compliance for warehouse/distribution and outdoor storage. Building permits were issued, and a certificate of occupancy was granted

• See **ICE** on page 4

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Learn more at dysart.org/Prop421 • Note: The estimated average annual tax rate per \$100 of assessed valuation is \$0.17 for Dysart property owners.

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ICE

• From page 1

in 2024.

“Because this was known to be a rental facility, it was designed with that in mind. So it wasn’t a warehouse facility that was being retrofitted to be able to store and distribute chemicals. It was designed and built for that specific function,” said Fleetham, noting the property remained in compliance with the 2022 city code.

The presentation included input from fire department officials, describing checks and balances done to ensure all facilities are in compliance on a local, federal, state and county level when hazardous materials are involved. A review happens before construction and an evaluation is done on what is proposed, materials that will be present and how they will be stored to ensure it is in compliance.

Depending on the chemicals on site, fire officials would use different tactics and response levels for any emergency. Precautions to any scenario could include the city issuing orders to shelter indoors or to evacuate if there are issues. Fire alarm systems, ventilation and gas detection among safety features are reviewed in the process.

However, city officials offered no definitive answer when Duffy asked about the distance businesses should be away from facilities that will have hazardous materials, particularly as it relates to the 418,000-square-foot ICE facility set to be occupied at Sweetwater Avenue and Dysart Road across the street from Rinchem, which will contain hazardous and regulated materials.

“I mean, what they are basically trying to do is put a hotel next to a chemical facility, and that’s something we wouldn’t allow. So I guess, is there a certain amount of feet it has to be away with the evacuation rules?,” said Duffy.

Fleetham said the site plan met requirements to be adjacent to other industrial zoning districts, but noted there would be an expanded setback for residential requirements.

Duffy further questioned allowances that were based on what was approved at the time and not what is “trying to be pushed in there.”

“That changes everything. All this response, it changes it,” said Duffy, pointing out the city would not allow a residential setting 300 or 400 feet away from two buildings that could pose a risk.

Duffy also asked if the Department of Homeland Security had communicated any potential evacuation plans if there is an emergency.

“At this time, we have not received any emergency plans or how they plan to handle the facility at this time,” said Surprise City Manager Andrea Davis, adding the city had sought the plans from DHS.

Duffy said his concern was DHS should have provided those answers already considering how fast they were trying to open.

“We need some answers from them because you guys do a great job. This is not anything on you. I feel bad for Rinchem on this whole thing, too. They didn’t ask for this, and now they’re in the spotlight. And now they have to worry. We need answers on what would happen,” Duffy said.

While the workshop discussion didn’t allow for public comments, some residents made those comments at the regular meeting immediately after. Davis noted how it is the city’s responsibility to respond to the emergency and communicate to people about evacuation plans, but they do not evacuate facilities.

“We let people know where the evacuation is needed and when and how, but everyone is responsible to self evacuate,” she said. “So the facility, no matter what the facility is, depending on who is, what is housed there or what it is, they have to evacuate their facili-

ty. We do not have the resources or the capacity. We do not have the resources or capacity to evacuate surrounding facilities.”

Mayor Kevin Sartor stated he didn’t doubt the city could handle an emergency at Rinchem if one arose, but questioned DHS for putting a facility that could have up to 1,500 people close by. At the same time, because it was a federal decision there was little the city could do.

“We have gone to D.C.,” Sartor said. “We have met them here. We have talked to every federal elected official that we can aside from the president that has control over the city of Surprise and Arizona, beating the drum of we need information, we need an emergency plan, we need any information we can get. Some have helped some have not.”

The situation is frustrating, Sartor said, because it is taking the city’s time, resources and effort for something “we didn’t even have a clue about them bringing” to the city.

Representatives from the Northwest Valley Indivisible, a grassroots progressive organization in Arizona’s 8th Congressional District, shared concerns about the Rinchem facility across the street from the planned ICE detention facility. The organization’s research on Rinchem was cited in Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes’s lawsuit, *Arizona v. Mullin*. The attorney general reportedly noted the site unsuitable for a mass detention facility because of its location in a potential chemical hazard

zone. Her lawsuit noted Rinchem’s federal risk management plan does not account for a detention facility next door. A June 30 agreement in that lawsuit paused detention and construction pending environmental review.

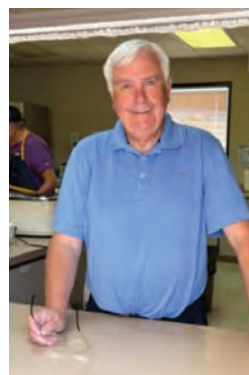
“Attorney General Mayes looked at the facts and took a stand. Now it’s the mayor and council’s turn,” stated Brent Peak, Northwest Valley Indivisible co-chair.

Lynne Gehling, the NWVI researcher who reviewed Rinchem’s risk management plan, said the company’s emergency planning was written before it was proposed as a place for “locking hundreds of people across the street,”

“There is no plan that makes a toxic cloud safe for people who can’t evacuate on their own,” Gehling stated.

The group detailed in a media release worse case and realistic scenarios concerning Rinchem, including accidents that can cause “a toxic cloud 2.7 miles and covers more than 73,000 people, affecting Dysart High School, which is less than a mile from the facility, and people detained in a center. NWVI representatives brought out during the meeting said they sent city officials five emails since July 9 without a written reply, and requested additional records, with responses yet to be received from city staff or the mayor.

Delarita Ford can be reached at dford@iniusa.org. Submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our [Civility Guidelines](#).



CHURCH PREPS FOR 23RD CRAFT FAIR

The Community Church of Sun City, 18401 N. 99th Ave., is hosting its 23rd annual Arts & Crafts Fair 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday Nov. 13, and Saturday, Nov. 14. Admission is free and open to the public with both indoor and outdoor shopping areas. The fair will feature over 70 vendors offering handcrafted items as well as a bake sale including gluten free and sugar free treats. Patrons can also visit the snack bar for coffee, donuts and lunch with outdoor seating. For more information, contact the church office at 623-977-4241 or admin@ccsc.org or visit ccsc.org. Pastor Brian Anderson will help serve coffee and donuts from the kitchen to patrons and vendors during the fair. (Submitted photo/Jessie Hempel)

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William Coniam, Dawn Densmore and Lisa Everett are running to fill two governing board seats with four-year terms. (File photo)

DUSD

• From page 1

Coniam is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and father of two children who attend Dysart schools. He had 510 signatures on his nominating petition when he filed to run June 26. He was reappointed to a fourth term on the Surprise Board of Trustees in 2026.

"Additionally, I have served as board chair for three years. Although I offered to step down to allow for new leadership, council members requested that I continue my service, and I agreed," Coniam said.

Boasting receiving "5,509 write-in votes in 2024, compared to the 1,623 votes Dawn Densmore received when she was elected," Coniam had an unsuccessful run for the school board in 2022 and as a write-in candidate in 2024.

Densmore, who collected 475 signatures when she filed on July 6, has had verbal spars with DUSD Board President Stephen Skvara during the summer over disagreements that mixed their personal and political past with their public status as board members. Densmore, Everett and

Skvara have contentious ties between them that were aired public during past board meetings.

Densmore has been the recipient of the Arizona School Board Member of the Year award from the Arizona Coalition of School Board Members Excellence in Education Awards in 2021, Densmore touts a passion for championing safer schools and more security. That comes amid complaints filed with the Arizona Department of Education by former Dysart High Students about the number of safety drills the school had last year. That investigation was closed by ADE.

"I take the safety and health of all students and staff to heart," stated Densmore about the the ADE investigation.

Objecting to Overs' questioning her intent, judgment, and character, Densmore has worked for the state agency, but abstains from Dysart affairs.

"As many in our community know, I am passionate about school safety. I ran for office eight years ago advocating for officers in every Dysart school, and I have accomplished that," she said.

"I was responsible for the Opioid

Antagonist (Naloxone) Procurement. I worked alongside many statewide partners including closely working with Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area to accomplish this massive task of procuring 16,000 Narcan kits to be deployed to schools across Arizona."

Everett, a community activist who is the former Legislative District 29 chair, garnered 510 signatures on her nominating petition when she filed to run on July 6. Earlier this year, she questioned the timing of the board pursuing another bond attempt and wanted to know the motives behind Skvara initiating another attempt after he voted against the previous bond and override proposal that failed last fall. Everett said examining using technology in schools, the time students are spending on school-issued Chromebooks and supporting parents and teachers are among her priorities.

"Parents should know what is happening in their children's classrooms and have a meaningful voice in their education," Everett stated. "Teachers should know that their administration will stand behind them, and every teacher and student deserves a classroom environment that is safe and conducive to learning."

EVENT

Hundreds gather for GAIN Night

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Scores of people and pets wore Halloween costumes to the GAIN Night recently at Mark Coronado Park, 15960 N. Bullard Ave.

Held annually, numerous public safety representatives in the city of Surprise dressed in their fire, police and SWAT uniforms for a show-and-tell opportunity for residents to learn how they keep the community safe. The Surprise Police and Fire-Medical Departments hosted the pre-Halloween event 5:30-8:30 p.m. Oct 17.

The family friendly function drew a crowd of all ages to participate in making memories, and gathering

information in one setting about community outreach and safety education at GAIN (Getting Arizonans Involved in Neighborhoods) Night. The free event offers people a chance to meet the community's first responders, create connections, and get information from various safety providers.

People got to look and sit inside police cars, fire trucks, specialty emergency vehicles and equipment. Safety organizations had booths with material on how to stay safe and other resources useful to the community.

"This is our third year coming. The kids like it. They have a good time. Surprise does a good job," said Jodi Wilkinson, who attended with her children, Zach, 10, and Elsie, 7, all of whom were dressed in costumes.

Elsie was dressed as a princess and halted taking a picture until she grabbed her magic wand to be photographed with in hand.

Fourteen-year-old Deuce P. walked around in a dinosaur costume that gave the illusion that someone else may have been operating the bottom and tail of the costume. His father, Mick, explained how "that's his real legs" making the animatronic-like dinosaur walk. He said his son got the costume off of Amazon after seeing some viral trend on the Internet.

Tracy Rogers brought her three grandchildren, ages 7, 6 and 9, after they were driving by and noticed the event in the park. She said if she knew in advance about the GAIN event, she would have had them dressed in their costumes.

"This is a great event for kids to learn about things," said Rogers, adding the benefits children get



Surprise Police Department Sgt. D. Bleicher and Lt. Matt Barker show some of the S.W.A.T. gear to remove people with and without lethal force. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

from talking to first responders to get first-hand information. She noted dialogue between the children and public safety workers helps them understand what some of the jobs entail and what they may want to be when they grow up.

GAIN Night began in 1998 as a cooler weather alternative to National Night Out, which is held annually in August. Longtime community pillars, Andy Cepen and his partner, Margaret Lieu, have attended the event since it started in Surprise years ago.

Cepen described the event as a resource designed to educate children and their families on safety, from taking children's pictures back in the day when the event started, so photos could help in locating missing children, to continuing to promote police and community partnerships.

Likewise, Lieu commended the Surprise Police Department on how much they do for the community.

"I think it's amazing. It's a great place, a safe place for people to come and meet their neighbors. We've never missed this event," said Lieu, adding "This has gotten to be bigger each year."

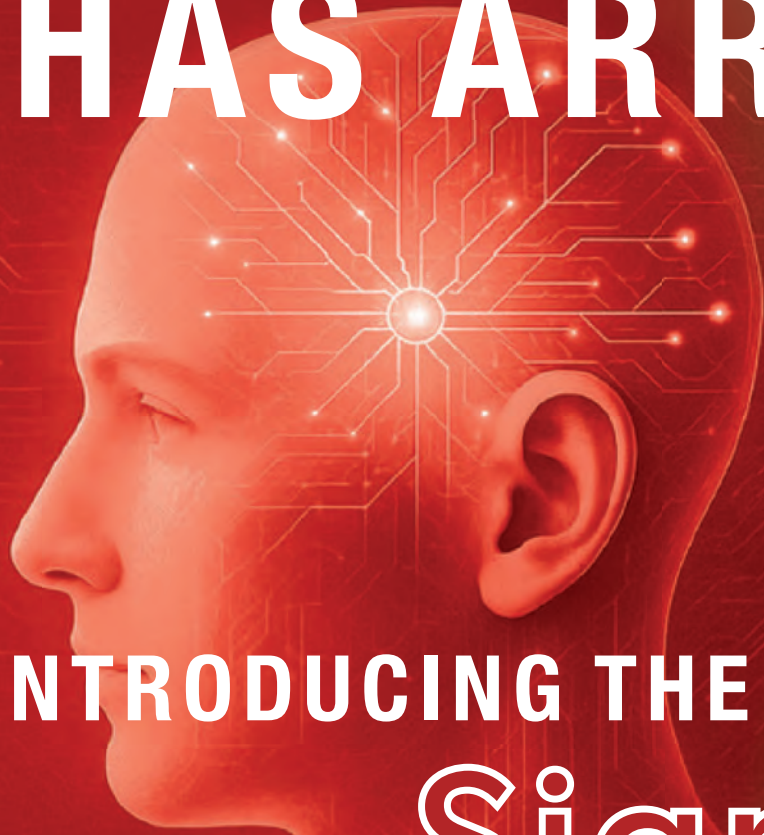
In addition to trick-or-treating in a safe environment, there were children's activities, including a gaming trailer, laser tag, bounce houses and more. Plus, the Salvation Army collected non-perishable food donations for needy families. People who donated were entered into a raffle for prizes.

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



Jodi Wilkinson with her children, Zach, 10, and Elsie, 7. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

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DONATIONS

Knights count on community for the upcoming turkey drive

Last year more than 2,138 pounds of turkey were donated

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Knight of Columbus Council 11809 is hoping for community support at the upcoming Thanksgiving Turkey Drive to support Valley View Community Fund Bank.

The event will take place over two days, at two locations, 8 a.m.-noon Wednesday, Nov. 18, and Thursday, Nov. 19, at either Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 19002 N. 128th Ave. or the Sun City West Foundation parking lot, at the intersection of R.H. Johnson and Stardust boulevards.

Donations include turkeys, hams and any non-perishable food items.

The organization recently held a canned food drive at the same two locations, but Knight Hank Gorski said the number of collections was low.

"We understand. In Sun City West we keep aging and money gets tight and people can only do what they can do. We collected about 70% of what we normally get," said Gorski.

However, the 2025 turkey drive did extremely well. According to Gorski, 145 turkeys were collected, for a total of 2,138 pounds. Non-perishable donations totaled 115 pounds. Monetary donations reached \$3,993 in total.

Gorski explained monetary donations go a long way because Valley View Community Food Bank has more buying power and can take \$1 and get more.

Knight said the organization vol-



Knights of Columbus are hosting an upcoming Thanksgiving Turkey Drive. (Independent News-media/File photo)

unteers by giving back to the local community.

Many of the outreach and participation comes from the parishioners and Gorski said he cannot say enough good things about them and the entire community that steps in to help support the cause.

There are four areas the Knights focus their work on and one area is called "families," which includes food, turkey and water drives, plus anything else the group decides to get involved with. The other areas include "community, life and faith."

The next event the group will participate is donating to the "Coats for Kids-Bobby's Coats". Anything left over from the initial donation will be given to the food bank to hand out during Christmas.

Gorski said every year the organization takes part in this program, which donates \$3,000 to purchase coats for kids who do not have one, which helps the community.

Reporter Jennifer Jimenez can be reached at jjimenez@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.

SUPPORT

Shepherd of the Hills makes 200 kindness kits

Congregation makes kits twice a year

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Members of the Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church helped to pack 200 kindness kits to support Circle the City.

After service, as members headed into fellowship hour, each picked up a plastic bag to fill with water, socks, body wash, deodorant, snack bar, sunscreen, toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitizer, lip balm and a handwritten note from the congregation.

Last May, 200 kits were also assembled which Julie Killebrew, MSN, head educator for Shepherd of the Hills said was the first of two packings. Circle of the City picks up the packages to deliver to individuals facing homelessness in Maricopa County.

Associate Pastor Rev. Danie Gomez addressed the congregation during fellowship hour and said it is a time to celebrate the good service the members were participating in.

"During fellowship hour, the congregation likes to sit and talk and eat cake and really enjoy packing these kits. After they fill one bag a lot of them go back through like an assembly line," she explained.

The Missions Team is made up of the congregation and completes several projects throughout the year. Killebrew said this group raises their own money to support programs like this. In fact, the Missions Team purchases the necessary items for the kits, while the congregation donates their time and efforts.

Other projects include providing



Members of the Missions Team lead the congregation at Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church as they pack kindness kits. (Independent Newsmedia/Jennifer Jimenez)

gifts for kids during Christmas at the West Valley Community Center, as well as shopping for jeans and tees. The group also helps A New Leaf, Native American Connections and other new charities each month.

Killebrew said the congregation helps donate items, as well as money.

At 8 a.m. every Monday the congregation makes peanut butter and jelly and ham and cheese sandwiches for the Justa Center. Everyone from the community can join.

"The week before last we had 42 people show up and some were also making snack bags or wrapping plastic silverware. We had to add other things people could also help with," said Killebrew.

The Missions Team also has greeting cards or calendars for donations on the church campus.

Visit shepherdumc.org.

OPINION

LETTERS

Take the Civility Pledge

Yes, I will do my part to help my community become a safe place for people to engage in civil discourse about public issues. Visit iniusa.org/civility-pledge/ to take the pledge.

Your Opinion

Our opinions page is to provide an open forum for our readers. We hope to stimulate debate, not to dominate or control it. We reserve the right to edit our opinions, and we insist on civility. Please include your name and phone number, so we can contact you for clarification or confirmation. We welcome your photo. All opinions must be no more than 300 words. Those that are judged as personal attacks or complaints about neighbors, businesses or other opinion writers will not be considered. No person may submit more than two opinions for publication during a calendar month. Two submissions in the same issue will not be published. The content of a submission is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

Speak Up

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

Corrections

There was an error in the article titled "Banner CEO promotes bringing together clergy" that appeared in the Oct. 21 issue of the Surprise Independent. Stan Holm is the Chief Executive Officer of Banner Del E. Webb and Banner Boswell Medical Centers. Additionally, as an organization Banner Health provides more than \$1 billion each year in community benefit.

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

What a coyote might say to its neighbors in The Grand

If a coyote could have a cordial conversation with its neighbors in The Grand, I imagine that this is what it might say:

My name is Wyly, and I would like you to know that I have as much right to be here as any of you, perhaps more. My greatest pleasure, as I stroll through the streets and backyards of the Grand neighborhoods in search of food for me and my family, is to find a rodent, rabbit, pigeon or anything else that will sustain us until our next meal.

There are times when I, or one of my friends, may be confronted by one of you humans, but my position is not to be in your business as long as you stay out of mine.

Just as many of you, if confronted by what may be considered threatening, I may respond in kind. On the other hand, in most circumstances, I'll probably run the other way.

After all, when you're on your morning stroll and you're approached and threatened by someone else, what would your

reaction be?

Answer that, and you might understand my position. I may not have the same level of intelligence as you, but my instincts are to protect myself from any threat, just as you might.

If you feel you can get close enough to me to see my scars, you're too close. So maybe back off and just realize that we can coexist without conflict.

Joe Pasta
SURPRISE

This writer is using a pen name. 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.

Arizonans with dementia shouldn't be driving

I've lived in Sun City West for 17 years. I recently had a strange encounter at the Post Office. The drive-thru drop box for mail has one entrance and one exit. I was in it when suddenly there was a woman in a large sedan facing me.

I thought she must have gone into the exit. While she got out and walked around the car to

mail her letter, I tried to pull over to the right as much as I could to let her get around me.

In the meantime, a car pulled up behind me and one pulled up behind her, hanging out into the street!

The lady in the big car pulled around me, rolled down her window and asked, "Is it a holiday or something? There are no cars in the parking lot," to which I answered, "it's Sunday. The Post Office isn't open on Sundays."

As she rolled up her window, she said, "I have dementia, can you tell?" I told her if she has dementia she shouldn't be driving. I hope she heard me before her window was up.

Anyone with family members who have dementia should have a pleasant talk with them to point out this letter, if necessary. No one who has dementia should be driving, let alone pointing it out to others!

Terry Ann Smith
SUN CITY WEST

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

Visit Desert Lights Festival Nov 20-Dec. 27

The Desert Lights Festival, formerly known as Desert Farm Lights, will illuminate the community with more than 1.5 million holiday lights, a new name and ways to celebrate the season with over 150 illuminated trees, holiday attractions, live entertainment and festive experiences Nov. 20-Dec. 27 at 14629 W. Peoria Ave.

The immersive, walkable holiday festival offers winter sleds, down hill tubing and illuminated swings. Festival guests can explore the Candy Cane Maze, take an Jolly Journey

train ride train with a surprise ending, skate on a real ice skating rink, visit Santa for photos, get on bungee trampolines, ride the Desert Carousel and 90-foot Fun Slide, race on the new winter sleds and experience illuminated swings. The festival also includes family-friendly experiences such as Gingerbread Bounce Houses, Elf Archery, the Green Lair with the Grinch, Desert Lights character appearances, face painting and balloon entertainment, open fire pits, Letters to Santa, yard games, food and seasonal

treats.

Guests can also browse one-of-a-kind gifts and holiday merchandise at the custom gift show. Live music will be every Thursday through Sunday and throughout Christmas week. Balloon entertainment will be Monday through Wednesday, excluding Christmas week. Desert Lights Festival is open 5-10 p.m., with extended hours until 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, Nov. 20-Dec. 27.

For tickets, attraction details and more information, visit desertfarmlights.com.



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15108 W. Via Manana, SUN CITY WEST

MLS# 7090877

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, N-RHJ, R-151st, L-Domingo Ln., R-Baja Dr., R-Via Manana

Popular Havasu model. Home has 1547 sq. ft., 2 bedrooms, 2 baths, great room floor plan & a large block wall fenced private backyard. Owned solar. Cul de sac lot. No Neighborhood HOA fee. Call today to view!



14114 W. Whitewood Dr., SUN CITY WEST

MLS# 7068961

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker, L-Echo Mesa, L-Whitewood Dr.

Expanded Montera model with panoramic views of SCW's Trail Ridge GC 3rd fairway/green & lake with fountain. Approx. 3000 sq. ft., 2 Bdrm suites, 3 baths plus a den/office & golf cart garage. The large, covered patio, dining/family/living Rm combination is designed for formal/casual entertaining. Quick close of escrow is possible. Centrally located & in SCW's lower tax area this home is one you'll want to see. Don't hesitate! Call today to view!



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23100 N. Drifter Way, SUN CITY WEST

MLS# 7062138

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-Meeker, L-135th, L-Deer Valley Rd., R-Dusty Trail Blvd., R-Drifter Way

Popular Rio Verde model (expended). This 1612sq. ft. home has 2 Bdrms (split), 2 baths plus an added den/office/craft studio. Both bathrooms updated including walk in/roll in showers (2023). Paid off solar lease. Quick close of escrow is possible. No neighborhood HOA fee. This one is one you'll want to see! Call today to view!



15192 W. Las Brizas Ln., SUN CITY WEST

MLS# 7059982

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-151st, L-Corral Dr., R-Acapulco, L-Las Brizas Ln.

Highly desired Prescott model is located on the 7th fairway of Desert Trails GC. This 1856 sq. ft. home has 2 Bdrms (split), 2 baths plus a den. New roof underlayment 2022, HVAC in 2020 & kitchen appliances 2019. Quick close of escrow is possible. Home has been well maintained. This one is one you'll want to see! Call today to view!



12635 W. Eveningside Dr., SUN CITY WEST

MLS# 7040339

Dir: Bell Rd./RH Johnson, Dr. N-RHJ, R-128th, R-Sunglow Dr. which becomes Eveningside Dr.

Fabulous panoramic view of Stardust GC's 4th & 5th fairways & greens. Home has 2599 sq. ft., 3 large bedrooms (split), 2 updated bathrooms, golf cart garage plus an added 175 Sq. ft. art/crafts studio or office. This home is truly special & an absolute must see! Call today to view!



POLICE



Those recognized include: Officer Dumlao (exemplary recruit), Officer East, Officer Eubanks, Officer Farney, Officer Fawzi (top academic recruit; also a former cadet of the Surprise Police Cadet Program), Officer Kohn, Officer Martinez, Officer Rice (top overall and top physical fitness recruit). (Submitted photo/Detective Alayna Nash)



Surprise Police Department recognizes officers

Eight Surprise police officers crossed the finish line at the West Valley Law Enforcement Training Academy. Their journey started long before the academy, with many participating in programs like S.P.E.E.D. and Interest to Badge, designed to prepare future officers for the challenges ahead.

"We're not simply hiring officers, we're developing people who are prepared to serve this community for years to come," stated Chief Evan Becher

reflected on graduation day. "Their success is a reflection of the hard work they put in and the investment our team makes in people from the very beginning."

For more information about the SPEED program or other career development opportunities, prospective candidates can visit surpriseaz.gov/speed-program.

Editor's note: Surprise Police Departments practice is to not release officers' first names for publication.

Church teaches Tai Chi

The Desert Garden United Church of Christ, 18818 N. 128th Ave., is hosting two one-hour classes every Friday in its Fellowship Hall.

The first class, Tai Chi 108, is 1 p.m. The second class, Strength and Balance/Beginning Tai Chi, is 2 p.m.

For more information, Deb Gomez at 206-436-9735 or deb.gomez@rocketmail.com.

HEALTH

Sun Health staff ride with Surprise Fire-Medical Station 302 for heart health

Nearly two dozen people from Surprise Fire-Medical Station 302 and Sun Health participated in a ride-along to support the American Heart Association's inaugural West Valley Torch Journey.

Sun Health, which is a "Live Fierce. Take Action" West Valley Heart Walk sponsor, teamed with the Station 302 representatives and Sun Health staff Oct. 20 for the event that began at Surprise Fire Station 302, 18600 N. Reems Road, and ended at the Sun Health Center for Health and Wellbeing, 14719 W. Grand Ave.

The riding partners spotlighted the importance of heart health, life-saving-education and the role first responders have in keeping the community healthy and safe.

Sun Health Director of Communications and Community Engagement Madeleine Goff noted the shared interest between the Surprise Fire-Medical staff and Sun Health employees in promoting healthier lives within the community.

"With approximately 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occurring in the United States each year, the American Heart Association's Torch Journey serves as an important reminder of the power of lifesaving education and the opportunity to equip everyday people with the knowledge and confidence to become lifesavers in the event of a cardiac emergency," Goff stated.

Goff added how meaningful the ride-along was as an opportunity to pair with local first responders to support the American Heart Association's West Valley Torch Journey.

"Beyond raising awareness about heart health and the importance of CPR, it gave us a chance to recognize and thank the dedicated men and women responsible for saving lives in our community every day," she said.

The American Heart Association's 10-week Torch Journey culminates to the West Valley Heart Walk Nov. 14, at Goodyear Civic Square.



Sun Health Director of Communications and Community Engagement Madeleine Goff rode along with Station 302 firemen, Trevor Cagle, Levi Lepinski, I. Ramos, and Justin F. (Submitted photo/City of Surprise)



CHURCH CELEBRATES CATHOLIC DAUGHTERS

The Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court #2278 Our Lady of Lourdes celebrated the group Oct. 18. The court is active with fundraisers, as well as bingo at noon the first Thursday of the month. Other events include the rummage sale, spaghetti dinner, a Christmas cookie walk, shred event and fashion show. The group also has officers and serves in church and in the community with Recreation Centers of Sun City West events, Sun City West P.R.I.D.E.S. and the Sun City West Posse. Monthly meetings are 9:30 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church Madonna Hall, 19002 N. 128th Ave. Call Regent Judy Penman 661-755-2774. (Submitted photo/Rosemary Dougherty)

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Be a Civility Advocate!



Civility Checklist

How to engage in respectful, honest & civil dialogue about public issues

- ☐ **Take the high road.** Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.
- ☐ **Be respectful.** Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment, and threats directed at another person — or that person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone's character or motives.
- ☐ **Be truthful.** Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes. When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.
- ☐ **Don't misrepresent.** Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.
- ☐ **Listen & learn.** It's both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don't agree with your own.
- ☐ **Look for common ground.** When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.
- ☐ **Respect privacy.** Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.
- ☐ **Set a good example.** Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it's OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.



Now that you've read the checklist, take the Civility Pledge at yourvalley.net/civility-pledge.



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- The Jam Bam Band



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Pictured: Alisha Carryall

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gcc-epc.com/events-2026-2027



GRACE
COMMUNITY CHURCH



Founder's Day Committee members Carla Maggio, Marcy Girard, Eileen Nelson, Barbara Krehl McKendall and Peggy Robbins. (Submitted photo/Nancy Alarcon)

PEO chapter slates annual luncheon

The Reciprocity Committee of the Sun City West/ Surprise PEO chapter will host the annual Founder's Day luncheon Saturday, Jan. 16, 2027, at The Colonnade 19116 N. Colonnade Way, Surprise.

A boutique starts at 11 a.m. with lunch at noon, according to a media release. All PEO members and visiting PEO sisters are welcome to attend.

The registration deadline ends Dec 18. Resident sisters must sign up through their chapter, submitting a check for \$28 made out to their PEO chapter treasurer.

Visiting sisters may register by mailing a check for \$28 made out to "SCW/ Surprise Reciprocity," care of Paula Kramer, 17466 N. Escalante Lane, Surprise 85374, with their phone and email contact information included with the check.

The Philanthropic Education Organization is a U.S.-based international women's organization of almost a quarter million members with a primary focus on providing educational opportunities for female students, worldwide.

Dysart to host Future Freshman Week Nov. 16-19

Dysart students and their families

can explore the district's four high schools during Future Freshman Week, Nov. 16-19.

Those entering high school in the 2027-28 academic year, and their parents, are encouraged to attend.

However, anyone weighing future options is welcome to join.

Prospective students and their families can go to the high school campuses on designated nights to learn about the high school experience, unique and career-related programs, core curriculum, graduation requirements, the registration process and class selection.

The meetings are designed to provide incoming freshmen with an overview of the academic programs available at Dysart Unified School District's four high schools and explain the process of registering for ninth-grade classes.

The Future Freshman Week is 5:30 p.m. at each of the following campuses:

- Monday, Nov. 16 - Dysart High School - 11425 N. Dysart Road, El Mirage
- Tuesday, Nov. 17 - Shadow Ridge High School - 10909 N. Perryville Road, Surprise
- Wednesday, Nov. 18 - Valley Vista High School - 15550 N. Parkview Place, Surprise
- Thursday, Nov. 19 - Willow Canyon High School - 17901 W. Lundberg Street, Surprise

The week will culminate with the launch of Dysart's open enrollment application for the 2027-28 school year Friday, Nov. 20.

Visit Dysart.org to learn more about high school academics, arts and athletics.

View school locations and residential attendance boundaries at Dysart.org/Boundaries.

Learn more about open enrollment opportunities within Dysart at Dysart.org/OE.



CHURCH CHOIR CELEBRATES AMERICA

Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church presents "Get Your Kicks on Route 66" 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15, at the Sanctuary, 13658 W. Meeker Blvd. The Sanctuary Choir and soloists are featured as the concert celebrates America's 250th anniversary with a musical journey through its states, cities, rivers and memorable places. Favorite songs, including "Meet Me in St. Louis," "Oklahoma," "Deep in the Heart of Texas," "I Love You, Arizona" and "California Dreamin'." The musical journey continues with "Tennessee Waltz," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "O Shenandoah" and "New York, New York" alongside patriotic selections "God Bless the USA" and "God Bless America." The concert is open to the public. Visit shepherdumc.org or call 623-584-2280. (Submitted photo/Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church)

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COMMUNITY

New Surprise resource center welcomes residents

Nearby facility combines senior programs, veterans assistance and community resources under one roof

By Steve Stockmar
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A new community gathering place about 15 minutes from Corte Bella is welcoming its neighbors from beyond Surprise.

The Surprise Community & Resource Center, which opened in September at 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive, brings senior activities, a fitness center, veterans assistance, employment services and other resources together under one roof. And Corte Bella residents are welcome to take part.

Seth Dyson, Surprise's human service and community vitality director, said Corte Bella falls within the service area for programs at the center. Residents are also welcome to stop by and tour the new facility.

One area with particular relevance to Corte Bella is veterans services. The center has a full-time Arizona Department of Veterans' Services benefits counselor along with Omar Lopez, Surprise's full-time veteran resource navigator.

Lopez spent 25 years in the Army and retired as a first sergeant. His own transition from military life helps inform the work he now does with other veterans.

"I didn't know what I was going to do," Lopez said. "All I know is Army, right? Like what am I going to do? All I know is this for the last half of my life."

After retiring, Lopez worked as a veteran benefits counselor for the state, helping veterans pursue benefits earned through their service. As the center's veteran resource navi-

SURPRISE COMMUNITY & RESOURCE CENTER

What: Community facility offering active-adult and senior programs, veterans resources, employment and workforce assistance, public-benefit assistance, early-childhood programs and other services.

Where: 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive, Surprise

Who can use it: Services extend beyond Surprise residents; Corte Bella residents are within the center's service area.

Senior programs: Annual membership is \$5, or \$12 with fitness center access. Adults 60 and older may participate in weekday lunches for a suggested \$2.50 contribution; reservations are required two days in advance.

Veterans: A full-time veteran resource navigator and Arizona Department of Veterans Services benefits counselor or are available. Eligibility varies by program.

Phone: 623-222-1500

Web: surpriseaz.gov/surprise-community-and-resource-center

gator, he now assists veterans with needs that can include rental or mortgage assistance, car and home repairs, employment and homelessness, and connecting them with partner organizations.

The center also offers several programs geared toward older adults. Corte Bella residents can participate in the city's active-adult and senior programs, use the new fitness center, volunteer, and visit Hollyhock Library.

Senior memberships are \$5 per



From left, Bernard Ott, Donna Rice and Omar Lopez are among the staff members ready to provide help at the Surprise Community & Resource Center, the new building that opened in September. (Independent Newsmedia/Steve Stockmar)

year, or \$12 annually with access to the gym. Adults 60 and older can also participate in a weekday lunch program offered at noon for a suggested contribution of \$2.50. Lunch reservations are required two days in advance. Other resources available at the center include employment and tax services and assistance that may be useful to residents seeking resources for grandchildren.

For veterans, Lopez said one of the center's advantages is having people who can help navigate systems that may initially seem overwhelming. Veterans seeking VA disability benefits, for example, can work with the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services counselor, who can assist with paperwork and guide them through the process.

Lopez describes his own role as a kind of "triage," determining what a veteran needs and then connecting that person with the right resource. Instead of simply providing a phone number, he said he tries to make the introduction and help veterans understand the next steps.

"I didn't even know all of these

resources were available myself," Lopez said of leaving the military. "The fact that there's all these resources out here is unbelievable."

The center's overall services for residents extend further. Staff and partner organizations provide employment assistance, workforce training, utility assistance and help applying for public benefits.

Early-childhood programs are available for families with young children, including grandparents caring for or spending time with grandchildren.

"Everyone here is all working together to help our community and our residents," said Juan Marquez, who works with the center's Early Childhood Education Program. "We serve anybody who comes and joins us."

Eligibility requirements vary by program, but Dyson said Corte Bella residents are within the programs' service area. The Surprise Community & Resource Center is at 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive. Call 623-222-1500 or visit surpriseaz.gov/surprise-community-and-resource-center.

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EDUCATION



High school students in West-MEC's fire science program worked on quick attacks and hooking up fire hoses to hydrants Oct. 15 at Glendale Regional Public Safety Training Center. West-MEC Partner Program Manager Leticia Reyna-Stroud is in the background at the left. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

West-MEC program lets West Valley students get jump on firefighting skills

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Nearly 50 West Valley high school students are getting a jump start on a potential career as firefighters.

In partnership with Glendale Community College, West-MEC offers fire science instruction in the classroom and in the field. Students are able to train alongside cadets from fire departments across the West Valley.

Every school year, two cohorts

with 23 students in each train two days a week for six hours total at Glendale Regional Public Safety Training Center.

Dysart High School senior Isabella Ayala learned how to do the plug — where a firefighter hooks up an engine to a hydrant — and quick attacks — using water immediately from an engine's onboard tank.

"You can't do that on a day-to-day basis unless you're a firefighter,"

• See **Fire** on page 21

Fire

• From page 20

Ayala said.

On Oct. 15, the trainees were going over quick-attack drills. They got practice draining hoses and reloading trucks.

Students load the hand lines, which are deployed inside houses during house fires. Supply lines connect to hydrants.

GCC Fire Academy Director Mike Godleski was among the professional firefighters leading drills.

As a regional academy, West-MEC receives all access to the facilities for their high school class.

“Obviously, we’re not going to take the students into live fire at this point in their careers, but everything else, we’re trying to give them more exposure to,” Godleski said.

A fire instructor for about two decades, Godleski has eight years

working with various colleges on fire science programs.

Didactic training is in classrooms and outdoor facilities at GRPSTC. Godleski said students get some basic wildfire training in the surrounding hills and desert.

“It’s really giving our students an advantage for those who do want to pursue a career in the fire service. They’re getting first-hand knowledge and hands-on experience that will prepare them when they are hired to go to a regional academy they’ll have already done the skills and tasks that are required,” he said.

The partnership between West-MEC, GCC and local fire departments started more than a decade ago, said Leticia Reyna-Stroud, West-MEC’s partner program manager.

“It developed out of a need to introduce more students to that world,” Reyna-Stroud said. “We thought why not have high schoolers start this

program. Hopefully, this gets them some initial credentials and they can continue on in their studies with Glendale Community College.”

Ayala said she wanted to be a firefighter and was looking for the first steps to become a firefighter.

She looked into West-MEC because Dysart High did not have much information about fire science programs.

Her older sister is an EMT.

“I’ve always grown up inspired by them because they risk their lives,” Ayala said.

Dual enrollment is available for high school juniors and seniors. They can earn college credit in the program and transfer these credits to a community college or university, toward a specific degree.

Seniors who want more exposure to the fire service can get employed as certified wildland firefighters. Students from previous classes were out in the wildlands of New Mexico and

California this summer.

“We hope to show them a little bit more of the search patterns — how to search a residence and things you’re looking for. The students will go through and get their CPR certification,” he said. “Next semester we’ll also put all students through their CPR certification. Next semester, we’ll also put all of the students through what’s called a red card class, which certifies them as wildland firefighters.”

Ayala plans to attend EMT school through GCC, then enter a fire academy as soon as she can.

Some friends at Dysart are now interested in the program.

She said the textbook portions of the program are more difficult for her than the firefighting drills.

“The physical stuff, I didn’t really struggle with. Of course, I did struggle with coupling but once you keep doing something over and over it becomes second nature,” Ayala said.

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CLUB

New Eagles Club opens to neighboring communities

Residents from Sun City, Sun City West, Corte Bella, The Grand and any “senior” residents of nearby communities are invited to a two-day open house at the newest Eagles club in the West Valley.

The Surprise Eagles and the Osborne Eagles partnered to create the newest Fraternal Order of Eagles Club in the West Valley. A “Senior Tour” of the new club is Saturday, Nov. 14, and Sunday, Nov. 15, at 10050 W. Bell Road, Suite 49, Sun City, near the near Arby’s on Bell Road.

Suprise Eagles Fraternal Order of Eagles No. 4534 Past President Ray Wilkins and his wife Pat said the club is all-inclusive for the neighboring communities.

“We are a nonprofit, all volunteer charitable organization that donates to

other local, state and national nonprofit organizations,” they stated.

Attendees are required to bring a Sun City recreation card or valid identification to verify age of at least 55 years old.

Some of the events and offerings at the new club include:

- Beer, wine and spirits
- Daily \$6 lunch specials on Tuesday through Sundays
- Thursday taco and trivia
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The Suprise Eagles Fraternal Order of Eagles No. 4534 Past President Ray Wilkins and his wife, Pat, invite any “senior” residents in neighboring communities, including Sun City, Sun City West, Corte Bella and The Grand to the two-day tour. (Submitted photo/Ray Wilkins)

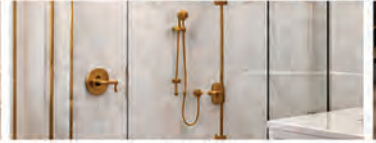


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ACTIVITY

Families dive for Surprise Pumpkin Splash

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A family outing for many included a late Friday festive swim with floating pumpkins at the Surprise Aquatic Center, 15831 N Bullard Ave.

More than 150 people had checked in and found areas poolside and along the pool perimeter by 6 p.m. Oct. 16, where participants of all ages had fun swimming, diving, playing games, and gathering pumpkins at a city pool.

A Surprise couple, Adrianna Austin and Maulik, saw the Surprise Parks and Recreation's Facebook post about the event and planned to attend for the first time so their children could have something to do during the school break. Their children, 1-year-old Amirah, and fifth-grader Carter, enjoyed time at the pool with their cousin, Luna.

"They love to swim. They're on fall break as well. This is an activity that gets them out the house on fall break," said Adrianna, who was told by a lady leaving the pumpkin-patch pool event as they entered to "make them pick the small ones."

Meanwhile, Perla Villalobos rocked her 3-month-old baby, Amelia, while her husband, Carlos and their other children, Aaliyah, 6, and Sienna, 9, gathered pumpkins from the pool to bring back for her to guard.

"We bring them here for classes. They love swimming," she said, adding how the Pumpkin Splash event "sounded like a really good Friday night," to be able to come to the pool, play games, take photos and choose pumpkins from the floating pumpkin



Adrianna Austin with 1-year-old Amirah, and her niece, Luna, 11, at the Surprise Pumpkin Splash, Oct. 16. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

patch to take home.

They were planning to have fall pictures taken of the new baby with a pumpkin.

"We wanted to put her in the pumpkin for a photo shoot. It's going to be perfect," said Villalobas.

She and her family moved to Surprise four years ago and they love it, she said because of the many family-friendly events the city offers.

Call Surprise Aquatic Center at 623-222-2500 for more information about pool events and schedules.

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

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SOFT OPENING FOR SMOOTHIE KING

Smoothie King held a soft opening Oct. 4 at 15557 W. Bell Road, Suite 403, and is now open ahead of its official public grand opening Saturday, Nov. 14. Co-owners Dawn and Dennis Grzebien participated in the ribbon cutting alongside Mayor Kevin Sartor. Visit locations.smoothieking.com. (Submitted photo/Kris Cassens)

FIRE

Fire-Medical crews return to renovated Fire Station 305

Surprise Fire-Medical crews have returned to Fire Station 305, 15517 N. Parkview Place, following the completion of a summer-long renovation. The changes made to the building's interior will enable the almost two-decade-old station to continue supporting and serving the community for years to come.

The renovation project included updates to several areas, including offices and bathrooms, creating an improved space for the station crews.

Fire Station 305 is the busiest station

in the city, and now that its doors are back open, public services at the station can resume, including free blood pressure checks, community visits and station tours. Access to the yellow cooking oil disposal station at Fire Station 305 has also returned to normal following construction. These services had been paused while crews operated from the temporary location.

Residents are still reminded that it is best to call 911 in the event of a fire or medical emergency rather than going directly to a fire station.

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CRAFTS



Items like these will be available at the upcoming craft fair. (Submitted photo/Caryl Jo Dagro)

Church slates craft fair

Lakeview United Methodist Church, 10298 W. Thunderbird Blvd., is hosting a holiday community craft fair 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday and Saturday Dec. 4-5 at the church.

Sponsored by the Lakeview Women in Faith, there will be hand-crafted items, jewelry and home decor from local artisans and Lakeview members. At last year's event, there were 70 tables with items. Holiday

baked goods will also be available. In addition, breakfast and lunch items will be sold with proceeds to benefit the Lakeview Men's Group.

Vendor tables are available for \$30. Set up is 7-9 a.m. Friday, Dec. 4.

To reserve a table or for more information, contact Cyndee LaFontaine at 480-242-2782 or azcyne@msn.com or Ila Lewis at 609-706-0377 or ilita3@yahoo.com.

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WEST VALLEY PREPS

Willow Canyon volleyball duo leads program revival

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Shia Chancellor and Emory Scogin have played volleyball together long enough to have reversed their roles on the court.

They have played together since they were 12, and in those days of club volleyball Chancellor's defense set up Scogin's offense. It is a little different now that both are seniors at Willow Canyon.

"It was really funny because I played outside and she was a libero. Now we've switched positions," Scogin said.

Chancellor went through a growth spurt in middle school, and now is a 5-11 outside hitter. She is close to collecting her 1,000th career kill and leads the Wildcats in that category for the third time in four years.

While Chancellor led the Wildcats' attack as a freshman, the 5-5 Scogin started at libero and has remained there throughout her career.

"Shia came in with a lot of developed skill and experience from the club world. She came in and seemed unbothered by having to play against upperclassmen," Willow Canyon Coach Matt Overfelt said. "I kind of got a glimpse of Emory right before her freshman year. I could see the skill development, the passing and the defense from her. My libero Maddox Richtmeyre graduated the year before. Emory impressed me that she had the skill to step in."

Chancellor said the volleyball program had a family atmosphere since day one.

Players on all three levels knew and liked each other, Scogin said.

"It was a huge program. There were so many players with amazing talent. I loved stepping into the program knowing that I was stepping

into an established team where girls already loved each other," Chancellor said.

The Wildcats missed the playoffs in that 2023 season. But with a healthy Chyler Martin leading the attack and Chancellor in support, Scogin pacing the back line and freshmen Emylia Coffman and Ashley Edwards added to the mix, Willow Canyon won in the 5A play-in and reached the first round of the playoffs in 2024.

In 2025, this squad from Surprise returned to the playoffs. The attitude of players in the program allowed this group to bond, and 2026 may be the best Willow Canyon team yet.

"When you're so close as a team it's hard to fail," Chancellor said. "We've already beat teams that we've never beat before in program history. It's been a great year for us."

As of Oct. 23, the Wildcats were ranked No. 8 in 5A. If Willow Canyon finishes in that slot or higher, it will be the highest 5A regular season ranking in program history.

The high point so far is the program's first win against Sunrise Mountain — a four-set victory at home Sept. 28.

"They've got lofty goals," Overfelt said. "They've had those long-term goals but are willing to do the short-term stuff to get there."

Then the Wildcats took down Centennial in Peoria in five sets.

Chancellor said this group has never played harder. Scogin is the on-court leader.

"As a libero you have to be loud and lead the back row. Emory does it without fail," Chancellor said. "She's always talking and always has a smile on her face. She always wants the best for everybody."

Scogin said Chancellor provides much more than the average attack-



Willow Canyon volleyball seniors Shia Chancellor, left, and Emory Scogin smile outside the Ironwood High School gym in Glendale Oct. 21. The Wildcats played the Eagles that night. (Independent Newsmedia/Richard Smith)

er.

Beyond that, Chancellor is an uplifting force on the court and the heartbeat of the team.

"Shia has definitely helped me be a leader on the court. Going into this year, her and I always talked about how we're going to have fun. On the court she's always talking. Her and I will look at each other and she'll say she believes in me. She does that with everyone else. Having that person on the court is very special," Scogin said.

Wildcat athletes have showed up for the girls at home games. The last regular season game is tonight against No. 4 ranked Phoenix Horizon.

"It's taken a long time to get here. They both have the attitude that we can beat talented teams. We've talk-

ed for so long that anybody can beat anybody," Overfelt said.

Scogin said the team has set the goal of meeting or exceeding program records. Willow Canyon has reached a state volleyball quarterfinal once — in 2008.

The Wildcats have never played in a semifinal, let alone a state final. Six seniors want to change that, led by the two four-year starters.

"I always loved playing with Emory because she's such a great girl. Her spirit is amazing. She's always so bubbly and funny," Chancellor said. "Getting to play with someone like that for years is truly special, especially to be graduating with her in a couple of months. I love her so much."

Then they're on to college. Scogin just committed to Scottsdale Community College

She wants to study business in college, then attend dermatology school. Then she wants to open her own dermatology business.

"I had a lot of talks with my teammates, my coaches and even Shia, trying to understand where I was at," Scogin said.

Chancellor committed to Alabama A&M, which is a Division I school in Huntsville. She made her decision early on, verbally committing a year ago.

She said she wants to study biology before going on to medical school.

"The process was not easy. Recruiting is never easy no matter what sport you're in. I think nobody's process is the same," Chancellor said. "To come across a school with such loving girls and to know immediately that's where I wanted to play was really powerful. I can't wait to go there next fall."

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SALE

Church members helping, comforting those in need

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Crown of Life Lutheran Church quilting group has been busy throughout the year and is now prepared for the upcoming quilt and craft sale.

The sale is 8 a.m.-noon Friday, Nov. 6, at Crown of Life Lutheran Church, 13131 W. Spanish Garden Drive.

The church has had a quilting ministry for almost 20 years and member Val Vanness said the group follows the teaching of Jesus Christ to give help and comfort to those in need.

"This past year we have donated 12 quilts to the American legion, 30 quilts to the Orphan Grain Train, 50 quilts to congregational homebound members and 177 quilts to Arizona Sunshine Angels an organization supporting foster children," said Vanness.

The sale will also be open to

church members Saturday, Nov. 7, and Sunday, Nov. 8, before and after services.

The various quilt options include baby to large throw size quilts, table runners aprons, place mat sets and small gifts for children to adults, plus Christmas ornaments.

Ginny McDuffee said using the larger space allows the group to display the items better in Parish Hall. She said this group purchases their own materials on top of relying on donations.

"We have to buy our own embroidery thread, sheets and regular thread for the quilts," she explained.

Member Marlene Peterson said all supplies and materials needed to create and make the quilts can get pricey. Vanness said proceeds from the sale go to purchase more batting for in the quilts, sewing accessories like scissors and thread and more sheets and fabric yardage. Most of the quilts



The Crown of Life Lutheran quilting group has worked hard over several months to prepare for the upcoming Friday, Nov. 6 quilt and craft sale. (Independent Newsmedia/Jennifer Jimenez)

are made from donated materials, according to Vanness.

The group is always accepting donations that can be dropped off at the church to help with quilt making.

Quilting throughout the year requires the group to go through about 10 rolls of batting, which runs \$200

per roll.

Members of the group said it is not just the value of the materials, but also the labor that goes in to each of these quilts. The group hopes the community will support the sale to continue to give back to the community.

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NEIGHBORS

Alumnae club welcomes new member

Carla Mungai is one of the new members of the Arrowhead-West Phoenix Pi Beta Phi Alumnae Club. She is 85, plays soccer, pickle ball, bowls and felt she had to quit skiing at 70 because of the fast and intimidating snowboards.

On July 26, in a soccer tournament in Burlington, Vermont, she was playing soccer with a Stayin' Alive team where she scored a goal.

She owns an online bookstore and has been assisting the chapter's Literacy Committee, of which she is a member, by donating books to the club's Little Free Libraries. Prior to becoming an entrepreneur, she worked for the U.S. Census.

Mungai was initiated at New York Gamma in 1960 where she attended St. Lawrence University obtaining a bachelor of science degree in eco-



Carla Mungai plays rugby and soccer. (Submitted photo/Sheryl Hamlin)

nomics.

Visit westphoenixpiphis.com.

Surprise donation drive will help deployed service troops

The city of Surprise is hosting a donation drive for deployed service troops through Friday, Nov. 6. Community members are encouraged to donate any of the following items at three city collection sites:

- Hot sauce bottles (2-4 ounces)
- Chewing gum/mints
- Game/Puzzle books (Dollar Tree)
- Rice Krispies treats
- Individually wrapped beef jerky
- Individual packs of peanuts/almonds
- Lip balm
- Sunscreen (travel-size)
- Toothpaste (travel-size)
- Body wash (travel-size)
- Foot powder (travel-size)
- Deodorant (travel-size)

Collections will be taken 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays at Surprise Community and Resource Center, 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive; 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays-Sundays at Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave.; and 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Mondays-Wednesdays and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays at Asante Library, 16755 W. Vereda Solana Drive

In addition, unwanted Halloween candy will be accepted at the Nov. 7 day of service event at the Surprise Community and Resource Center.

Contact daisy.vargas@surpriseaz.gov or 623-222-1612.

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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Please be advised, Ray Smith with SWS Engineering, Inc., will host a Neighborhood Meeting to discuss the project referenced below. Any member of the public may participate in this conversation as it pertains to this project by utilizing the access information provided under Meeting Details below. According to Surprise Municipal Code, the applicant is required to host a Neighborhood Meeting to present their project to the public while soliciting feedback and providing answers to questions. Please note, the City of Surprise is not the host of this meeting; however, the assigned City Planner will be available to provide information as needed in response to inquiries received from residents.

Applicant: Ray Smith, 602-793-3243, ray@sws-engr.com

City of Surprise: Alex Ferruccio, 623-222-3164, alex.ferruccio@surpriseaz.gov

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING DETAILS

DATE: Monday, November 16, 2026
 TIME: 6:00 PM
 PHYSICAL LOCATION: Marley Park Elementary School
 15042 W Sweetwater Ave.
 Surprise, AZ 85379

MEETING LOCATION



PROJECT LOCATION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

A Conditional Use Permit with Site Plan for the construction of an approximate 900 square foot drive through restaurant facility on a vacant pad located west of the northwest corner of Litchfield Road and Waddell Road. Surprise Planning Case FS26-0365.

Publish: Phoenix Independent, October 23, Surprise Independent, October 28, 2026/50786_1

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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

Please be advised, Ramon Meza with Pathangay Architects, LLCs, will host a Neighborhood Meeting to discuss the project referenced below. Any member of the public may participate in this conversation as it pertains to this project by utilizing the access information provided under Meeting Details below. According to Surprise Municipal Code, the applicant is required to host a Neighborhood Meeting to present their project to the public while soliciting feedback and providing answers to questions. Please note, the City of Surprise is not the host of this meeting; however, the assigned City Planner will be available to provide information as needed in response to inquiries received from residents.

Applicant: Ramon Meza, 602-500-9513,
meza@pathangayarchitects.com

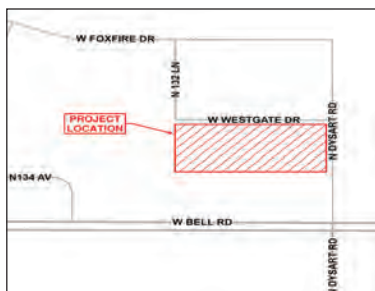
City of Surprise: Tanner Wessel, 623-222-3137,
tanner.wessel@surpriseaz.gov

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING DETAILS

DATE: Monday, November 9, 2026

TIME: 6:00 PM

PHYSICAL LOCATION:
Surprise Community & Resource Center –
Mancini Room
12641 W. Santa Fe Drive
Surprise, AZ 85378

MEETING LOCATION**PROJECT LOCATION****PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

A proposed rezone of 4.19 acres from Community Commercial (C-2) to Regional Commercial (C-3) located at the SWC of Dysart Road and Westgate Drive. Surprise Planning Case FS25-0227.

Publish: Surprise Independent,
October 28, 2026/50954_1

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