TOWN OF PARADISE VALLEY
INDEPENDENT
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INSIDE

SUSD talks student screen time; Page 14



NOVEMBER 4, 2026

Arizona's Nonpartisan Newspaper



Paradise Valley Victim Advocate Melisa Dodge discusses shelters and resources available to domestic violence victims, noting that recommendations depend on each person's circumstances, at the Coffee with a Cop event Wednesday, Oct. 7, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

Q&A: Paradise Valley victim advocate

Supporting survivors of domestic violence

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Independent spoke with Melissa Dodge, Paradise Valley's victim advocate, about supporting survivors, navigating the justice system and resources available to those experiencing domestic violence.

"All it takes is that one victim that finally decides that enough is enough, decides to assert their rights by having their voice heard, and puts their trust in me to assist them in having justice served," Dodge wrote. "Watching a person persevere and cultivate self-reliance is what keeps me motivated."

What led you to become a victim advocate, and what was your path to your current role with the prosecutor's office?

My path began when I discovered I wanted to help people. After earning my college degree, I initially began my career as a behavior coach for

• See **Q&A** Page **30**

Council considers eliminating fire service fee

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Paradise Valley Town Council members discussed the future of the town's fire service fee during an Oct. 22 study session, with several members supporting eventually eliminating the fee and covering fire services through the general fund.

Leslie DeReche, the town's chief financial officer, presented the history of the Fire Service Fund, its expenditures and collection costs, and options for addressing its ongoing deficit.

Before entering into an intergovernmental agreement with the city of Phoenix, Paradise Valley relied on private company Rural Metro to provide fire and emergency medical services, with property owners paying the company directly. The town later entered into an agreement with Phoenix for fire and emergency services to improve response times, increase efficiency and expand available resources.

Initially, the town paid for the agreement through the general fund before implementing a dedicated sales tax on Aug. 1, 2011.

• See **Service Fee** Page **30**

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BRUCE THE SAVVY BUYER

The client who taught me to be a better agent

BY GREG HAGUE

The savviest buyer I ever represented followed a rule: he would not fall in love with a house until he owned it.

His name was Bruce. And although I was supposed to be the real estate expert, he taught me a few things.

My specialty has long been home selling strategy, but occasionally I've helped buyers. Bruce expected Harvard level representation. I suspect many agents have never been taught what that involves. I didn't fully appreciate it until I met him.

> ***To Bruce, a house was an investment first. It could become his home after he bought it. The order mattered.***

That sounds easy enough. Until you walk into a kitchen you adore, see the view from the patio, and start mentally arranging your furniture. Suddenly, you're looking for reasons to buy. Reasons to be careful become less welcome.

Bruce kept his enthusiasm on a leash.

Before we made an offer, he expected me to investigate the property, the neighborhood, and the community's prospects. How had values performed compared with similar nearby communities? What could I learn about the schools, taxes, and surrounding development? Were businesses opening or leaving? Was demand growing? What might bring more houses onto the market?

A beautiful house could still be a mediocre investment. Bruce expected me to look beyond the front door.

And handing him a pile of statistics wouldn't finish the assignment. He wanted my opinion, supported by facts.



Bruce and me after a backcountry flight in Wyoming. We're both pilots.

Why might this property appreciate faster than comparable properties elsewhere? If the market weakened, what might help it hold its value?

Bruce knew I couldn't predict the future. But he expected me to explain my thinking before he committed his money.

Then came my favorite part.

His instructions went something like this: "Greg, make the sellers love everything about my offer except the price. That's how I'll get the deal I want."

Think about that. Most buyers focus on what they want, then ask their agent whether the seller will take less. Bruce expected me to discover what the seller wanted before we put an offer on paper.

That meant calling the listing agent and asking questions. What closing date would work best?

When did the seller actually want to move? Would a little time in the house after closing help? Was a shorter inspection period important? What else would make the transaction easier?

I wasn't supposed to guess. I was supposed to find out.

Then we could build an offer around those answers, giving the seller reasons to accept our price. Bruce had one firm boundary: he still needed enough time to inspect the property properly. Being accommodating didn't mean being careless.

He understood that a seller's life doesn't fit neatly into an asking price. A closing date that costs a buyer nothing to accommodate might solve a seller's biggest problem. Certainty, convenience, and a smoother move can have real value.

Discovering that value was part of my job.

Bruce put me through my paces, and it was a joy to help him. When he purchased, I felt I had truly earned my fee. There was research behind my advice and a reason behind the terms we offered.

So when you hire an agent to help you buy, ask what happens beyond the showings. Who investigates the seller's needs? Who examines the investment potential? Who gives you an informed opinion, including reasons to walk away?

Bruce expected all of that. After more than 50 years in real estate, I still believe he set the bar for buyers and the agents who represent them.

> ***I called him Bruce the Savvy Buyer. He helped me become a better buyer's agent.***

Thank you, Bruce.

Greg Hague **CEO, 72SOLD**

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FDA approves immunotherapy regimen studied by Mayo Clinic

The Food and Drug Administration has approved the immunotherapy drug atezolizumab in combination with chemotherapy for some patients with stage 3 colon cancer following surgery.

The treatment is for patients whose tumors have deficient DNA mismatch repair, or dMMR.

The approval is based on results from the ATOMIC clinical trial led by Mayo Clinic, according to a press release.

The study found that adding atezolizumab to standard chemotherapy reduced the risk of cancer recurrence or death by 50% compared with chemotherapy alone. FDA approval further establishes the addition of immunotherapy to chemotherapy as a standard treatment option in the curative setting and helps to make it more readily accessible to patients who may benefit.

"This approval represents a major advance for patients with a subset of stage 3 colon cancer," Frank Sinicrope, M.D., a Mayo Clinic oncologist and leader of the ATOMIC study said in the release. "ATOMIC is the first study to show the benefit of immunotherapy after surgical resection in patients with locally advanced colon cancer with dMMR. The goal after surgery is to eliminate remaining microscopic cancer cells responsible for recurrence and thereby increase the number of patients who are cured of their disease."

The phase 3 ATOMIC trial enrolled 712 patients with stage 3 dMMR colon cancer that had been surgically removed and spread to regional lymph nodes. Patients were randomly assigned to receive standard chemotherapy alone or chemotherapy combined with atezolizumab, an immune checkpoint inhibitor, followed by additional atezolizumab.



The Food and Drug Administration has approved a new immunotherapy drug for use by patients with stage 3 colon caner that was studied at the Mayo Clinic. (Courtesy Mayo Clinic)

At three years, 86.3% of patients who received immunotherapy plus chemotherapy were alive and free of disease, compared with 76.2% of patients who received chemotherapy alone. The findings were published this year in The New England Journal of Medicine.

Moving immunotherapy earlier in treatment

Immune checkpoint inhibitors have transformed the treatment for several advanced cancers. In colon cancer, they have been particularly effective against tumors with dMMR. These tumors have a defect in their ability to properly repair errors in their DNA during cell division, leading to the accumulation of multiple mutations that can make the cells more recognizable to the immune system.

Before the ATOMIC trial, immunotherapy was used primarily for advanced or metastatic dMMR colorectal cancer. ATOMIC examined whether activating the immune system after surgery that is intended to cure the patient could prevent cancer from returning.

"Instead of waiting until a patient's colon cancer has returned or spread, we can now use immunotherapy earlier when patients have undergone surgery and are able to prevent or markedly reduce the chance of recurrence," Dr. Sinicrope says.

Approximately 15% of colon cancers have dMMR. Testing a patient's tumor can identify dMMR and help determine the optimal treatment.

An important advance for younger patients

The approval also comes as colorectal cancer rates among young-

• See **Immunotherapy** Page **28**







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Arizona educator discipline cases surge as state clears backlog

Discipline cases against Arizona educators have risen sharply in recent years, including a more than fourfold increase in cases categorized as assault since 2022.

But state education officials caution that the increase does not necessarily mean misconduct is occurring more frequently in Arizona schools.

Read online at yourvalley.net

$100K grant expands student-veteran education program across Arizona

A $100,000 contribution from the Timothy T. Day Foundation will help an Arizona nonprofit expand a program connecting students with military veterans, giving young people opportunities to preserve firsthand accounts of history while developing writing, communication and leadership skills.

Imprints of Honor, a Phoenix-based nonprofit, operates an after-school character and civic education program with 33 school and college chapters, including 31 in Arizona.

Read online at yourvalley.net

Arizona broadcasters back AM frequencies as Congress debates mandate for autos

The technology may be more than a century old, but AM radio waves continue to carry safety alerts, news and entertainment in multiple languages across Arizona.

Now, national lawmakers are working to keep drivers tuned in with a bipartisan bill that would require AM radio in new passenger vehicles, despite pushback from car manufacturers.

Read online at yourvalley.net

Gigi's Playhouse in Scottsdale offers those with Down syndrome skills, camaraderie

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Chris Mays knows what's wrong with the world.

"The world needs more people with Down syndrome," said Mays, the executive director of GiGi's Playhouse Phoenix, which is actually located in Scottsdale.

"When you're talking to somebody with Down syndrome, they're going to tell you exactly what they're thinking and what they're feeling," Mays said. "I love that because if you're doing something good, they're going to tell you. If you're doing something they don't like, they're going to tell you ... I think they're the answer to saving the world."

There are over 60 GiGi's Playhouses across America and Mexico. The achieve-

• See **Gigi's** Page **16**



Gigi's Playhouse Phoenix member Sofia Ramirez (right) prepares the cash register for a busy day at the achievement center's cafe. (Independent Newsmedia/J. Graber)

Italian Festival moves to Scottsdale Civic Center



Around 60 vendors, including 12 Italian restaurants are scheduled for this year's Italian Festival at Scottsdale's Civic Center. (Courtesy Italian Association of Arizona)

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The 11th annual Italian Festival will return to Scottsdale Nov. 7-8 in grand style.

The festival has outgrown its normal location along the waterfront and will be headed to the 24-acre Scottsdale Civic Center Plaza, 3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd., this year

"It's our biggest and most exciting festival yet," Italian Association of Arizona Board Member Ron Pacioni said.

• See **Festival** Page **24**



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We hope to stimulate debate, not control it on our opinions pages. We reserve the right to edit submitted opinions. We insist on civility. Please include your name, physical address 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.

Letters 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. Letter content is the responsibility of the person who submitted it.

SPEAK UP

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

CORRECTIONS

We promptly correct factual errors. We offer a "right of reply" to the people we cover. Readers who disagree with a news story may respond with a letter.

Can't wait for council to act on leaf blowers

Following the town council's Oct. 22 study session on leaf blowers, one thing is clear: residents shouldn't count on the council to lead any effort to reduce leaf blower noise and emissions. This is despite the council's acknowledgment that leaf blower complaints are perennial — and have been among the most persistent concerns residents have raised over the years.

But we don't have to wait for the council to act.

Paradise Valley resorts have already switched from gas-powered to quieter battery-powered leaf blowers because they don't want to disturb their guests. With no commercial businesses to speak of in town, that leaves our own yards as the major source of the noise that disrupts our neighborhoods. And that means we have the power to make a real difference.

If enough of us ask our landscapers to switch to battery-powered blowers, they will have an incentive to do so. Better yet, we can ask them to rake whenever practical and reserve blowers for when they're truly needed, like after major storms. My husband and I have already adopted this approach. Our landscaper has even told us that, in many circumstances, raking is easier than blowing.

Imagine the difference we could make if more of us took this simple step. I plan to rally my neighbors within leaf blower earshot to see what we can accomplish together. I urge other residents to do the same. We shouldn't have to accept incessant leaf blower noise as the price of living in Paradise Valley when alternatives are available.

And when the next council election comes around, let's ask candidates where they stand on leaf blowers. If this is one of our community's most persistent complaints, it deserves more than another study session. It deserves action.

Maja Wessels
PARADISE VALLEY

ATTENTION PLEASE!

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

Please send comments to azopinions@iniusa.org. More letters are on **yourvalley.net**.

Arizona's health care system needs to improve

I pray to God something improves with our health care system.

My husband is dead and gone because the health care system here in Arizona failed him. I called 911 because my husband had fallen a couple of times. He didn't need to die four weeks later – he had low sodium and low electrolytes. I thought they'd give him an IV and I'd take him home in a couple of days. He ended up getting sepsis, sending him to a rehab, bringing him back to the hospital and back to rehab.

It was absolutely horrible. I still have nightmares about it. He's been gone three and a half months.

Please do something about our health care system. I pray to God I never have to go to the ER. I felt angry and frustrated. Most of the time I didn't feel like anybody was helping me or certainly helping my husband.

Patricia Brooks
SCOTTSDALE

A call for refugee support

In this fraught time when so many freedoms are endangered, this letter calls for support for vetted refugee immigrants.

This October, the Department of Homeland Security cut the 30-day refugee termination notice to a mere 10 days – endangering previously granted work authorization, ability to support children and applications for green cards.

Historically, termination of thoroughly vetted refugees has been rare because refugees are identified overseas and go through years of security vetting, medical screenings and in-person DHS interviews. Now, DHS has begun systematically revisiting previously settled cases. A 10-day deadline makes it nearly impossible for individuals and families to get legal help or gather evidence needed to avoid being detained or deported.

Meanwhile, redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Ukrainian refugees is on hold, endangering families who cannot safely return to an active war zone. Also, the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program remains paused while the latest travel ban removed the Afghan SIV exemption. Thus, Afghan allies who supported our

• See **Opinions** Page **28**

REAL ESTATE PERSPECTIVE FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

THE MARKET EDIT

PEOPLE PLACES PROPERTIES A MORE MEANINGFUL WAY

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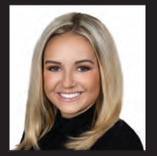
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REPRESENTED SELLER

Arizona's child divide

Where young families are growing — and where they aren't

By Matt Loeschmann
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Arizona continues to attract new residents, but the state's growth is creating very different communities for children and families.

In some parts of Arizona, new neighborhoods are filling with young families, school districts are adding classrooms and communities are building parks and other services for children. In other areas, children make up a shrinking share of the population as the number of older residents grows.

The difference could help shape Arizona's schools, housing market and public services for decades.

About 1.59 million Arizonans were under age 18 in 2024, representing roughly 21% of the state's population, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. At the same time, nearly 1.5 million residents were 65 or older.

That means Arizona has nearly as many children as seniors, but they are not distributed evenly across the state.

Family growth is reshaping the Valley

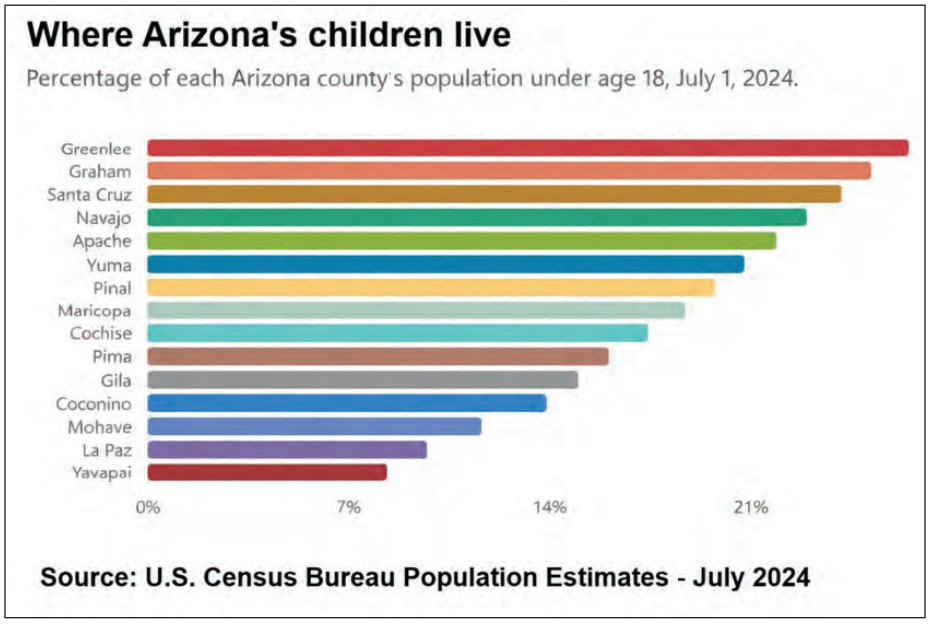
In the Phoenix metropolitan area, some of the clearest examples of family growth can be found in communities such as Queen Creek, Buckeye, Goodyear and Surprise.

Queen Creek illustrates how quickly a community can change.

Once a small community on the southeastern edge of the Valley, Queen Creek has become a major residential growth area. New subdivisions continue to spread across the community, bringing families with children into neighborhoods that did not exist a generation ago.



What does the data say about young families in Arizona? (Metro Creative)



The growth is reflected in the local school system. Queen Creek Unified School District reports approximately 15,000 students and 16 schools, according to the district. Its schools include elementary, junior high and high school campuses serving a rapidly expanding community.

The effect of that growth can be seen at the individual-school level. Queen Creek High School had 1,968 students in the 2024-25 school year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Other fast-growing communities face similar pressures. Buckeye, Goodyear and Surprise have added large numbers of homes and residents, increasing demand for schools, child care, parks and other services aimed at families.

The number of children tells a different story

But population growth alone does not tell the entire story.

A community can add thousands of residents without adding many children if the newcomers are primarily adults or retirees. Conversely, a smaller community can have a much higher percentage of children even if its overall population is relatively modest.

That makes the percentage of residents under 18 an important measure when comparing Arizona communities.

The broader numbers suggest that the state's family landscape is changing. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Center reports that the percentage of Arizona households with at least one person under age 18 fell from 31.8% in 2011-15 to 28.7% in 2020-24.

Births and school enrollment show the trends

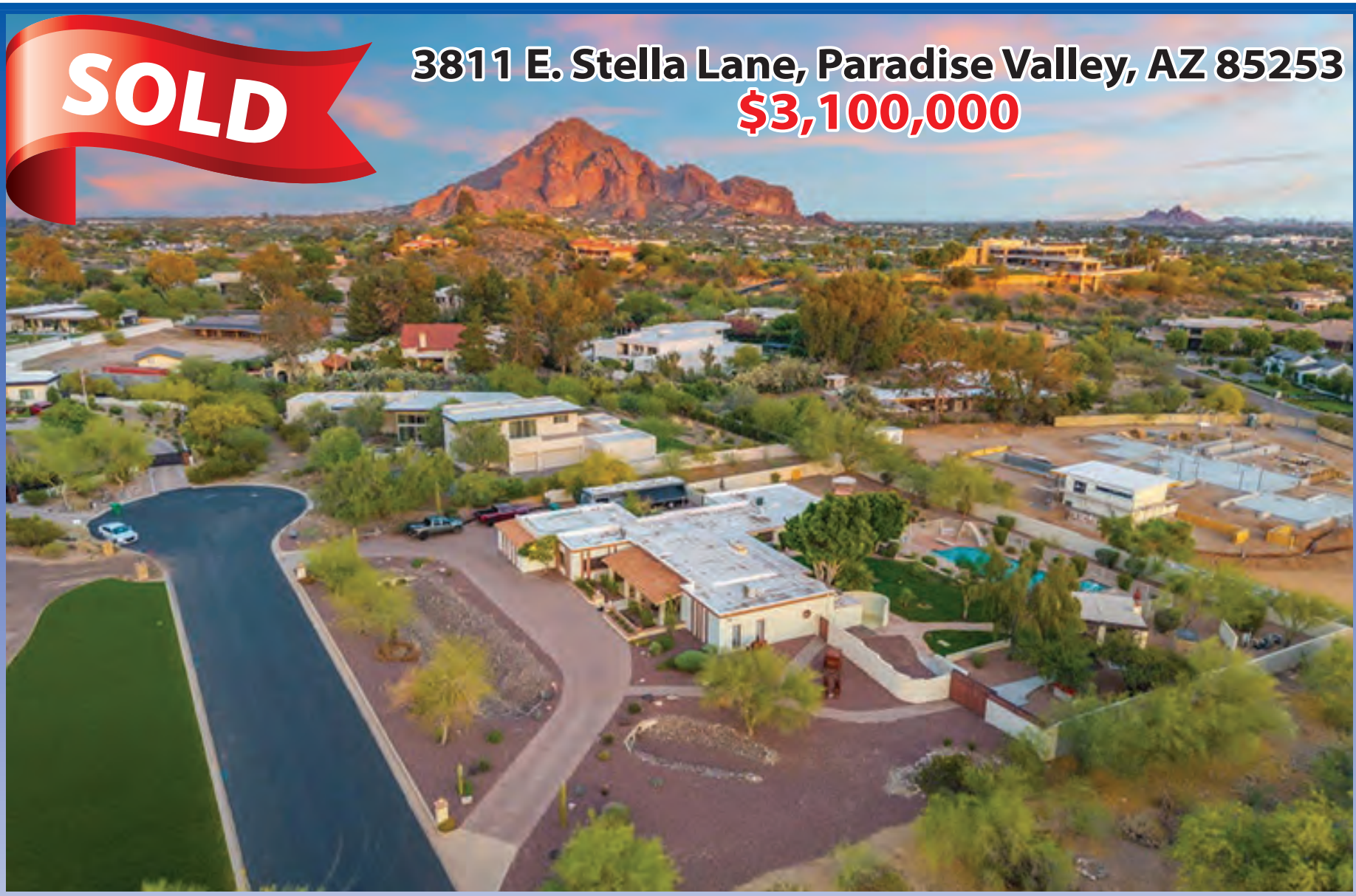
Birth statistics provide another measure of the trend.

Arizona recorded 78,711 births in 2024, according to Arizona Department of Health Services vital statistics data. The state's fertility rate was about 53 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44. The state health department also publishes birth data by county, allowing researchers to see where births are increasing or declining.

Those differences matter because the number of children in a community affects much more than school enrollment.

A growing child population can increase demand for classrooms, teachers, day-care centers, pediatric health care, playgrounds, libraries and youth recreation programs. It can also influence where communities build roads, parks and new housing.

• See **Families** Page **29**



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SUSD looking at student screen time rules

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Scottsdale Unified School District governing board is looking to limit how much screen time students can have for school purposes.

The board discussed the issue during its Oct. 27 meeting and tasked staff with writing a policy they can vote on sometime this school year.

Superintendent Dr. Scott Menzel said he would like to have it to the board by March or April at the latest.

One thing board member's agreed on was that the youngest students should have minimal access to computers.

"Don't show them a movie when you can read them the book," board member Dr. Matthew Pittinsky said.

National screen use guardrails proposed by staff call for kindergartners to have no more than 15 minutes of screen time per day, first-graders to get no more than a half hour and second-graders to get between 20 to 40 minutes of screen time daily.

Board member Amy Carney said she would like to see students through second grade get no screen time.

"We do have parents that are leaving or not coming to our schools because they are looking for schools that aren't using screens like we are," she said. "It's vital we make change. We need to get our enrollment up, and this is a way we can do that, if we do it the right way."

Carney also said she wants to go back to pre-COVID systems when students weren't assigned their own computers for the year. She preferred computers only be accessible to students when they are rolled out in carts for specific lessons.

Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Lea Mitchell agreed with Carney that some parents and even teachers have expressed a desire to get away from technology, but she's also heard from as many families concerned their children aren't being taught more computer literacy.

Menzel noted that students begin taking standardized tests in the third grade, so it might make sense to give them some computer literacy skills before that.

Carney also said she wants an opt-out option for families that don't want their kids using computers at all — which the district already offers.

Menzel said his staff has found examples of poor use of screens in the district's schools.

"We've had examples of people putting on 'Bluey' while the kids are doing snack time and we've said, 'No, that's not an appropriate use. Students need to be engaging in social activity during snack time, not watching the screen,'" he said.

But it's not all bad news regarding technology use.



Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board member Amy Carney wants a district-wide policy that limits all students through the second grade to no screen time at school. (Scottsdale Unified School District)

"We've also walked into classrooms where the screen is up, what's in the workbook is on the screen and the teacher is using that as an interactive flat panel to help with group instruction ... so it's screen but it's educationally driven with a teaching and learning purpose," Menzel said.

That leads to the first step in creating a policy, which is to define exactly what is screen time. For example, if students need their school issued computers to do homework at night, does that eat into their daily allotment of screen time.

Menzel also noted as students get older, a lot of research is online, which needs to be accounted for.

And some students who are behind in some subjects, such as English as a second language, can benefit from extra programs to catch up.

Likewise, students don't necessarily use their computers uniformly every day. For example, Menzel said, arts students may use their computers heavily some days to create designs, then not at all on other days when they are creating the piece, so to say to all high schoolers should strictly get 90 to 120 minutes of computer time each day, may not be meeting their needs either.

But Menzel said he and staff will develop something for the board to vote on this school year.

"What I've heard: One is that the board would like to pursue policy and then regulations recognizing that the policy in itself and it's creation shouldn't be so ridged that it doesn't account for some of the exceptions or things that we know are important at all levels, but also, I've heard pretty clearly a strength of minimizing screen time at the younger ages," he said.

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Gigi's

• From page 6

ment centers are dedicated to improving the lives of people with Down syndrome by offering services like occupational therapy and speech therapy as well as other services while eventually finding them employment as adults. One of the most important services it provides may be the chance to simply socialize with each other.

The Gigi's Playhouse Phoenix is the 21st location in the nation, which Mays says is serendipitous because Down syndrome occurs when there is a third chromosome in the 21st pair.

Gigi's Playhouse Phoenix was started by Jennifer Gage when her daughter was getting ready to graduate high school. There was no clear path for her next step so she spearheaded a start-up committee in 2013 and started raising funds

The Scottsdale location opened on Valentine's Day 2015 in a single room and has since expanded into the two store fronts on either side of it to its current size of just over 6,000 square feet.

It provides all of its services at no cost to members and runs on about a $1.2 million budget with no government funding — it's all donors and grants.

The center is the only location in Arizona and works with approximately 1,200 families across the state. On any given month, there will be between 100 and 150 active participants ranging from newborns to members in their 50s.

The playhouse is a place of joy filled with success stories.

For instance member Moria Silverberg is interested in acting and was recently cast as a barista in the independent film "Underneath the Glittery Moon."

And member Jordan Leydon was hired by the Phoenix Suns, got four other members hired by the team and was promoted to a full guest service representative.

"He'll take their ticket, tell them where the seat is," Mays said. "He's giving them eye contact and high fives every time they're coming in, and it's genuine. It's authentic."

Leydon loves it.

"I like meeting new people and helping other people," he said.

Leydon's mom Christine Leydon, who became the Scottsdale location's director of adult education after discovering GiGi's Playhouse, is beyond proud of her son's accomplishments.

"When he graduated high school, it was like, now what?" she said. "There's nothing out there for someone with Down syndrome. For years I was searching high and low, asking what is going on as he regressed. Then we found Gigi's Playhouse, thinking it's just for the little ones like everybody else, but it's an amazing adult program here (too). It's changed our lives. Now my son's confidence is built back up and he's met new friends here. He's living his dream, working for the Suns."

The goal at GiGi's Playhouse isn't just to fit members into any old job they can find. The idea is to find something that plays to each individual's strengths and interests.

"We have musicians, we have athletes, we have writers, we have baristas," Mays said. "They all have their own interests. We help give them skills. We identify what their interests are and really send them on this journey. Ultimately their going to end up in our education (program). They're going to work on resumes and job interviews. We're going to get them out into the public."

But members don't graduate from GiGi's Playhouse per se. They may develop skills and get jobs, but that doesn't mean they stop coming.

"This is a life journey here," Mays said.

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Chinese musical treasures coming to Musical Instrument Museum

More than 70 musical instruments and other objects excavated from archaeological sites in China will be featured in a new exhibition opening Nov. 6 at Musical Instrument Museum.

"Unearthed Musical Masterpieces from the Southern Kingdoms of Ancient China" includes artifacts dating back more than 2,000 years. More than 40 of the objects will be displayed in the United States for the first time, including 10 designated Grade One National Cultural Relics, China's highest classification for national treasures. The exhibition was organized by MIM and the Hubei Provincial Museum under the guidance of China's National Cultural Heritage Administration.

The exhibition traces the development of musical culture in ancient China from the Neolithic period through the court music associated with the ancient Zeng and Chu states. Among the objects are bronze bells, drums and stone chimes that were excavated from the tombs of rulers and nobility.

Highlights include a bell from the tomb of Marquis Qiu of Zeng dating to about 650 BCE; a bronze bell from the tomb of Marquis Yu of Zeng dating to about 550-476 BCE; and a painted standing drum dating to about 400-300 BCE featuring phoenixes standing on the backs of tigers. The exhibition also includes an exceptionally rare bronze animal-shaped chime dating to approximately 1300-1100 BCE and a painted stone chime decorated with phoenixes.

Other artifacts include depictions of musicians, armor and a helmet, a bronze sword and jade pendants. Archaeological excavation footage and videos of contemporary performances also will be shown.

MIM will mark the exhibition's opening with a three-day event Nov. 6-8 featuring curator talks, instrument demonstrations, live music and family activities.



The Musical Instrument Museum will soon receive dozens of instruments excavated from sites in China. (Photo provided by Musical Instrument Museum)



Opera singer to perform at Italian Festival

Italian singer Ripalta Bufo returns to Scottsdale this year to showcase her talent, headlining the 11th annual Italian Festival on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 7-8 at the Scottsdale Civic Center, 3939 N. Drinkwater Blvd.

Bufo, a soprano opera singer from Apulia, Italy, has captivated audiences around the globe with her remarkable talent, according to a press release.

She was a finalist on "Italia's Got Talent" in 2013, displaying her status as a world-class performer. She traveled to the United States to record her new album "From Italy with Love" and will share songs from it at the festival.

Tickets can be purchased at italianassociation.org.

Italian opera singer Ripalta Bufo was a finalist on "Italia's Got Talent" in 2013. (Submitted Photo/Italian Association of Arizona)



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Festival

• From page 6

Typically over 10,000 people visit over the weekend but the association is shooting for more this year.

Among the new features this year, will be a Bocce tournament and the festival's first VIP section, offering exclusive perks such as three complimentary pasta dishes prepared by chef Francesco Allegro and three wine or cocktail selections available only to VIP guests. VIP ticket holders will also receive general admission and six wine tasting tickets for La Strada del Vino.

In fact, the crowd favorite La Strada del Vino will include over 30 wines from regions across Italy this year.

World famous Italian coloratura soprano Ripalta Bufo is also returning and award winning flag waving team Sbandieratori del Palito Asti is also coming back from Asti, Italy.

"If you love food and you like wine and you like our culture, there's something here for everyone, Pacioni said.

That includes kids.

"We'll have a children's face painter, a balloon artist as well as a magician for the kids.

The association is closing in on 60 vendors coming to sell everything from pottery and jewelry to clothing and makeup.

This will be the fifth year Jennifer Koeninger of Humble Jewels will be at the festival.

> *"It's our biggest and most exciting festival yet"*
>
> **RonPacioni**
> **Italian Association of Arizona Board Member**

It's one of her favorite shows because she does well in sales and the association always puts on a first class, but relaxed, production, she said.

"I have the same people coming to me year after year," Koeninger said. "It's a lot of families. I have one family, two adult daughters and the parents, it's something they just come out to and look forward to every year."

And family is largely what the Italian culture is about, Pacioni said.

"Italians always joke you meet someone and the next day they're part of your family ... and you welcome them in," he said.

The Italian Festival is just one of many fundraising events held by the 501 (c)(3) Italian Association of Arizona aimed at eventually building an Italian Cultural Center, which is planned for 2030 somewhere in Scottsdale.

Early bird prices are available and tickets can be purchased at italianassociation.org.

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Mary Lynn Kasunic
President & CEO

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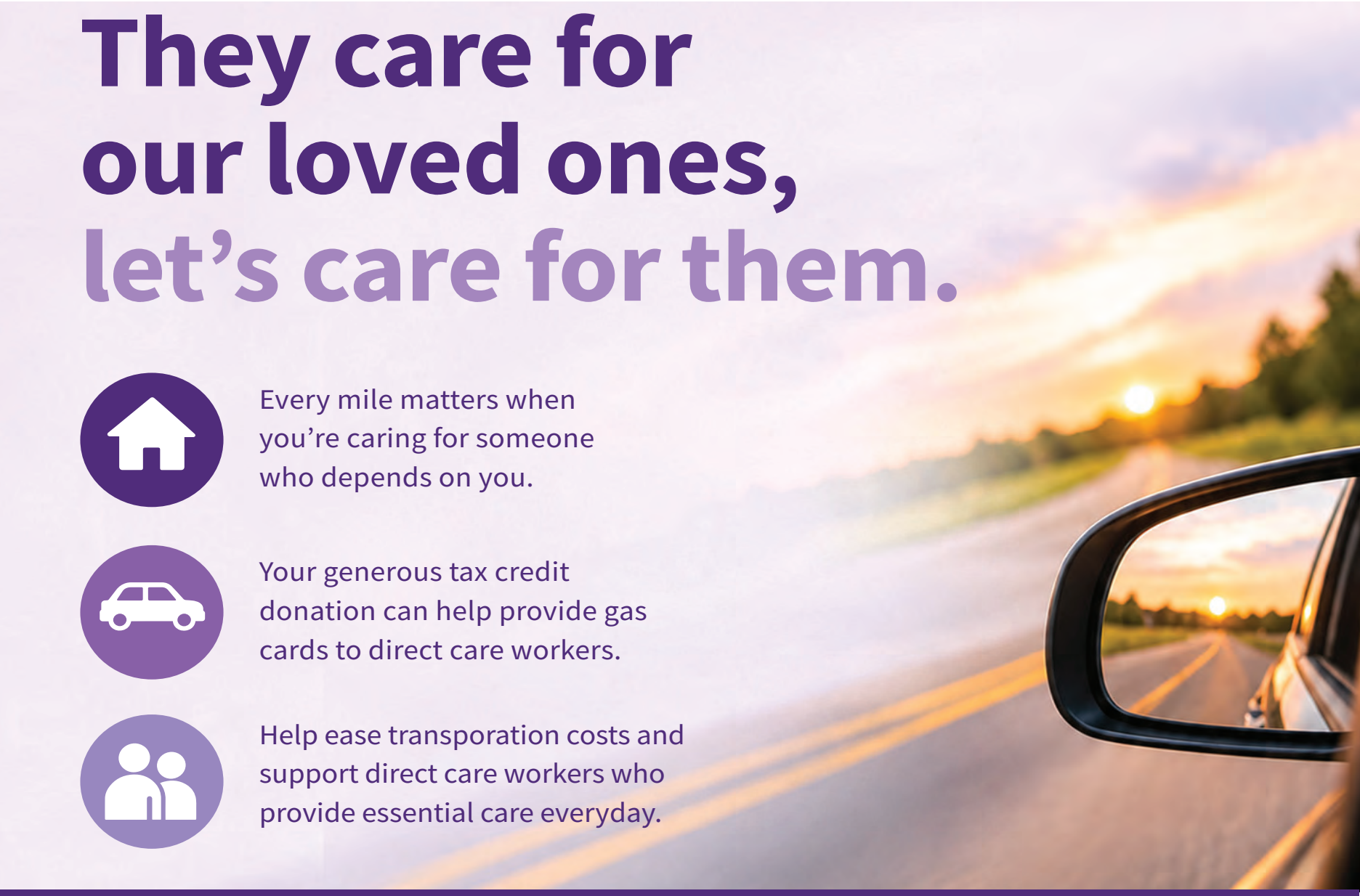
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Scottsdale Philharmonic 'thriving'

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Scottsdale Philharmonic Symphony Executive Director Joy Partridge was devastated to learn the Phoenix Symphony has shut down and laid off its musicians for lack of funding.

"I wish we could help them because it's just such an embarrassment for the City of Phoenix to shut down an entire season of a major classical organization," Partridge said. "We're all appalled this is happening."

The Scottsdale Philharmonic, on the other hand, has a different story to tell, as Partridge says it's "thriving."

"We outgrew the Scottsdale Center for the Arts, which holds about 800, and where we are right now, La Casa de Cristo Lutheran Church ... which seats about 1,250," she said.



Scottsdale Philharmonic leaders are hoping to begin paying all of their musicians by the middle of the season. (Submitted Photo/Scottsdale Philharmonic)

And the concerts are so packed they realized last June that they were turning people away, so they doubled the performances this year. Each show is now played on a Thursday night, which is new, and a Sunday afternoon.

The symphony is even playing shows in the summer months, while the typical season is in the fall and winter.

After opening the season in October with Mendelssohn's "Fingal's Cave" and Arensky's "Symphony No. 1," November's concerts, which will be Nov. 12 and 15, will feature Mozart's "Symphony 40" and Saint-Saens' "Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 22."

The Scottsdale Philharmonic is currently a semi-professional orchestra, meaning only some of its musicians are paid; however, its leaders are hoping to pay all of the musicians by the middle of the season.

"When you have a combination of the people you pay versus people who volunteer, there tends to be a big difference sometimes in reliability ... you've really got to pay your people to make sure you've got that consistency," Partridge said.

General admission to Thursday night events is $19.95 and VIP seat-

• See **Philharmonic** Page **29**

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Immunotherapy

• From page 4

er adults continue to rise. More than one-quarter of patients enrolled in ATOMIC were younger than 50.

The trial included patients with Lynch syndrome, the most common inherited cause of colorectal cancer and the most common hereditary cancer syndrome. People with Lynch syndrome have an increased risk of developing several cancers, particularly colorectal cancer, and frequently develop cancer at younger ages. Colon cancers associated with Lynch syndrome generally have dMMR.

"For patients who develop colon cancer at a young age, preventing recurrence can translate into decades of life gained," Dr. Sinicrope said in the release. "Being able to offer an effective treatment such as immunotherapy to improve the survival of these patients is especially meaningful for them and their families."

From scientific insight to a new treatment

ATOMIC grew from years of research into the biology of dMMR colon cancer. Dr. Sinicrope and colleagues previously observed that these tumors contain large numbers of inflammatory and immune cells, including those cells targeted by immune checkpoint inhibitors. Those findings provided the scientific rationale for testing whether immunotherapy could strengthen the body's immune response against cancer cells that can remain after surgery.

Dr. Sinicrope developed the study, which was conducted through the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology, part of the National Cancer Institute-supported National Clinical Trials Network. Patients from the U.S. and Germany participated.

"The patients who participated in ATOMIC made this advance possible, and their contribution will change how we treat patients with dMMR colon cancer here and around the world," Dr. Sinicrope said in the release.

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network previously updated its guidelines to include atezolizumab plus chemotherapy as a treatment option based on the ATOMIC findings. FDA approval establishes the regimen as an approved treatment for eligible patients in the U.S. previously updated its guidelines to include atezolizumab plus chemotherapy as a treatment option based on the ATOMIC findings. FDA approval establishes the regimen as an approved treatment for eligible patients in the U.S.

The National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health and Genentech funded the ATOMIC study. See the study in The New England Journal of Medicine for a complete list of authors, disclosures and funding.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Do you have an opinion on this issue? Email **azopinions@iniusa.org**.

OPINIONS WITH CIVILITY

• From page 8

troops and have been vetted and deemed eligible for visas, are barred from entering the U.S.

All these people have trusted our country with their safety. Neighbors throughout the Valley of the Sun have helped to house, resettle and support vetted refugees who are contributing to our communities. Please contact our elected officials to restore the 30-day refugee termination notice period, release the hold for Ukrainian refugees and support Afghan SIVs.

Kristine Bartanen
FOUNTAIN HILLS

Families

• From page 12

School enrollment provides another way to measure the changing population.

The Arizona Department of Education's School Report Cards provide enrollment information for individual schools and districts, making it possible to compare student populations with broader demographic changes. The state data also show how school districts differ in size and composition.

For districts in rapidly developing communities, growth can happen quickly. A new housing development may initially bring only a handful of students. As more homes are occupied, however, hundreds of children can eventually enter the local school system.

Two paths for Arizona's future

The opposite can happen in communities where the population is aging.

Fewer children can mean declining enrollment and less demand for new schools, while an increasing senior population can create greater demand for health care, transportation and other services.

That creates a demographic divide between some of Arizona's youngest communities and some of its oldest.

It also changes the meaning of the word growth.

Two communities can both add residents, but one may be adding young families while the other is attracting retirees. One may need new elementary schools and playgrounds. The other may need more senior housing and health services.

For Arizona, the important question is no longer simply how many people are moving into the state.

It is who is moving in — and where are they going?

The answer will help determine where Arizona needs to build its next schools, parks and child-care facilities and where communities will instead have to prepare for an increasingly older population.

Arizona is still growing. But the state's future may depend just as much on where its children live as how many people live here.

Philharmonic

• From page 26

ing is $34.95. Youth tickets are $9.95, with kids under five free. There are discounts to Thursday night shows for students and veterans.

Sunday show prices have gone up slightly. Youth tickets are now $14.95, general admission tickets are $24.95 and VIP seating is $44.95.

Part of the reason for the increased prices is the effort to pay all the musicians, as well as the fact the symphony's costs have simply gone up in this economy, according to Scottsdale Philharmonic Symphony Marketing Director Cole Whitener.

"Funding for the arts continues to be cut, so prices had to increase a little, but most of our sustainability comes from private donors and patrons," he said. "Ticketing could never support a full orchestra, by itself."

Partridge still called the prices "very reasonable for the level of entertainment."

"We're not looking at $100 a ticket, or $85 a ticket," she said.

If price, or just getting to the concerts, is a barrier, the symphony livestreams all of its performances on Youtube for free. It also records them so online audience members have access to over 230 past performances for free.

For more information, visit scottsdalephilharmonic.com.

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Service Fee

• From page 1

When that tax expired in 2014, council considered creating a fire district, implementing a primary property tax or establishing a fire service fee. Council ultimately approved the fee on Nov. 15, 2012.

DeReche said the Fire Service Fund began operating at a deficit in 2018, and the fee has not increased since its creation. The town currently supplements the fund with general fund revenue, a subsidy that is projected to grow annually.

The current cost of fire services is approximately $4.5 million annually, according to the presentation, with about $3 million of that being covered by general fund subsidies.

Council considered three options: continuing to subsidize the fund, increasing the fee to cover program costs or eliminating the fee and absorbing the full expense into the general fund.

A fee increase could be implemented all at once or phased in over several years, potentially with a requirement residential fees rise along with Phoenix cost increases, DeReche said.

Council Member Julie Pace said she would prefer the town eventually absorb the entire cost but believes it should wait until additional revenue becomes available from two planned resorts, Kimpton Miralina Resort & Villas and The Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley at The Palmeraie.



Paradise Valley Town Council members at their Sept. 10 meeting, in Paradise Valley. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

"As a town, public safety is what we pay for. We don't charge for police on a separate fee," Pace said. "This really is a tax. Let's be real."

Council Member Karen Liepmann agreed that fire services should be covered by the town rather than charged separately to residents.

She suggested eliminating the fee could reduce administrative costs associated with billing, although DeReche said staff would still be needed for other billing responsibilities, including sewer services and alarm monitoring.

Council Member Ellen Andeen-Keller also reiterated her longstanding support for eliminating the fee.

Council Member Anna Thomasson opposed moving the full expense into the general fund at this time. She said during the meeting if the fee remains, it should increase along with costs as do other town enterprise funds.

Thomasson cautioned against committing millions of dollars in annual revenue before the planned resorts are operating and generating revenue for the town.

"If we started paying $3 million a year that we weren't paying now in 10 years, which is not a very long time, that's $30 million," Thomasson said, adding the town could be more than two years away from receiving revenue from the developments.

In an email to the independent on Oct. 28, Thomasson explained her hesitation to support shifting fire service costs to the general fund, citing the lack of resident concerns she has heard about the fee and the significant long-term expense.

"I will continue to listen to my colleagues' perspectives and resident wishes and support the majority," she wrote.

Council Member Scott Moore said he would support keeping the fee at its current rate or eliminating it, but not increasing it.

He also suggested exploring administrative efficiencies and staffing options that could reduce fire service costs.

Town staff expressed uncertainty about whether such changes could be incorporated into the Phoenix agreement.

Vice Mayor Christine Labelle said she would support either retaining the fee or eliminating it in favor of using town funds, emphasizing that transparency is her priority.

She also expressed concern the fund's deficit conflicts with internal policies and the original intent behind creating the fee.

"Transparency is the name of my game," Labelle said.

Mayor Mark Stanton agreed the town could eliminate the separate fee and pay for fire services through the general fund.

"The number one responsibility of a municipal government is public safety without a doubt," he said.

Stanton directed staff to return to council with information on how eliminating the fee and transferring the cost to the general fund could work. No final decision was made during the study session.

Allison Kotzbauer can be reached at akotzbauer@iniusa.org. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

Q&A

• From page 1

adolescents in residential treatment centers, then moving into case management for the SMI population, and later transitioning as a victim advocate for a law enforcement agency. Here is where I uncovered my true potential in assisting those who have been victims of violent crimes. After several years as a civilian employee in law enforcement, I was invited to interview for a newly created Victim Advocate position in the Town of Paradise Valley. The rest is history.

How long have you worked as a victim advocate, and what experiences have shaped the way you approach your work?

For eight years, I was a victim advocate for a law enforcement agency and then moved into the victim advocate role in the prosecutor's office. I have been in the prosecutor's office for almost four years now. Being present and assisting people in some of their lives' most awful moments teaches you that a calm, non-judgmental presence and active listening can help ground a person in the middle of a crisis. Sometimes active listening and validation is all a person needs.

How would you describe what a victim advocate does and the support you provide to victims?

A victim advocate guides, supports and empowers individuals through the aftermath of a crime

• See Q&A Page 32

PROTECT OUR VIEWS. PROTECT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. PROTECT PARADISE VALLEY.

MULTIPLE SOLAR CANOPIES UP TO 15 FEET HIGH BLOCKING YOUR VIEWS!

THE FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER IS THREATENING TO SUE PARADISE VALLEY IF IT DOESN'T GET ITS WAY

OPPOSE THE FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER PROPOSAL | SUP-26-02

SHOW UP SPEAK UP VOTE NO

NOV 12



PROJECTED PROJECT RENDERING



PROJECTED PROJECT RENDERING

15 FEET
MAXIMUM HEIGHT

12,000+
SQUARE FEET

~212 FEET
SOME ARRAY LENGTHS

THE TOWN COUNCIL WILL DECIDE NOVEMBER 12 • VOTE NO! • PROTECT OUR VIEWS!

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

The Franciscan Renewal Center seeks a Major Special Use Permit amendment for multiple elevated solar parking canopies beside residential neighborhoods, blocking Camelback and Mummy Mountain views.

WHY RESIDENTS ARE CONCERNED

Mountain-view loss, neighborhood character, construction disruption - and the standard this approval may set for future large-scale projects.



SHOW UP. SPEAK UP. VOTE NO.

CONTACT THE TOWN
Brandon McMahon, Planner
480-348-3531 bmcmahon@paradisevalleyaz.gov

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNSEL
neighborhood.counsel@gmail.com

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OPPOSE THE FRANCISCAN RENEWAL CENTER PROPOSAL
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2026
6:00 P.M. | TOWN HALL
6401 E. Lincoln Drive, Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

PROTECT OUR VIEWS. PROTECT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. PROTECT PARADISE VALLEY.

Dimensions and information: Town of Paradise Valley public hearing materials, SUP-26-02.

Paid for by Concerned Paradise Valley Neighbors

Q&A

• From page 30

or traumatic event ... We inform victims of their rights, help them assert those rights, explain how the criminal justice system works, keep victims informed on the status of their case, accompany them to court or police interviews, assist them with victim impact statements and restitution requests, help safety plan, and connect them to community resources.

What are some of the most common challenges or concerns victims bring to you?

One of the most challenging aspects of this work is that victims may not recognize, acknowledge or be ready to accept that what they are experiencing is abuse. When violence, control or manipulation become part of their everyday life, these behaviors gradually become normalized, making it difficult for victims to see the seriousness of their circumstances. A victim advocate's role is not to judge their decisions or become frustrated when they are not ready to make changes, but to meet them where they are, provide consistent support and empower them to recognize their own worth and options.

Through your work, what have you learned about domestic violence that you wish more people understood?

One of the biggest misconceptions about domestic violence is, "If it's so bad, why doesn't the victim just leave?" The reality is that the most dangerous time for a victim is when they leave or attempt to leave. This is the time when victims are most likely to be killed.

Leaving an abusive relationship is incredibly complex and dangerous. Victims face safety concerns, custody concerns, financial concerns, emotional manipulation, fear of retaliation, lack of support, cultural/religious pressure, fear that their partner will be arrested or deported, etc. It is not as easy as "just leave."

Is there anything else that you would want people to know about domestic violence awareness, yourself or your role as a victim advocate?

Domestic violence is rooted in power and control over another person, rather than just physical violence. It frequently includes psychological, emotional, financial and sexual control that isolates a victim/survivor. Learning about the cycle of domestic violence can help us understand why leaving an abusive relationship is rarely simple. Equally important is understanding the bystander effect — the tendency for people to hesitate or assume someone else will intervene when they witness something concerning.

When it comes to domestic violence, silence or inaction can unintentionally reinforce an abuser's sense of control and leave a victim feeling isolated. Many people hesitate because they are unsure what to say, or uncertain whether it is their place to get involved. These feelings are understandable, but they remind us why education and awareness are so important.

Allison Kotzbauer can be reached at akotzbauer@iniusa.org. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org.

HAVE AN OPINION ON THIS ISSUE?

Want to contribute to the conversation? Email us at **azopinions@iniusa.org**





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Protect Paradise Valley's Views: Vote No on SUP-26-02

The Town Council decides Nov. 12 whether to allow solar canopies up to 15 feet high beside homes. The answer could shape every large project that follows.

Paradise Valley is defined as much by what it has chosen not to build as by what it has. Homes sit low, the sky stays open, and the mountains remain part of everyday life. Residents have protected that character for decades.

On Thursday, Nov. 12, the Town Council will decide whether to make an exception.

What is being proposed

The Franciscan Renewal Center has applied for a Major Special Use Permit amendment, case SUP-26-02, to build multiple elevated solar parking canopies on its property beside residential neighborhoods. According to the Town of Paradise Valley's public hearing materials, the canopies would reach a maximum height of 15 feet, cover more than 12,000 square feet, and include some arrays approximately 212 feet long. That is more than two-thirds the length of a football field, raised overhead, next to people's homes.

Solar energy is not the issue. The issue is height, scale and location.

The views we would lose

The project's own renderings show long, elevated canopies set against Paradise Valley's mountain backdrop. For neighbors, these structures would stand directly in their views of both Camelback Mountain and Mummy Mountain, the sightlines they see from their yards, windows and streets every day.

This concern was not raised only by residents. It came from the Council itself. At the Oct. 22 Town Council meeting, Council Member Pace asked the applicant, "Why are we having it so high to block all the views for everybody in the area?"

Council Member Pace also addressed the height directly: "I know you lowered to 14, but why isn't it 9 feet like many of them around town?" Why this project needs to be so much taller is a question neighbors are still asking.

The precedent we would set

Land-use decisions build on one another. When a town approves large, elevated structures beside homes, that approval becomes a reference point. The next applicant, whether a church, a school, a resort or a private developer, can point to it and say, "You already allowed it there." Each exception makes the next one easier to justify and harder to deny.

Paradise Valley's character was preserved by councils and residents who held a consistent line, one application at a time. Approving SUP-26-02 as proposed would move that line. Views that are not protected now become much harder to protect later.

Pressure on the Council

The Franciscan Renewal Center is threatening to sue Paradise Valley if it doesn't get its way. At the Oct. 22 meeting, the Center's representative told the Council, "So if it gets declined, then I'm going to have more involvement … I'm going to have more involvement than I have right now." Council Member Pace responded, "What you're saying is you're going to sue us."

Paradise Valley's land-use decisions should be made on the merits, not under pressure.

What a "no" vote means

A no vote is not a vote against the Franciscan Renewal Center, which is a valued part of this community. It is a vote to say that this design, at this height and scale, beside these homes, does not fit Paradise Valley.

The Council has the authority to say no and ask for something better.

Be in the room on Nov. 12

This decision will be shaped by the people who show up. A full room of residents sends a message no letter can match.

Thursday, Nov. 12, 2026, at 6 p.m.
Paradise Valley Town Hall
6401 E. Lincoln Drive, Paradise Valley

Here is what you can do:

Mark your calendar and plan to arrive a few minutes early.

Bring a neighbor.

Ask to speak during the public hearing. You do not need a prepared speech. Tell the Council where you live, what you see from your home, and why Paradise Valley's views and standards matter to you.

If you cannot speak, come anyway. Your presence counts.

For renderings, project details, hearing information and a calendar reminder, visit ProtectParadiseValleyViews.com.

Protect our views. Protect our neighborhoods. Protect Paradise Valley.

Show up on Nov. 12. Speak up. Ask the Council to vote no on SUP-26-02.

Paid for by Concerned Paradise Valley Neighbors.

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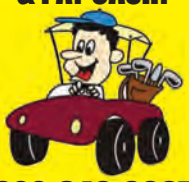
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Be a Civility Advocate!

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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