SURPRISE INDEPENDENT
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NOVEMBER 11, 2026
Surprise's Nonpartisan Newspaper

INSIDE
Film screening honors Surprise resident; 15



Surprise council talks Wittmann incorporation

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Pursuing efforts to become incorporated, a group of Wittmann residents now seek Surprise annexation as part of the process, despite maintaining resistance of the notion in the past.

During the Nov. 2 City Council work session, Mayor Kevin Sartor and council members questioned the fiscal ramifications of absorbing the rural community after all in its desire to become incorporated. As previously reported by the Independent, many residents of the community have been adamant about not being annexed by Surprise, so the request came as a surprise to the council.

Wanting to know if anyone on the council or staff asked to annex Wittmann, Council Member Chris Judd said his family and friends who live there constantly tell him "don't you dare annex Wittmann," adding they do not want to be part of a city or town and wish to remain rural.

Judd said the council shares

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Friends of the Libraries volunteer Coleen Holman shelves books. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

Friends of Surprise Libraries donates over $1M to community

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

While Friends of the Surprise Libraries make a difference in the community one book at a time, charitable efforts have reached over $1 million for the nonprofit that gives back to the city instead of taking funds.

The charitable group has surpassed the $1 million mark as of Nov. 1. The Friends have made more than $1 million since 2003 and donated funds to the community. The group continues raising funds and giving back to the community.

"We're the only nonprofit who donates to the city instead of taking," said Friends of the Surprise Libraries President Aly Cline, adding how she did not think they would achieve that much this year. "We put $1 million in the community helping teachers, helping students and helping the community."

She gave an update on the charitable contributions from the compact library found inside the Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave. Her husband, Gary, a U.S. Navy veteran, is the treasurer. He and her assistant provided an itemized breakdown of where many of the funds from book sales went from helping local schools to fulfilling teachers' wishes.

The Friends of the Surprise Libraries helped get the metal drop boxes for book returns at the Asante, Hollyhock and Regional libraries among the many things the group did to

• See **Library** Page **10**



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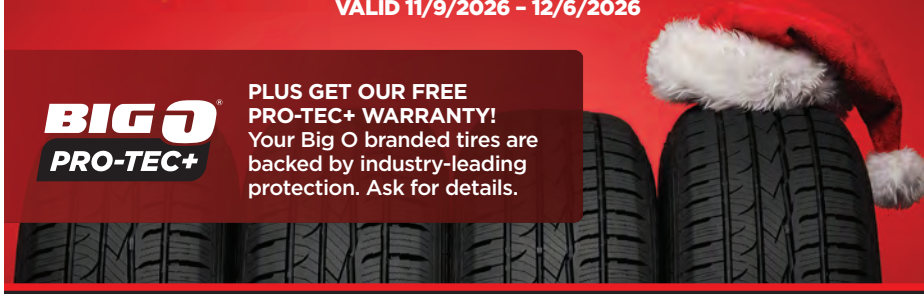
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NEWS IN BRIEF

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Center closes for Veterans Day, Thanksgiving

The Surprise Community and Resource Center will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11, in observance of Veterans Day and Thursday, Nov. 26-Sunday, Nov. 29, in observance of Thanksgiving. Regular hours will resume Monday, Nov. 30.

Surprise partners with CAMP program

The City of Surprise has partnered with CAMP, a program of Desert Farms2Tables, to host the Pre-Pack 2 Go service on the third Saturday of each month.

Order reserved prepackaged produce boxes with a $16 donation ($15 per produce box and $1 transaction fee). Then pick up the produce 12:45-1:45 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Surprise Community and Resource Center, 12641 W. Santa Fe Drive.

Produce boxes for purchase at the event are also available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Visit campaz4u.org or call 480-269-2084.

City offers free block party trailer rentals

The City of Surprise encourages community engagement and offers free rentals of a block party trailer that comes with tables, chairs, music, games and more.

City staff will deliver the trailer and stay throughout the event to help things run smoothly. In addition, applicants may receive up to $150 reimbursement to help cover food or party amenities and entertainment. Approved applicants will receive a block party kit, which includes flyers to help spread the word about your party.

Reservations are required at least two weeks in advance and are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more and apply at surpriseaz.gov/BlockParty.



SURPRISE GOES THE EXTRA MILE

Surprise Mayor Kevin Sartor proclaimed Nov. 1 as Extra Mile Day to recognize individuals and organizations who committed to "going the extra mile" in volunteerism and service. Extra Mile Day celebrates the capacity to create positive change in families, organizations, communities and more to "go the extra mile" for helping to make the world better. Sartor joined a countrywide effort in recognizing the people whose volunteer service, generosity, and everyday efforts improve lives and strengthen the community, from supporting schools and community programs to caring for seniors, helping animals in need and showing up for a neighbor. Visit ExtraMileAmerica.org. Mayor Kevin Sartor at City Hall. (Independent Newsmedia/File photo)

Program provides supportive services

In partnership with Maricopa County, the Surprise Community Action Program provides supportive services that foster self-sufficiency and stability during unexpected financial crises.

These services provide limited temporary assistance with utility and eviction prevention for qualifying residents of Surprise, El Mirage, Sun City, Sun City West, Waddell and Wittmann. Funding is limited and is not guaranteed. Applicants must meet eligibility requirements.

Residents may begin the pre-screening process by visiting the Maricopa County portal at hsd-clientportal.maricopa.gov.

Call 623-222-1600 to schedule an appointment.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

November 2010: By unanimous vote, the Surprise City Council approved an agreement with the Western Maricopa Educational Center creating Arizona's first fabrication lab at the Surprise Civic Complex.

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Cashatt stabilizes Stallions volleyball

By Richard Smith
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Through four years and four head coaches, Haley Cashatt has been the constant for Shadow Ridge volleyball and a key to the program's improvement.

The 5-9 outside hitter who attacks in the land of the giants put away her 1,000th career kill Oct. 20 in a home game against Youngker.

She started playing volleyball around age 9, and is used to outjumping taller foes and hitting before they can get a block up.

"Honestly, it was more of a mental think for me. I had the athleticism and the vertical. It doesn't matter the height," Cashatt said.

As things currently stand, her competitive volleyball career is nearing its end. Cashatt said she plans to attend nursing school in college.

She wants to start that degree path at one of the in-state community colleges.

That made the 1,000 kills an exclamation point on her career.

"That was one of my big goals that I wanted to hit in my senior season," Cashatt said.

Each successive year has been easier than 2023, which was a tumultuous year for the Stallions and their new freshman attacker. Coach Joe Volkman left the program at midseason and Sean Carleton finished the year as head coach.

Troy Sherman arrived to coach Shadow Ridge in 2024.

"Honestly it wasn't too hard the past couple of years," Cashatt said. "Freshman year was hard, but as the years went on, I got used to it."



Shadow Ridge senior outside hitter Haley Cashatt celebrates her 1,000th kill after an Oct. 20 win against Youngker. She is flanked by her mother, Kallie, and her father Kevin, right. (Submitted photo/Shadow Ridge Volleyball Booster Club)

Mackenzie Cumbie had just finished her college volleyball career at the University of Saint Katherine in San Marcos, Calif., and joined Sherman's staff.

The sophomore leading the team in kills immediately stood out.

"Her athleticism comes easy to her. She is a natural leader without trying," Cumbie said. "If you watch her the past couple of years, she's kind of a laid back leader. She doesn't say or demand much. She plays with a performance level that makes you want to be better."

In 2025 the Stallions elevated to a 24-10 record and won the West Valley Region.

They hosted a play-in game, but lost to Mesa Red Mountain. Sherman left as coach.

But Cumbie was ready to move up.

"This year I knew I wanted to come in and kind of continue uplifting the girls," Cumbie said. "I can speak from experience. It's very different when a man is coaching instead of a woman."

Shadow Ridge is younger and not quite as successful at 17-12.

But it has been an enjoyable season.

"She's more in touch with us, age wise and especially having a woman coach," Cashatt said.

A second region title is nice for the program.

Cashatt said it has been fun to help the Stallions roster that includes six juniors, two sophomores and two freshmen.

"Knowing how I felt my first year and then meeting someone to look up to and lead in the sense of being on the court," Cashatt said.

"I tried helping the younger girls as well as previous players I've played with."

Now she and her coach are looking forward to tougher competition, starting with a Nov. 3 playoff game.

They want to extend the careers of seven seniors into the 6A playoffs.

"There is a reason I came back and it was these girls. It's how hard they fought, how hard they've worked. They've just changed the overall perspective for coaching for me at least," Cumbie said. "I love this group of girls and I've had some of them for three years."

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YOUR OPINION

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.

Excited to serve Dysart students, community

I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout my campaign for the Dysart Unified School District Governing Board.

To those who voted for me, encouraged your friends and neighbors to vote, displayed signs, shared my message, prayed for me or generously donated to my campaign, thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your kindness, encouragement and belief in me mean more than words can express.

I am truly honored to have earned the trust of our community and the opportunity to serve on the Dysart Governing Board. This is a responsibility I do not take lightly.

Throughout my campaign, I spoke about putting students first, encouraging parental involvement, supporting our teachers and getting back to the basics of education. Those commitments have not changed.

I believe strong schools are the foundation of strong communities. Our students deserve an excellent education, our parents deserve to be heard and our teachers deserve the tools and support they need to succeed. I also believe we have a responsibility to taxpayers to be thoughtful stewards of public dollars.

As I begin this new chapter, I look forward to listening, learning, asking questions and working collaboratively with my fellow board members, district leadership, teachers, parents and our community.

Whether you voted for me or not, I want you to know that I am committed to representing all Dysart families and doing what is best for our students.

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**.

Thank you again for your trust, your prayers and your support. I am excited about the opportunity to serve this wonderful community.

Our students deserve nothing less than our very best.

Lisa Everett
SURPRISE

West Valley Symphony board thanks supporters

The West Valley Symphony would like to thank residents for their continued support, for attending our concerts and for their commitment to live orchestral music, which helps sustain an important part of our community's cultural life.

The Phoenix Symphony's season has been suspended. This is a profound cultural loss for the Valley. Our hearts go out to its musicians, staff and audiences, and to everyone affected by the absence of these performances. We hope its music will soon return to the stage.

We also recognize that this news may raise questions about the health of other arts organizations. We want to reassure everyone that the West Valley Symphony is financially sound.

We have no debt, and we maintain adequate cash reserves and investments to support our financial health for the foreseeable future. Careful stewardship and responsible planning remain central to our work.

Continued community support by ticket holders, donors and advocates helps make that stability possible.

It allows us to bring exceptional musicians and inspiring performances to the West Valley while planning confidently for the years ahead.

We thank everyone for the trust they place in us and for making live symphonic music part of their lives.

We look forward to welcoming patrons to our next concert and to sharing the joy of music together.

Kevin Perry
SURPRISE

The author is president of the West Valley Symphony. He wrote this on behalf of its Board of Trustees.

Honor Arizona heroes along Interstate 17

Arizona has a long and proud history of answering the nation's call, and few stories embody that sacrifice more than those of Kayla Jean Mueller and Navy SEAL Charles H. Keating IV.

Recently, Congressman Abe Hamadeh introduced HR 10091, the Mueller-Keating Memorial Highway Act, to designate a 26-mile stretch of Interstate 17 between Phoenix and Prescott in their honor.

This recognition — which includes memorialization of the Sunset Point Rest Area, a great place to stop on a scenic drive — is a fitting and deeply deserving tribute to two remarkable Arizonans who gave everything in defense of freedom and humanity.

Mueller, a Prescott native, devoted her life to humanitarian aid before being taken hostage and killed by ISIS in Syria in 2015. Keating IV,

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OPINIONS WITH CIVILITY

• From page 8

a Phoenix native, laid down his life in 2016 during intense combat with ISIS in Iraq while attempting to rescue fellow servicemen.

Naming this portion of I-17 after Kayla and Charles ensures that millions of drivers traveling from Phoenix to Northern Arizona will be reminded daily of their bravery, selflessness and sacrifice.

Congressman Hamadeh deserves credit for championing this legislation and bringing our community together behind a common purpose.

I urge our congressional delegation and local leadership to give HR 10091 their full support and help immortalize the legacy of these two Arizona heroes.

Jason Begalke
PHOENIX



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.***

Wittmann

• From page 1

their sentiments. Stressing later in the meeting how "nobody up here wants to annex you," he mentioned the misconceptions about the city annexing Wittmann as rumors sparked online and elsewhere following the city's General Plan 2040 community meeting when details were shared at a community workshop in 2023.

"I think we all are in agreement up here. We want Wittmann to stay rural," said Judd, noting the area's beauty and "great people."

Repeating rhetoric about "Surprise is coming for us," "Surprise is going to annex us," Judd stated he doesn't know anyone who wants to annex in to Surprise, but supports the idea if the Wittmann residents finally want to go through the process. "I think if Wittmann becoming a city of any kind is the quickest way to kill the rural lifestyle out there," said Judd, noting how Surprise, which was once rural with rodeos, became "incorporated for the exact same reason," to protect a rural lifestyle.

"Have you guys been to the rodeo grounds out here? They're gone. It didn't work. They made things not rural by doing that."

Lloyd Abrams, the assistant city manager for Surprise, explained to council members why they were entertaining Wittmann's incorporation and annexation request by Jeffrey August, of Keep Us Rural LLC, who submitted a formal letter to the city on Sept. 30, outlining a "proposed incorporation of the Town of Wittmann" as follows:

> *"I think we all are in agreement up here. We want Wittmann to stay rural."*
> **Chris Judd**
> City Council Member

"On behalf of residents, qualified electors, property owners and supporters of the unincorporated community of Wittmann, Arizona, we hereby submit this Formal Filing Package concerning the proposed incorporation of the Town of Wittmann, Arizona. This filing requests that the city of Surprise formally receive and act upon the accompanying request concerning annexation of the territory proposed for incorporation," stated the correspondence.

Abrams' presentation detailed annexation and how it works under state law and city policy, plus the city's position on not "proactively pursuing annexation." Annexations begin with requests from property owners or developers as demonstrated by the letter sent by August for Keep Us Rural.

Abrams presented the following details for the council to consider in their process to decide in the future if they wished to pursue and honor the Wittmann activists' request:

• Wittmann is within Surprise's urbanized area, so under A.R.S. §9-101.01 it cannot incorporate unless the city approves by resolution, or an annexation petition goes 120 days without an approved annexation ordinance

• The filing asks the city to consider annexing the proposed incorporation area and take formal action

• If no annexation ordinance is adopted within 120 days, the petitioners intend to file an affidavit with the Board of Supervisors and proceed with incorporation

Sartor asked Abrams what was the last city to become incorporated in the state, to which he replied Santan. While Judd also noted some benefits of the city embracing Wittmann's endeavor, he and Council Member Jack Hastings pointed out the financial implications it could have on Surprise. City Manager Andrea Davis, agreed.

Hastings said he is interested in doing what is best for Surprise residents first.

Abrams and Davis stated how the Keep Us Rural group would need consent from other entities such as Buckeye, Peoria and BNSF in the incorporation and annexation process, too.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share your thoughts with us.
Email **azopinions@iniusa.org**.

Library

• From page 1

assist where there was a need. A substantial amount of contributions went toward Dysart Unified School District to benefit various staff and students' interests.

Community contributions since January 2003:

• Total gifts to city of Surprise/Libraries - $287,383.93

• Total grants to local Schools - $514,040.56

• ALTRUSA of the West Valley HSE and STEM Grants - $27,200

• Friends Scholarships - $64,500

• Bookmark Contest - $29,912.81

• Other gifts - $94,813.82

• Total contributions to the community - $1,017,856.12

The book site has gently used hardback and paperback books, starting at $1. Magazines, puzzles, cookbooks, health and wellness, religious, biographies, science fiction, fiction, non-fiction and more are among catalogs. The group is preparing for the annual book sale that occurs around Thanksgiving.

> *"I love books so I've always volunteered at libraries. It makes me happy."*
> **Colleen Holman**

A lot of time is devoted in the endeavor to give back to the community and donate to the causes, noted Cline. She said over 100 "multi-generational" volunteers help make the Friends of the Library endeavors a success as well.

Likewise, Colleen Holman stated how volunteering at the library makes her happy.

"It's fun. It's a nice place to volunteer because I get to know the authors better. I love books so I've always volunteered at libraries. It makes me happy," said Holman as she put books on the shelves.

In 2021, what was called the Friends Book Store moved from the the Surprise Library lobby to an adjacent space, on the side of the lobby by the south entrance. Money from book sales supports local schools through its grant program supporting reading and literacy programs for teachers, reading specialists, special education and STEM. Grants to support learning through Literacy in Surprise area schools has been a mission of the organization since 2012.

The Friends of the Libraries has an older inventory with more classic books than the Regional library offers, which tends to be more modern and most popular books. The Friends Library features a "classics" section that is a huge draw for many readers seeking nostalgia.

Although most cities have a version of a "friends" group to support local libraries, the Surprise Friends group has a niche of helping teachers and community organizations as its primary focus. Since the Friends group is a charity, it often receives discounts from manufacturers to secure books and materials that may otherwise be costly to buy.

Go to friendsofthesurpriselibraries.org.

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Veterans Day activities, events to check out

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

In addition to the annual city of Surprise Veterans Day Parade, there are lots of activities and events scheduled throughout the Valley and nearby to honor service men and women, from local ceremonies to free entry to National Parks all day for visitors on Nov. 11.

Celebrate the 251st Marine Corps Birthday with a reading of the Commandants birthday message, a ceremonial cake cutting with some of the oldest and youngest Marines while sharing memories 6 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10, at Tempo Urban Bistro, 21067 W. Main Street, Buckeye.

A Veterans Day ceremony at The Grand starts 11 a.m. in the Village Center off of Remington Drive in Surprise. A local student, who won Grand's Armed Forces Support Group "What a veteran means to me" essay contest, is among featured speakers for the program. The S'Miles band will play patriotic music. Veterans residing at The Grand will be treated to a Mission BBQ lunch after the ceremony.

The Northwest Valley Veterans Association invites the public to the Veterans Day Remembrance Ceremony 9 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11, at Sunland Memorial Park, Mortuary & Cremation Center, 15826 N. Del Webb Blvd. The pre-ceremony music provided by Robert Prado starts 8:30 a.m., followed by an approximately 90-minute program to recognize the sacrifices and contributions by those who served.

The ceremony features guest speaker Winnie Fritz, U.S. Army nurse and Vietnam veteran, a military flyover, and the presentation of colors by the Peoria High School Air Force Junior ROTC Color Guard. Members of Mary Ellen Piotrowski American Legion Post 94 Sun City West, will provide the traditional three-round rifle salute and the sounding of Taps.

Following the ceremony, Dignity Memorial will provide a complimentary lunch for attendees.

NWVVA unites veterans organizations and those supporting veterans throughout the Northwest Valley to promote patriotic observances, honor veterans and serve the community. Call Phil Easley 602-561-0353 or email p_easley@msn.com.

Glendale has its annual Veterans Day ceremony, beginning 9 a.m. Nov. 11 at Glendale Main Library, 5959 W, Brown Street outside at Veterans Memorial. The public can drop off flags to be retired. The event is hosted by Glendale Mayor Jerry P. Weiers and the Mayor's Military Mission (Triple M).

City of Peoria's 2026 Veterans Day Ceremony begins 8:30 a.m. Nov. 11 at Rio Vista Community Park Veterans Memorial, 8866 W. Thunderbird Road, Peoria. Ceremony highlights include recognizing new names added to the Veterans Honor Wall, which is a permanent tribute honoring local service members from every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. The ceremony has patriotic performances, remarks from community leaders and veterans and a moment of silence for those who have served and those who died.

MORE ONLINE
See more Veterans Day happenings at yourvalley.net



Surprise author appears at fair

Showcasing "Faith the Ugly Dog," author Kelly Davis Beckley, of Surprise, attended the Phoenix Public Library's Local Author Fair Nov. 7, at the Burton Barr Central Library, 1221 N. Central Ave., Phoenix.

The author and publisher shared "Faith the Ugly Dog (The Adventures of Buzzardillopossum)", an independent children's book. She focuses on uplifting stories for young children that emphasize community, compassion and kindness.

Beckley joined over 100 Arizona writers when she debuted her children's book, which is for ages 3-8. The personal story is inspired by a real-life rescue dog named Faith who Beckley saved.

The dog became a source of comfort and strength, helping the author navigate through her journey with breast cancer, and how the bond with Faith showed how "a single, random act of kindness can completely change a life," a media release stated.

Visit faiththeuglydog.com.



Surprise author Kelly Beckley. (Submitted photo/Kelly Beckley)

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Closures, modifications in observance of Veterans Day

City of Surprise administrative offices will be closed Wednesday, Nov. 11, in observance of Veterans Day. City trash and recycling customers can expect a modified collection schedule. Additionally, some City programs and facilities will have modified hours for the holiday.

In honor of Veterans Day, the City of Surprise will hold its 12th annual Veterans Day Parade Wednesday, Nov. 11. The parade begins at 10 a.m. and will be routed along Bullard Avenue between Paradise and Tierra Buena lanes. It will feature community floats, bands, dancers and more! This event has become a tradition in Surprise, honoring the men and women in uniform who have selflessly served the United States.

City of Surprise customers are reminded there will be a modified trash and recycling collection schedule the week of Veterans Day, which will postpone collection by one day. There will be no service Wednesday. Collection will resume Thursday, Nov. 12.

Note that not all Surprise residents are city of Surprise trash and recycling customers and may not experience a change in pickup service. Call 623-222-1900.

All three city of Surprise libraries will have modified hours for the holiday. Surprise Regional and Asante Libraries will be open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Hollyhock will be open 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Programming at city locations will proceed as planned. The Surprise Tennis & Racquet Center will be open 6:30 a.m.-noon Nov. 11 for open play.

Call 623-222-2000.



ALUMNAE CLUB GATHERS FOR HALLOWEEN

Two dozen Pi Beta Phi alumnae members gathered to enjoy the feasts of Arizona fall weather Oct. 24 at the Sun City Grand home of Emily Johnson (Oklahoma Alpha University of Oklahoma) in Surprise. There was a buffet and wine on the patio. As part of the national Pi Beta Phi Literacy initiative, children's books were also brought to the party. Members brought 75 new books and contributed cash donations of $100. Co-president Laura Williams Looman (Arizona Beta Ariona State University) was pleased with the turnout. Visit westphoenixpiphis.com. (Submitted photo/Sheryl Hamlin)

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Film screening honors Surprise resident

Trustwell Living at Kingswood Place, an assisted living community in Surprise, will host a red carpet premiere screening of "Being Heumann" Friday, Nov. 13, honoring resident Joni Breves for the role she played in the real-life events the film portrays.

The screening will bring together Breves' friends and family ahead of the film's national theatrical release 3 p.m. Nov. 13. She is portrayed in the film by actress Roberta Colindrez.

"Being Heumann" tells the story of Judith Heumann, a disability rights advocate and driving force behind the legislation that became the Americans with Disabilities Act. Paralyzed by polio as an infant, Heumann grew up in a world that often failed to recognize the rights, and even the basic worth, of people with disabilities. She crossed the stage to receive her high school diploma carried by her father, and spent the rest of her life refusing to accept anything less than equal rights for every person living with a disability.

Breves met Heumann in Berkeley, California, where the two became allies in the disability rights movement. On Oct. 28, 1976, Heumann, fellow organizer Kitty Cone, Breves and 125 other disabled activists staged a sit-in at the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare building in San Francisco, demanding enforcement of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The protest remains the longest takeover of a federal building in U.S. history.

Breves served as a link during the occupation, working with the Secret Service and the media and relaying communications to Heumann as



Joni Breves holding Judith Heumann's memoir. (Submitted photo/Erika Perez)

word of the protest reached California's congressional delegation and, eventually, the White House.

Partway through the standoff, Heumann left Breves in charge of the protest in San Francisco and traveled to Washington, D.C., to press HEW Secretary Joseph Califano directly, a push that helped set the stage for the legislation that would become the ADA.

In the film, Heumann is portrayed by Ruth Madeley, a disabled actress, and Secretary Califano is portrayed by Mark Ruffalo.

"We couldn't be more proud of Joni and the role she played in building a more equal world for people with disabilities," said Beth Hulbert, regional sales specialist, Trustwell Living. "Hosting this premiere in her honor, surrounded by the friends and family who know her best, is a small way of celebrating a legacy that changed this country."

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November brings kickball, volleyball fun

The City of Surprise Parks & Recreation Department is offering two opportunities to have fun this November.

Families can take the field for a Family Kickball Tournament at Dick McComb Park, while teens can team up for a Sand Volleyball Tournament at Surprise Community Park.

The Family Kickball Tournament is 5-9 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, at the Dick McComb Softball Complex, 17894 W. Westpark Blvd.

Teams can include players age five and older and must consist of 8-15 participants, with at least four youth players ages 5-17 on each roster. Teams may have a maximum of 11 players on the field at one time and must designate a captain, pitcher and catcher. The person registering the team must be 18 or older.

Pre-registration is required. Registration is $60 per team and includes admission and food.

Teens ages 12-17 can hit the sand for a night of friendly competition at the Teen Sand Volleyball Tournament 5-9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 20, at the Surprise Community Park Sand Volleyball Courts, 15953 N. Bullard Ave.

Participants register individually and may request to be placed on the same team as their friends. Teams will consist of no more than six players.

Pre-registration is required. Registration is $10 for Surprise residents and $20 for non-residents. Visit surpriseaz.gov/SurpriseRec.

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Students go from childhood to adulthood in one class

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Juggling jobs, feeding families and possibly working with limited funds in today's economy is a life lesson Dysart Unified School District students learned in one day.

More than 250 Valley Vista High School students participated in an early morning interactive course Oct. 2, simulating life after high school for the Financial Fitness in Action class. Students in the economics class were faced with surprise, real-life situations including such things like traffic tickets, emergency hospital visits and more.

Based on the career chosen, students are given notes on pieces of paper to show a glimpse of their future lives working with the salaries, pay rates and credit score assigned. The students make decisions that affect their finances, such as renting an apartment on their own, buying a house, having a roommate or a spouse, buying or leasing a vehicle, purchasing phones and/or cable and possibly saving for their retirement.

"Remember your household size when you make decisions. You cannot divorce your spouse or get rid of your children," said Teojia Willamson, of the Arizona Council on Economic Education, which regularly visits the school to offer the day program.

Williamson said that was the 15th financial fitness event at a school in the Valley this year,

"It's really exciting to give students an opportunity to practice in a fun way and to sit them down so they can see the numbers. This gives them the ability to practice that," she added.

She joined a room full of community volunteers, private industry representatives and teachers who offered students guidance during the event at individual decision-making stations spread throughout the room, advising them on life choices including housing, transportation, food and health care, health/home/car insurance deductions, car repairs and more that impact finances.

At the end, financial health counselors reviewed each student's final budget one-on-one to ensure solvency or to help students learn how to live within their means of saving, spending, and budgeting based on career choices doled out to them and lifestyle decisions.

"Our whole point in high school is to get them ready for what ever comes next. We love any opportunity where we can take any theory and apply it in real life," said Valley Vista High School Principal Ginger Richards, noting how it helps students come to a reality of what is going to be expected in life.

Teacher Mitchell Pinda, who oversees the course, thanked Arizona Council on Economic Education representatives and other volunteers who help students understand the life lessons of budgeting, but being flexible in life choices.

"Each kid is given a budget sheet. Each kid is given a new life. It's literally the game of life in high school," said Pinda.

He noted how some students may be fortunate to have lucrative careers while others live paycheck to paycheck. Pinda stated the benefits of students rotating to stations, buying grocers, banking, experiencing getting their "tires popped."

Valley Vista senior Aven Tyler got to experience having a salary of $309,000 as a surgeon. She had more to work with in her budget compared to other students who were assigned being mechanics, truck drivers, teachers and more.

"I definitely learned that the cost of living is a lot higher than I anticipated," said Tyler, an aspiring astrophysicist.

She added that her salary allowed her to be interested in learning how to make her investments grow.

"It's better to have someone to help you financially," said Valley Vista Senior Dillion Reid Schwartz, a married truck driver for the morning who earned $53,090. "It's better to have a spouse to help you financially. You can afford a lot."

Likewise, Valley Vista Senior Jackson Branning, noted the hardships of being a diesel mechanic, making $52,000 a year.

"I got to get a side job. It's really hard to stay alive. This is not entertainment. It's not a joke," said Branning, who is pursuing a diesel and automotive program after high school.

This class is one of many course offerings by the district, which hosted a two-hour Career and College Expo on Oct 22 at the district office. There were booths for all CTE programs to show what students could learn to do for careers. Middle schoolers can explore their options before entering high school.

More details on the Financial Fitness in Action can be found at azecon.org/student-program/financial-fitness-in-action.

Detailed listings on the district CTE classes offered such as Army JROTC, automotive technology, culinary arts, and more are at dysart.org/mainsite/panels/career-technical-education/43/cte.

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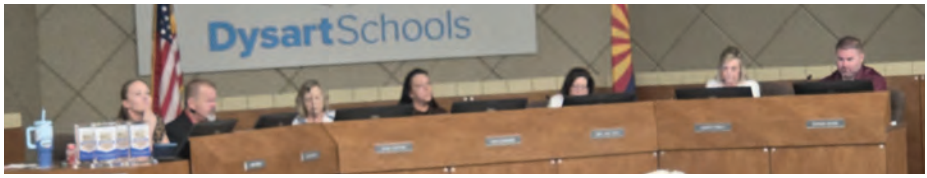
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Dysart Unified School District governing board members at the Oct. 5 meeting where the reduction of speaking time to 90 seconds was mentioned. Board President Stephen Skvara and board member MaryJane Ziola were absent from the Oct. 26 board meeting. (Independent Newsmedia/Delarita Ford)

Student leader updates DUSD board at meeting

By Delarita Ford
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The most detailed updates at the Dysart Unified School District governing board meeting came from a student council representative, Maddie Klemmer.

Board President Stephen Skvara and board member MaryJane Ziola were absent from the Oct. 26 meeting, leaving Dawn Densmore, Jennifer Drake and Denise Destiche to conduct the school district's business.

Klemmer gave a recap of the recent high school happenings, including the homecoming activities that were a success at every school and upcoming events. She mentioned students represented the district during the recent three-day 75th anniversary festivities for El Mirage, which had a parade Oct. 24.

Other updates were brief from superintendent Dr. John Croteau, and from Destiche, who shared about her visit to Willow Canyon High School; she was pleased to report a positive impression of the school.

Thanking participants for their hard work, Croteau acknowledged their efforts for the recent two-hour Career and Technical Education Expo Oct 22 at the district office.

"CTE was another great, successful night," he said, reminding attendees about the Future Freshman nights for Dysart High School Nov. 16, Shadow Ridge High School Nov. 17, Valley Vista High School Nov. 18 and Willow Canyon High School Nov. 19.

Although Densmore requested again for the topic to be added to the agenda about returning public comments to three minutes, a parent, Danielle Mills, of Surprise, spoke during the public comments and was allotted three minute as opposed to the 90 seconds.

The Valley Vista High School parent addressed the board on her concerns about student safety during the sports season since her child was reportedly harmed. She described the situation dealing with the district and its lack of response to serious concerns as "scary" and "toxic leadership." Croteau was directed by the board to follow up with those involved.

There was an earlier vote to adopt the previous agenda where Densmore made a change in the motion to edit the audience with individuals time limit to three minutes. While Densmore moved the motion, which was seconded by Destiche to adopt the agenda as presented, with the exception of changing the time limit for audience with individuals from 90 seconds to three minutes, was not agreed upon by board member Jennifer Drake. Ziola and Skvara were not present to vote, so the motion carried 2-1 regarding the public comments.

Registration open for winter youth sports

The City of Surprise is accepting registrations for winter youth sports. This includes basketball, kickball and flag football leagues, as well as camps and skills classes.

Early bird registration runs through Nov. 15 and offers a $20 discount. Regular registration begins Nov. 16.

The Jr. Suns Basketball, Kickball and NFL Flag Football leagues are open for boys and girls ages 4–17 (age determined on or before Feb. 28, 2027). The season runs early January through the end of February. Most games are played on Saturdays with the possibility of one or two weeknight games.

Practice times are determined by the volunteer coach and are typically held one evening per week for one hour.

The new Girls-Only Flag Football Division recreational leagues are open for ages 10-12 and 13-15. The season runs early January through the end of February.

With growing interest and participation in girls' flag football across the state, this program reflects the increasing demand and popularity of the sport.

Visit surpriseaz.gov/YouthSports.

Surprise is also offering a variety of skills classes for ages 6 -15. Baseball, softball, volleyball, basketball, soccer and speed and agility skills classes will be offered November-February.

For classes and camp dates, visit surpriseaz.gov/SportsClasses.







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WISCONSIN CLUB

ABOUT: 9 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11, at The Grove (formerly Tivoli Gardens), 12555 W. Bell Road, Surprise
INFO: Sun City West Wisconsin club breakfast gathering. Register at wiscwclub.wordpress.com the Friday before that date or call Mikey at 623-628-3624. No text. Wear a Wisco badge to enter a drawing of $15 towards breakfast. Anyone in The Grand, Sun City West, Sun City or Corta Bella is invited to join this social club.
CONTACT: 218-252-2357 or 602-330-8055.

MUSIC CLUB

ABOUT: Nov. 13-15, in the Sonoran Ballroom at The Grand, 19753 N. Remington Drive.
INFO: The Grand Music Club invites the community to experience a weekend of "Music without Boundaries," which takes place over three consecutive days. The show kicks off with evening performances 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13. and Saturday, Nov. 14. The matinee performance at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15.
TICKETS: Purchase tickets ($20) at grandmusicclub.com or in person at the Sonoran Plaza Activities Desk.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

ABOUT: 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday Nov. 13, and Saturday, Nov. 14, at The Community Church of Sun City, 18401 N. 99th Ave.
INFO: The fair will feature over 70 vendors offering handcrafted items as well as a bake sale. Patrons can also visit the snack bar for coffee, donuts and lunch with outdoor seating. Raffle tickets will be on sale after church services Nov. 8.
CONTACT: 623-977-4241, admin@ccscaz.org, visit ccscaz.org.







CHURCH TO HOST PIANO TRIO PERFORMANCE

The Iridescence Piano Trio, with violinist Ramses Cid, cellist Xuehui (Michelle) Yu and pianist Moyi Liu, will perform 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 22, at First Presbyterian Church of Sun City, 12225 N. 103rd Ave. Formed in July 2025 at Arizona State University following years of artistic collaboration, the ensemble is dedicated to exploring a spectrum of musical colors, emotions and expressions through chamber music. Since their formation, the trio has performed at Mirabella at ASU and Steinway & Sons Scottsdale. A free-will donation will be accepted, as well as non-perishable items for the Valley View Food Bank. (Submitted photos/Stewart Porter)

STORIES OF AMERICA

ABOUT: 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at Surprise Regional Library, 16089 N. Bullard Ave., Surprise
INFO: "Reflecting America: A Semiquincentennial Living History" explores personal stories, struggles and achievements that helped shape the nation. The program is part of activities marking America's 250th anniversary.
WEB: surprisepubliclibrary.gov/Programs.

WISCONSIN CLUB

ABOUT: Noon Thursday, Nov. 19, at Olive Garden
INFO: Sun City West Wisconsin welcome back luncheon. Fill out the form at wiscwclub.wordpress.com and send it to Sue, listed on the form. Anyone in The Grand, Sun City West, Sun City or Corta Bella is invited to join this social club.
CONTACT: 623-476-6856.

MUSIC UNDER STARS

ABOUT: 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, at Asante Library, 16755 W. Vereda Solana Drive, Surprise
INFO: Jacob Acosta & the Golden Hearts perform during the city's LIVE at Asante outdoor concert series. The free event also features arts activities and a food truck. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets.
WEB: surprisearts.com/Events.

THANKSGIVING MEAL

ABOUT: Thursday, Nov. 26, at Lakeview United Methodist Church, 10298 W. Thunderbird Blvd., Smoot Hall.
INFO: Doors open at 11 a.m. and serving will begin at 11:30 a.m. Menu includes turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, pumpkin casserole, green beans almondine, herb stuffing, rolls, salad bar, dessert and beverages (iced water, lemonade, iced tea, coffee). Deadline for purchasing tickets is noon Monday, Nov. 23.
RESERVATIONS: 623-974-5821.

FARMERS MARKET

ABOUT: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Fridays at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, 13724 W. Meeker Blvd., Sun City West
INFO: The outdoor community market features more than 70 vendors offering produce, farm-fresh eggs, grass-fed beef, prepared foods and other products, along with craft vendors. Admission and parking are free.
WEB: Facebook—Sun City West Farmers Market & Craft Show

HAVE AN EVENT?

Have something happening in or near Surprise? We welcome submissions from clubs and groups, as well as nearby nonprofits, churches and community organizations. Include the event name, date, time, location, a brief description and contact information.
Email: **jcarr@iniusa.org.**

IN EVENTS

The Mesa Independent will host a senior expo 9 a.m.-noon Nov. 13 at the Mesa Market Place Swap Meet, Building #4, 10550 E. Baseline Road. Interested in being a vendor at the event? Email: **azads@iniusa.org**.

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO-DO LIST



(Independent Newsmedia/File photo)

VETERANS DAY PARADE

ABOUT: 10 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11, along Bullard Avenue between Paradise and Tierra Buena lanes, Surprise.

INFO: Surprise honors military veterans with its annual Veterans Day parade. Residents can line Bullard Avenue to watch participating organizations, community groups and other parade entrants recognize those who have served in the armed forces.

WEB: surpriseaz.gov/VeteransDay.



(Metro Creative Graphics)

CELEBRATING AMERICA

ABOUT: 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15, at the Shepherd of the Hills United Methodist Church Sanctuary, 13658 W. Meeker Blvd.

INFO: 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.

CONTACT: shepherdumc.org, 623-584-2280.



(Metro Creative Graphics)

OREGON CLUB

ABOUT: Sunday, Nov. 15, at R.H. Johnson Social Hall, 19803 N Johnson Blvd. Check-in at noon, followed by lunch, bingo and prizes.

INFO: Cost for the welcome back party is $10 per person, with $5 for lunch and $5 for 2026-27 membership. Reservations and payment must be received by Monday, Nov. 9.

WEB: oregonclubaz.weebly.com, oregonsocialclub@gmail.com, 503-261-1475.



(Submitted photo/Wendy Whitlock)

THANKSGIVING MEAL

ABOUT: 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 26, at 14808 N. Boswell Blvd.

INFO: The Church of the Palms in Sun City has embraced a tradition of offering a free, home-cooked Thanksgiving meal to anyone in the community.

RESERVATION: 623-748-3574.

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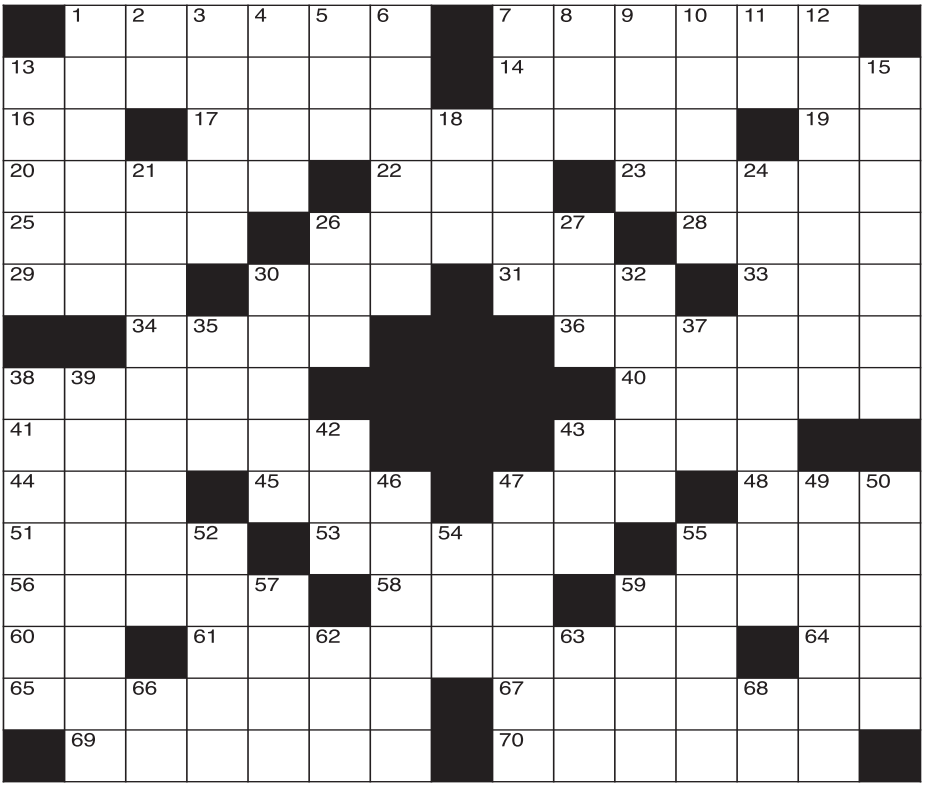
MEET DODGER

Dodger, a Maltipoo, lives in Surprise with Jennifer Bollinger.





CROSSWORD BY METRO CREATIVE SERVICES



CLUES ACROSS

1. Spiritual leaders
7. Containing salt
13. Fortified wine
14. Edible mollusk
16. Blood type
17. Make a comparison
19. Government lawyer
20. "Game of Thrones" actor Ciaran
22. 8th month of the year (abbr.)
23. Very willing
25. __ ex machina
26. Satisfies
28. New Zealand mountain
29. A doctrine
30. Popular Dodge truck model
31. Dekagram
33. Naturally occurring solid material
34. Company higher-up
36. Villains
38. Cricket frog genus
40. Influential early psychologist
41. Endured
43. Servant
44. You can get stuck in one
45. __ and feather
47. Passive optical network
48. French ballet dynasty
51. Employee stock ownership plan
53. Forming a bottom layer
55. Sound
56. Yankees slugger Judge
58. Dickens character
59. Beloved late sportscaster Craig
60. "The Mount Rushmore State"
61. Sarcastic and critical
64. Atomic #79
65. Longtime Atlanta Braves pitcher
67. Humor
69. Shawl
70. Preliminary assessment of patients

CLUES DOWN

1. Animal disease
2. Commercial
3. Craft supplies
4. Containers
5. A way to save for your golden years
6. Common Arabic greeting
7. Bulged downward
8. Acquired brain injury
9. Lay about
10. Intestinal
11. Not yes
12. In a way, pleased
13. Messianic figure in Islam
15. Resulting from intense conviction
18. Not in
21. Number above the line in a fraction
24. Lawn pest
26. Pouch
27. Ancient language (abbr.)
30. Start anew
32. Wild flower
35. Fourteen
37. Graphical user interface
38. Facing the same way
39. Campaigns
42. Touch lightly
43. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Gretchen
46. Violent seizure of property
47. One who supports the Pope
49. Malaise
50. Body fluid
52. Inauthentic person
54. Title of respect
55. Moth genus
57. Central Japan city
59. Silk garment
62. Draw from
63. Automobile
66. A male
68. Powerful government lawyer

SOLUTION ON PAGE 25





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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!



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!



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!