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Local business owners rally around restaurant owner via fundraiser

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Local business owners in Fountain Hills are rallying around a restaurant owner celebrating 10 years of business.

The community has helping Terri Woods, owner of Sun Baked Food 4 The Soul, to raise money to renovate and upgrade her restaurant.

"She's coming up on 10 years of serving the community, and she survived COVID-19 and the egg crisis. She's really been a pillar of the community for so many people," Grand Pops owner Heather Burke said. "So I got together with Bunny Keller and we started a fundraising campaign on Facebook. We were able to get her three pieces of equipment, a paint job, some decorations, some repairs, and we're still collecting more."

Keller, who works at MinDak Gold and Silver, said Woods is a highly valued member of the Fountain Hills business community and deserves recognition.

"I've known Terri personally

• See **Rally** Page **13**



From left: Heather Burke, owner of Grand Pops, and Bunny Keller, who works at MinDak Gold and Silver. (Independent Newsmedia/Connor Van Ligten)

FHUSD outlines priorities in improvement plan

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Unified School District has identified five areas of focus for the 2026-27 school year, ranging from academic achievement and special education to campus safety and career preparation.

Superintendent Val Reichler presented the district's Continuous Improvement Plan to the governing board Nov. 4, saying the goal is to give families and residents a clearer picture of the work taking place across the district.

"We've always had a continuous improvement plan, but what we want to do is be a little more transparent here and share with you and the community what we are doing," she said.

The plan was developed through discussions among district principals and administrators to identify needs and establish priorities.

• See **School** Page **3**



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School

• From page 1

The five areas are special education, student and parent involvement, student achievement, culture and climate and the Portrait of a Graduate.

For special education, the district plans to provide additional staff training on supporting students in general education classrooms and develop electronic procedures for managing individualized education programs and Section 504 records, according to the plan in the board packet for the Nov. 4 meeting.

Student and parent involvement efforts will focus on increasing participation in academic and extracurricular activities, encouraging parents to attend school events and improving communication about opportunities for family involvement, according to the plan.

Academic achievement goals include consistent use of Benchmark Advance in preschool classrooms and Beyond Textbooks in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Teachers will also use formative and benchmark assessments, along with state testing results, to guide instruction and identify areas needing improvement.

Campus culture and climate represent a broad portion of the plan, according to the board packet.

Priorities include maintaining safety and emergency preparedness measures, reducing chronic absenteeism, addressing student conflicts and aggressive behavior, and strengthening efforts to prevent student use and possession of alcohol, vaping products and marijuana.

The district also plans to use attendance, behavioral and safety data to track trends and determine whether its interventions are effective.



Fountain Hills Unified School District governing board president Dr. Richard Rutkowski and other board members at the Fountain Hills Unified School District Governing Board meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 19, in Fountain Hills. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

The Portrait of a Graduate goal centers on preparing students for life after high school.

Teachers will incorporate the district's graduate competencies into classroom activities, while each school site will provide career exploration opportunities to help students identify interests and potential career paths.

Board members Bernie Hoenle and Lillian Acker offered positive feedback following the presentation.

"I think it's great," Hoenle said.

"Everything seems to be there, it's really good," Acker said.

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

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NEWS IN BRIEF

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Groups plan joint Veterans Day ceremony

Three local service organizations in Fountain Hills are planning a joint Veterans Day ceremony.

American Legion Post 58, Marine Corps League Detachment 1439 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7507 will hold the joint ceremony at 9 a.m. Nov. 11 at the Fountain Hills Veterans Memorial, 17166 E. El Lago Blvd., according to a press release.

VFW Post 7507 will be the lead organization for the ceremony this year, which will also feature the Celebrate Kids Choir singing a prelude to the National Anthem.

For information, visit mtsinaz.wixsite.com/7507postwebold.

Shah wins CD1 race

Democrat Amish Shah has won the 1st Congressional District race in Arizona.

Shah had 179,685 votes, or 52.4%, as of Friday afternoon compared to Feely's 155,688 votes, or 45.4%.

Prior to his run for CD1, Shah won three elections from the Arizona House of Representatives in 2018, 2020 and 2022. Outside of his role in politics, he is an emergency room physician and pilot who enjoys flying small aircraft.

Feely was an NFL kicker for six teams across his 14-year career, most notably with the Arizona Cardinals. He also represented players through the NFL Players Association Committee where he represented teammates with ownership. After his career, he won five Emmy Awards in broadcasting.

The CD1 race includes the Scottsdale, northeast Phoenix, Fountain Hills, Paradise Valley, Cave Creek and Carefree communities.



Questers Four Peaks No. 1207 members Kay Hatcher, Tonie Lindenberger, Betty Crisanti, Nell Bigley, Alice Helton, Sandy Stafford and Betsy Stambaugh standing by the new storyboard panels added in 2025 surrounding the Merci Train at the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park in Scottsdale. (Submitted photo/Betsy Stambaugh)

Fountain Hills area group helps with project

The McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park's Merci Train boxcar will debut an updated exhibit Nov. 13, offering visitors a closer look at a unique piece of Arizona and American history.

The exhibit explores the 1949 Merci Train, a gift from the people of France to the United States in appreciation for the generosity of Americans who sent food and supplies to France following World War II through the Friendship Train.

Arizona received one of 49 boxcars filled with gifts from French communities. Its boxcar is among the few that remain intact, with its original contents still accounted for.

Arizona Questers Four Peaks Chapter No. 1207 helped curate historical stories and materials, shape the updated exhibit and contribute approximately $8,000 toward improvements.

The group has been involved in preserving the Merci Train's history, including creating and installing eight educational storyboards around the boxcar in 2025, according to chapter members.

The opening celebration will begin at 1 p.m. Nov. 13 and include a dedication ceremony and a presentation by Carissa Whiting, curator of the Merci Train Collection at the Arizona Capitol Museum.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

While marketing Fountain Hills to attract Valley residents, the original management team that created both Fountain Hills and Lake Havasu City held the first public event, which was an Arizona Chili Cooking Championship on Oct. 28, 1972.

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Vehicle collisions lead Fountain Hills Sheriff's Office report

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 7 substation based in Fountain Hills reports deputies responded to the following incidents during the time of Oct. 29-Nov. 4.

Thursday, Oct. 29

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Palatial Drive where it was reported a driver was stopped for speed (71 in a 50). A records check revealed the driver's license was suspended. The driver was issued a criminal citation.

• Deputies responded to Saguaro Boulevard and Ledferd Lane where it was reported a driver was stopped for a traffic violation. A records check revealed the driver had an outstanding felony warrant. The driver was arrested and booked into jail on the warrant.

Friday, Oct. 30

• Deputies responded to Palisades Boulevard and Avenue of the Fountains where it was reported a traffic collision occurred after a driver failed to control speed and rear-ended another vehicle stopped in traffic. No injuries were reported, one vehicle was towed.

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Fountain Hills Boulevard where it was reported a traffic collision occurred after a driver failed to control speed and rear-ended another vehicle stopped in traffic. No injuries were reported, no vehicles were towed.

• Deputies responded to the 15000 block of East Thistle Drive where it was reported an unknown subject attempted to use the complainant's credit card without permission.

• Deputies responded to the 16000 block of East Avenue of the Fountains where a violation of a court order was reported. The subject was arrested and booked into jail.

Saturday, Oct. 31

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Fountain Hills Boulevard where it was reported a traffic collision occurred after a driver failed to control speed and rear-ended another vehicle

• See **Call Log** on page **15**

Check out upcoming activities in Fountain Hills

Week of Nov. 12-18

Fountain Hills Community Center is maintaining its schedule of weekday events within the Cutillo Civic Center, 13001 N. La Montana Drive. Most of these activities are reserved for Community Center members.

Activities are scheduled as follows:

Thursday, Nov. 12

*8 a.m., Peer-led exercise; aerobic chair exercise.
*9 a.m., Video gentle yoga.
*9:30 a.m., Beginning line dance; Tai Chi for balance; Memory Cafe.
*10 a.m., Open paint studio; intermediate Spanish.
*1 p.m., Mid/high improv line dance; table talk women; Hand and Foot cards.
*4 p.m., Poker.
*5 p.m., Open paint studio; movie; evening beginning line dance.

Friday, Nov. 13

*The Community Center closed for the Fountain Festival of Fine Arts and Culture.

Saturday, Nov. 14

*Available for private booking.

Sunday, Nov. 15

*Available for private booking.

Monday, Nov. 16

*8 a.m., Back fit with Pilates.
*9 a.m., Geri-fit fall prevention; open table tennis.
*10 a.m., Men's Discussion.
*10:30 a.m., Conversational Spanish.
*11:45 a.m., Duplicate bridge.
*12 p.m., Sign Language meet up.
*12:30 p.m., Poker.
*1 p.m., Hi Beg/Low Improv line dance; Cribbage; Pinochle; Mah Jongg (all levels).
*4:30 p.m., Chess Club.
*5 p.m., Aerobic chair exercise; Hand & Foot cards.

Tuesday, Nov. 17

*8 a.m., Peer-led exercise; aerobic chair exercise.
*9 a.m., Video gentle yoga; women's poker.
*9:30 a.m., Intermediate line dance; Tai Chi for Balance.
*10 a.m., Hooks & Needles; open paint studio; Medicare Consult.
*11 a.m., Sign Language meet up.
*11:30 a.m., Advanced line dancing.
*12 p.m., Social duplicate bridge; blood pressure check.
*1 p.m., Bingo; Mah Jongg; movie; Swing Time.
*5:30 p.m., Open table tennis.
*6:30 p.m., Ukulele for beginners.

Wednesday, Nov. 18

*8 a.m., Back fit with Pilates.
*8:30 a.m., Intermediate bridge.
*9 a.m., Video gentle yoga.
*10 a.m., Open paint studio.
*10:30 a.m., Parkinson's Disease Workshop: Ask a Doctor Q&A.
*12:30 p.m., Poker.
*1 p.m., Scrabble/Rummikub; cards; Intro to Spanish Language & Culture.
*2 p.m., Open Jam Session.
*2:15 p.m., Spanish I: Grammar & Conversation.
*5:45 p.m., Bunco; Photo Enthusiasts.

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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.

Concerning Sharia law and the Bible

In the Oct. 28 issue of the Times, there was a discussion about Sharia law and Shelby Blecker stated that there were parts of Sharia law that "scared him to death" and that he was not aware of any Jewish laws that said you can go out and kill someone if they don't convert.

If you Google "How many places does the Bible say to kill someone," you find that there are over 100 places where God commands people to kill others. Offenses punishable by death include striking or cursing a father or mother, Sabbath-breaking, gay sex and marrying without being a virgin (No penalty for a guy that gets married without being a virgin).

There is also a passage where Moses is angry at his soldiers for sparing some people in a village after a battle and he commands his men to kill all the boys and all of the women who have had sex, but to save the young girls who are not virgins for themselves. Then, in more modern times, if you visit the Alamo in Texas, you find that the Christians there gave the Native Americans a choice to convert or be killed. Nice.

As an aside, I also found it very interesting that God got a lot nicer in the 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Google says there is not one single instance in the New Testament where God recommends or commands a human to kill another human. It's almost as if the people writing this stuff had a change of heart, so give credit where credit is due.

Stephen Robb
FOUNTAIN HILLS

Savor the season of connection

Welcome November, the "Month of Connection." At least that is what I call it, because people tend to get together all month long. Then the culminating event for most of us will be on Thursday, Nov. 26, Thanksgiving Day.

Actually, it gets better because food is the major connector. That makes this month the perfect time to get the word out about nutrition. Nature has come forth with a wonderful lesson designed to enhance this social time: Foods that look like parts of the body are especially good for those parts. As it turns out the sweet potato, very popular this month, looks like the pancreas, and that means eating it helps the pancreas do its job of regulating blood sugar.

Children are not home very much these days. However, on this one day many families will gather, and food will be a big focus. That is great because eating is both for nutrition and bonding. We "break bread" to share time together.

Children really need our help these days. They have to know that food is not a toy or something for play. These are four basic guidelines for teaching children.

1. Serve them foods that have different colors and textures.

2. Tell them about the need to chew all food pieces well.

3. Avoid giving them snacks in strollers, while walking or during play.

4. Serve meals at a table and enjoy time together.

Here is a quirky thought but a good one: Books provide nutrition for the brain, and reading to children is the absolute best.

However, in reality this activity includes being able to give your full attention. Not so easy these days. Imagine that "in-person" has become a valued commodity to savor. Savor it well this November. Happy Thanksgiving!

Sally Goldberg
FOUNTAIN HILLS

ATTENTION PLEASE!

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

Historic election results

Yes, it was a blue wave! Not a normal wave, but a tidal wave that swept through many red states.

I celebrated near Central Park in New York City. I embraced Haitians, Colombians, Latinos, gays, trans, Muslims and people from different parts of the world. Hopefully, someday we can all open our arms to every human being.

We are all the same.

We always were until a leader tried desperately to separate us with hate and vile language. It almost worked. It came dangerously close. So many listened and believed the inciteful words.

What an incredible wave. We are Americans from all over the world. We always were.

Alfred Southall
FOUNTAIN HILLS

Mobility an investment in independence

We may all lose just a little bit of the spring in our step as we age, but slowing down does not mean we need to give up our independence. Taking time to work on mobility and balance is a key part of the strategy for aging well and moving confi-

✦ See **Opinions** on page **9**

OPINIONS WITH CIVILITY

• From page 8

dently into the future.

As a physical therapist, my focus is on clients who have suffered injuries from falls or who are in recovery from surgeries. Physical therapists also help treat individuals who can no longer leave their home safely without assistance.

Movement is the basis of what physical therapists are trained to help patients with, no matter what their age or condition. Regular physical activity helps support muscle strength, mobility of joints, cardiopulmonary endurance and neuromuscular coordination.

A major concern for many clients is whether they will be able to maintain their mobility and be able to walk confidently, get up from a chair, climb stairs or carry groceries safely into their home. This is a space where physical therapy can play a major role in assisting patients to improve their overall quality of life.

Stability and balance with transfers, standing and walking activities are critically important and often something we ignore as we age.

Everyone is at a different level and may need to focus on different parts of their body to be able to achieve their highest level of function.

Among the biggest challenges we encounter with patients is the thought of exercise being unnecessary to maintain their health. Patients often look at exercise as an obligation, but with proper education by medical professionals, including physical therapists, they can see it as an investment in their future. This will help lead patients to increased independence as they age and allow them to continue doing the things that they love.

Geoffrey Miller

Geoffrey Miller is lead physical therapist at Home Assist Health.

Fentanyl overdose statistics are alarming

While deaths from drug overdoses across the United States declined during each of the last three years, they have surged in Arizona.

From September 2024 to September 2025, our state recorded a 17% increase in overdose deaths — twice the national average — according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's an alarming trend.

The main culprits are prescription opioids and illegal opioids like counterfeit pills with fentanyl, which, on average, are killing five Arizonans each day, based on tracking by the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Even in non-fatal opioid overdose events, fentanyl is the source, with men between the ages of 25 and 44 at greatest risk.

While it may come as a surprise to some, fentanyl and other substance use overdoses can happen anywhere — from home and the mall to parties and the workplace.

Fortunately, a potentially lifesaving medication called Narcan is helping to reduce the deadly effects of heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioid medications.

In 2021, Terros Health created the state's most comprehensive Narcan education and training program to teach people how to reverse the effects of fentanyl and prescription opioid medications in minutes. Since the program's inception, more than 22,000 Arizonans have completed the free training and Terros Health has distributed more than 30,000 Narcan samples.

Free training for sports teams, school districts, companies, nonprofit organizations and a host of other groups are an important line of defense in combating the fentanyl crisis and the larger drug epidemic.

Dr. Vanna Campion
Terros Health

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.***

Hidden in the Hills: 30 years of opening studio doors

By Michelle Talsma Everson
Special to Independent Newsmedia



Jeanne Bonine works in her north Scottsdale studio, where she has spent more than six decades building a career as a romantic realist painter. (Submitted photo/Jon Linton Photography)

Thirty years ago, Hidden in the Hills began with artists opening their studio doors and inviting people to see what they were making.

That basic idea has not changed much. Almost everything around it has.

The 30th annual Hidden in the Hills Artist Studio Tour returns Nov. 20-22 and Nov. 27-29, bringing 150 artists to 38 studios throughout Cave Creek, Carefree and north Scottsdale. The free, self-guided tour runs 10 a.m.-5 p.m. each day and is billed as Arizona's largest and longest-running artist studio tour.

Thousands of visitors spend the two weekends moving from studio to studio, meeting artists, seeing where they work and browsing everything from paintings and ceramics to sculpture, photography, jewelry and mixed media.

With the tour landing just before the holidays, it has become a place to look for one-of-a-kind gifts.

For seven artists, this year carries another distinction: They were there at the beginning and have participated all 30 years.

First- and second-year participants are also part of the 2026 tour, and artists travel from across Arizona to take part. This year's participants include artists from Goodyear, Tucson, Chandler, Queen Creek and Fountain Hills, along with others from across the East and West valleys.

That mix gives longtime visitors a reason to come back. They can stop in on an artist they have followed for years, then head down the road and find someone new.

Jeanne Bonine takes the cover

For the 30th anniversary, one longtime Hidden in the Hills artist will be especially easy to spot.

North Scottsdale romantic realist painter Jeanne Bonine's oil painting "Welcome to My World" was selected for the cover of the 2026 Hidden in the Hills Artist Directory.

Bonine, 82, has been painting professionally for more than 60 years. Even with a long list of career highlights, this recognition stands out for a different reason.

"Although I have received many honors during 60 plus years of my art career, including covers of various art magazines, participating in museum shows, and having my work appear on special projects like Northwest Airlines International Airline menus, it is still exciting and meaningful to be elevated by my peers as I was chosen this year's cover artist for Hidden in the Hills," Bonine said.

She will welcome visitors to Studio No. 15, where guests can see "Welcome to My World" along with new oil paintings, originals and limited-edition giclées, hand-painted heirloom glass ornaments, mini oils, greeting cards and her coffee-table book, "Inspirations of Timeless Beauty."

Bonine said she hopes the cover brings some new faces through the door.

"I sincerely hope to touch all who enter my world," she said.

That is still what Hidden in the Hills comes down to after 30 years: walking into a studio, talking with the person who made the work and seeing a side of the creative process that usually happens behind closed doors. The tour may be bigger now, but that part remains personal.

Hidden in the Hills admission is free. For the artist directory, studio locations and participating artists, visit HiddenInTheHills.org.

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‘Godspell’ rocks out at Fountain Hills Theater

By Connor Van Ligten
Independent Newsmedia



“Godspell” runs through Nov. 22 at Fountain Hills Theater. (Submitted photo/Patti Torrilhon)

Fountain Hills Theater is rocking out with Jesus Christ during its next show.

“Godspell” is set to run at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. on Sundays through Nov. 22 at 11445 N. Saguaro Blvd., according to a press release.

“Godspell” comes from the mind of “Wicked” composer Stephen Schwartz. The musical tells the story of the Gospel of Matthew and the life and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

However, “Godspell” trades its robes and hymns for rock ballads and contemporary fashion.

“The music in this show is very timeless. It takes you through a lot of experiences through to the crucifixion of Jesus,” Ross Collins, the show’s director, said. “It’s pertinent today with the message of love and understanding as opposed to have avarice.”

Collins said the show aims to tell the story of Jesus Christ in an upbeat and positive way to bring people together.

“It’s uplifting. It’s a positive vibe even though it ends with the crucifixion,” Collins said. “There still is an uplifting ending to the show. It’s trying to get people away from the hate and divisiveness that’s going and understanding that we’re stronger together.”

Music director Jay Melberg agreed.

“One of the most famous songs in the show is called ‘Beautiful City,’ and Jesus is singing to the people about how to build a positive community that supports and loves one another,” Melberg said. “It’s an antithesis of Jesus Christ Superstar. It’s a more positive depiction of the disciples’ lives as opposed to a negative story.”

“Godspell” being set in modern day helps to make the story more relatable to audiences while also making it unique compared to other stories of the life of Jesus Christ, according to Collins.

“It brings it up to present time. At the beginning he appears to wear a robe, but his attire changes to be that of a more modern-day carpenter as opposed to any kind of religious figure,” Collins said.

Melberg said the setting is brought to life by not only the props and sets, but also the actors taking part in the show as well.

“The cast is really amazing. They’re excellent singers and dancers, and they have great chemistry,” Melberg said. “There’s around 12 different characters on stage, and everyone has their own unique, individual viewpoints of the story that they all experience in different points of their life.”

Melberg said he believes the show might provide a good escape from the onslaught of politics, elections, and other topics that can be very divisive in a community.

“I think everybody is sick to death of politics and hearing about it right now,” Melberg said. “This is the perfect chance to investigate a life that is positive and uplifting and maybe could give them hope for the future.”

Collins agreed.

“I hope they take the energy of the songs with them, but also the messages from them,” Collins said. “I hope that they can take a sense of calm and peace from it and hold onto a little bit of hope.”

For more information, visit fhtaz.org.

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Rally

• From page 1

for about 10 years, ever since she's been open, and she's an inspiration as a one-woman show," Keller said. "Through all the COVID-19 stuff and all the snowbirds leaving, she has remained open, still serving the community with a smile on her face. We are so happy that so many of our people in the community have come together to participate in this blessing."

> "She's a one-woman show so she doesn't really get to see everybody supporting her."
>
> **Bunny Keller**
> **MinDak Gold and Silver**

The town will also be honoring Woods.

Keller and Burke said the town will hold a ribbon cutting for her restaurant's 10th anniversary about 1:45 p.m. Nov. 12, and mayor Gerry Friedel will present Woods with a plaque.

"What we want her to see is how loved she is in the community and how much support she has," Keller said. "She's a one-woman show so she doesn't really get to see everybody supporting her. We really want to do the ceremony for her so that she can feel all the love that the town has for her."

Burke added that the business community in Fountain Hills can always seek to learn from Woods.

"We're hoping that through this whole celebration, business owners can see that she has kept going and not given up no matter what. When times were harsh, she persevered, and exemplified serving the community for the last 10 years," Burke said. "We also want to show the community what really is important, and that is the people rallying around our business owners and each other when we needed a helping hand."

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FHUSD seeks to boost enrollment, marketing

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Unified School District governing board discussed ways to attract more students and improve the district's visibility during its Nov. 4 meeting, including whether to hire an outside company to help with enrollment efforts or handle the work internally.

The district has explored possibly using Caissa K12, an outside company that assists schools with enrollment and marketing, but concerns about sharing families' personal information have prompted officials to consider whether similar efforts could be handled in-house.

Kim Garman, the district's registrar, told board members she already serves as a primary point of contact for families considering a move to FHUSD and often goes beyond the typical responsibilities of her position.

"I'm a one-stop concierge service, and I am not being fastidious in that sense," Garman said, explaining she helps incoming families find real estate agents, navigate rentals and home purchases and connect with local services, even recommending hairdressers to families relocating from out of state.

Garman said she speaks five languages and can connect incoming families with mentor families who can help them navigate the transition to the district.

Superintendent Valerie Reichler praised Garman's role, saying she meets just about every family who walks through the district's doors and is a vital part of its enrollment efforts.



The Fountain Hills Unified School District Governing Board members during their Sept. 16 meeting. (Independent Newsmedia/Allison Kotzbauer)

Garman said one of the district's biggest sources of new students is not neighboring Scottsdale, but Mesa and Gilbert.

Some families choose Fountain Hills schools because parents work in or near the community and can drop off their children on the way to work, she said.

She said the district's marketing could use improvement, particularly its online presence.

"We should be marketing a little bit more," Garman said. "Our websites need to be updated, we need to have different kinds of things proposed to see what we have here."

When speaking with prospective families, Garman said she highlights the close-knit nature of the Fountain Hills community, where children ride bikes through town, study together at Starbucks and meet for slushies after school.

"We just have to play upon it to see if we can get this out there, and see if we can get some more enrollments that way," she said.

Garman said the district's current enrollment losses are largely tied to families moving out of state or leaving the area for jobs and more affordable housing, rather than choosing other schools because of what they offer.

"I can't stop those families," she said.

She also pointed to Fountain Hills' housing market as a challenge to attracting and retaining families.

With median home prices exceeding $800,000, limited housing options for larger families and no new residential developments planned, she said convincing some families to return could be difficult.

However, Garman estimated about 45% of students who leave FHUSD for Scottsdale Unified School District eventually return.

"They find out that being at a 2,400-person school is not as fun as they thought it was going to be," she said.

Board President Richard Rutkowski asked Garman how she thought families would respond if the district hired Caissa K12.

"You're not going to be received very well," Garman said, predicting families would question how the company obtained their personal information.

Board member Fran Murray suggested another opportunity could come through expanding the district's Little Falcons preschool program once it moves to the elementary school campus.

"Especially if they're already on the elementary school campus they'll get excited about maybe wanting to stay, the parents will see all the fun stuff that's going on at the elementary school," Murray said.

Garman said improving the district's website and marketing materials, and getting prospective families onto campus for tours, should be priorities. Once families visit the schools, she said, most choose to enroll.

Board members generally agreed that FHUSD could strengthen its online presence through its own website and other community platforms, including the town's website and real estate websites. Board member Kim Duckworth was absent from the Nov. 4 meeting.

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

Call Log

• From page 6

stopped in traffic. No injuries were reported, one vehicle was towed.

• Deputies responded to the 18000 block of East Horse Shoe Bend where it was reported that an unknown subject used the victim's personal information without permission.

• Deputies responded to the 15000 block of East Palisades Boulevard where a domestic violence assault incident was reported.

• Deputies responded to the 16000 block of East Avenue of the Fountains where it was reported a driver was arrested for DUI after a single vehicle traffic collision.

• Deputies responded to the 13000 block of North Fountain Hills Boulevard where a private property vehicle collision was reported. It was reported that one of the drivers left the area without reporting the incident or exchanging information. The driver was located and issued a criminal citation.

Sunday, Nov. 1

• Deputies responded to the 16000 block of East Shea Boulevard where it was reported that a subject assaulted the employee of a business after a disagreement.

• Deputies responded to the 14000 block of North El Sobrante Avenue where it was reported that an unknown subject broke into a parked vehicle.

Monday, Nov. 2

• Deputies responded to Palisades Boulevard and Center Street where it was reported a vehicle collision occurred after a driver failed to yield at an intersection and struck another vehicle. No injuries were reported, no vehicles were towed.

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Technology Drive where it was reported a traffic collision occurred after a driver lost control of their vehicle and struck another vehicle. No injuries were reported, no vehicles were towed.

• Deputies responded to the 17000 block of East Calaveras Avenue where it was reported three subjects damaged a building by throwing rocks into the windows.

• Deputies responded to Palisades and Shea boulevards where it was reported a traffic collision occurred after a vehicle made an unsafe lane change and struck another vehicle. No injuries were reported, no vehicles were towed.

• Deputies responded to the 16000 block of East Shea Boulevard where it was reported that an unknown subject shoplifted items from a business.

Tuesday, Nov. 3

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Palatial Drive where it was reported a driver was stopped for criminal speed (82 in a 50). The driver was issued a criminal citation.

• Deputies responded to the 16000 block of East Shea Boulevard where it was reported that an unknown subject shoplifted items from a business.

Wednesday, Nov. 4

• Deputies responded to Saguaro Boulevard and Ledferd Lane where it was reported a driver was stopped for speed (48 in a 35). A records check revealed the driver's license was suspended and the driver had a valid warrant. The driver was issued a criminal citation and arrested and booked into jail on the warrant.

• Deputies responded to Shea Boulevard and Palatial Drive where it was reported a driver was stopped for criminal speed (76 in a 50). The driver was issued a criminal citation.

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Q&A: Get to know Fountain Hills' Geoff Yazzetta

Member of the Dark Sky Center

By Andrew Lwowski
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Times Independent continues its Q&A series with familiar faces around town. This is an opportunity for readers to get to know more about their neighbors, whether they're from the school district, working in Town Hall or a resident with a story to share.

This week, Geoff Yazzetta, a man of many facets in town, takes on The Times Independent's questions.

Name: Geoff Yazzetta

Occupation: Chief Operating Officer

Hometown: Los Angeles

What I do: I manage the day-to-day operations of a commercial cleaning company that serves HOA common areas and amenity spaces, model homes, and apartment unit turns. Our clients span the Valley, from Queen Creek to Wickenburg, and we're in an exciting period of growth. Outside of work, I'm involved in a number of volunteer efforts here in Fountain Hills.

What's one thing you want people to know about you? I find human movement and performance fascinating, and I'm very passionate about both. Before moving to Arizona, I coached CrossFit part time at a gym in Los Angeles, where I had the opportunity to work with everyone from professional athletes to people who had been sedentary for years. Though they were on opposite ends of the fitness continuum, their needs differed by degree, not by kind. Everyone benefits from a proper diet



Geoff moved to Fountain Hills five years ago but is now involved in many town activities. (Photo courtesy of Geoff Yazzetta)

and regular exercise. Our bodies were designed to move, not sit all day. Coaching allowed me to see firsthand how following a simple but consistent plan can produce life-changing results for anyone. It's never too late to start!

How are you involved in the local community? After moving to Fountain Hills in late 2021, I joined the Fountain Hills Leadership Academy the following fall (Class 6, 2022). As a new resident, I found it was the perfect launchpad for getting involved and learning about the many organizations that make Fountain Hills such a great place. I'm grateful there are so many ways to put my skills to work in this community. I currently serve as vice chair of the Town's Strategic Planning Advisory Committee and as a board member for both the International Dark Sky Discovery Center and the Fountain Hills Cultural & Civic Association. I also serve on Mayor Friedel's Economic Development Advisory Committee and the Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce's Public Policy Committee.

What drew you to your community? I visited Fountain Hills many times before making it my home in late 2021. Coming from Los Angeles, I always found it to be a welcome retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life. As an amateur astronomer, I noticed the International Dark Sky Community signs during my first visit in 2019 and knew there was something special about this town. Little did I know those signs were hints of my future involvement in the International Dark Sky Discovery Center project. Also, the views here are spectacular! I don't think I will ever tire of watching the sun rise over the mountains every morning.

How did you get into your career? I spent a decade in Los Angeles city government, starting as a campaign canvasser and rising to district director, where I oversaw the delivery of municipal services for approximately 275,000 residents. Over those years, I managed many complex, multi-year infrastructure projects that required patience, coordination, community building, and keeping a lot of moving parts on track. That experience gave me a strong foundation in project management, operations, and working with a wide range of stakeholders. I came to see how those skills could open new doors in the private sector, and when the right opportunity for career growth came along here in Fountain Hills, I took it. Today, I put those skills to work growing a business, building and leading teams, and maintaining strong client relationships.

What inspires you? People have a phenomenal capacity to do great things, and I'm inspired by what we can accomplish when we work together. The International Dark Sky Discovery Center is a perfect example of this. The idea for the Discovery Center took shape not long after Fountain Hills earned its Dark Sky designation in January 2018. Our board of directors and staff have worked tirelessly over the years and have overcome many obstacles along the way. The building itself is an incredible sight, and the programming inside will be even more impressive. We are right around the corner from opening in early 2027, and this one-of-a-kind facility will educate and spark curiosity in countless visitors.

What do you do in your downtime? In my free time, I enjoy reading and collecting old books, and lately I've been fascinated by the history of resource and infrastructure development in the American West. I like watching classic movies, and as a California native, I watch Huell Howser's "California's Gold" reruns whenever I'm feeling nostalgic for the Golden State. Sharing the night sky with people is near and dear to my heart. You can often find me and my telescope at private stargazing events with Night Sky Tourist and at public events hosted by the International Dark Sky Discovery Center.

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

FHUSD budget override measure posts strong lead

By Allison Kotzbauer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Fountain Hills Unified School District's budget maintenance and operations override ballot question appears headed for a win.

The measure has received 7,097 yes votes, or about 57.08% of total votes tabulated, against 5,336 no votes, or 42.92% of the total votes counted so far, according to Maricopa County's unofficial results as of the morning of Nov. 6.

For final results, check online at fhtimes.com.

FHUSD Superintendent Val Reichler spoke during the governing board's Nov. 4 meeting that even if the override does not pass, she is thankful to everyone who has supported the district.

"My phone's been ringing off the hook all day, and I just want to put a sincere thank you out there to everyone who has come out to believe in Fountain Hills," she said.



The Fountain Hills Unified School District likely won't have to cut its budget next year as voters appear to have approved a measure extending the district's 15% maintenance and operations override during the Nov. 3 election. (Fountain Hills Times Independent file photo)

The measure asked voters to renew the district's existing 15% M&O override for another seven years. The override provides approximately $1.2 million annually to support the district's operating budget.

If the results hold, the override would provide additional funding for teacher and staff salaries, classroom instruction, student programs, transportation, campus safety, athletics, fine arts and other extracurricular activities.

The owner of a Fountain Hills home valued at $467,130 is estimated to pay approximately $78 annually under the override.

If rejected, the existing override would begin phasing down, resulting in an estimated $400,000 reduction in funding annually over each of the next three years before the funding expires entirely.

The override accounts for approximately 13% of the district's maintenance and operations budget. District officials have said the funding helps maintain educational programs and services amid approximately $2.3 million in budget reductions over the past two years.

Final results will determine whether the district's existing override is continued for another seven years or begins its scheduled phaseout.



Q&A with NJLC Pastor Philip Gustafson

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Name: Philip Gustafson
Age: 72
Occupation: Interim Pastor
Hometown: Erie, Pennsylvania
What I do: I serve New Journey Lutheran Church as its interim pastor, serving as pastor until a new pastor is called there.

When and why I moved here: I began Aug. 1, 2026, and live in Sun City.

What I like most about living here: I love most about Fountain Hills are the people. Those I have met at New Journey and others that I have met while I am in town.

Questions:

What is something most people don't know about you? That I am an introvert.

Who is your inspiration and why? My father — though death has separated us for 32 years, his model of being a parent and grandfather based on values of family and faith continue to inspire me. He also never let situations define him, but he defined the situations and that inspires me in ministry and coaching to not let circumstances define me and that my value of faith and family shape that identity.

At the end of the day, what brings you the most joy? To count the blessings I have received and to know that I have blessed someone else.



Pastor Philip Gustafson of New Journey Lutheran Church. (Submitted photo/Philip Gustafson)

What are the opportunities you see in your community and in your church? To build healthy relationships that honor God and build up the community. To assist members of the community and church in discerning the blessing that they are and the blessings they have received. That can come often by helping them reframe what they perceive around them.

What is your favorite thing about New Journey Lutheran Church? The people of New Journey as they seek to be a blessing to others, those they know and those they don't know but believe they can be blessed. In this time of pastoral transition they embrace hope.

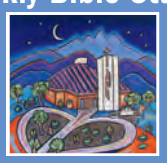
What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind once you step down from your position or retire? My goal is to have them be as healthy and prepared as possible whenever their new pastor arrives. The legacy I always hope to leave is for those I journey with to be in a better place than when we began our time together.

What does the town of Fountain Hills mean to you? It is a beautiful community that seeks to be impactful (in the best way) to residents and visitors.

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GriefShare holding seminar for the holidays

GriefShare is holding a holiday-themed seminar in Fountain Hills.

The event, GriefShare: Surviving the Holidays, is a stand-alone session meant for attendees to learn how to face the holidays after a loved one's death.

The $10 event takes place 10 a.m.-noon on Nov. 14 at JOY Church, 13430 N. Saguaro Blvd., according to a press release.

The seminar will feature video interviews with counselors and grief experts covering topics such as dealing with hard-hitting emotions, traditions, surviving social events, finding comfort and strength and more.

Although the event is Bible-based, it is open to all beliefs and faiths. Attendees will also receive a Survival Guide filled with tips, ideas, exercises and more to get through the holiday season.

For information, visit joychurchaz.com.



GriefShare is holding a holiday-themed stand-alone session on Nov. 14. (Submitted photo/GriefShare)

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From left: FVV Patriots guest speaker Dave Hagen and Program Coordinator Bruce Frobes. (Submitted photo/Bruce Frobes)

Fountain View Village Patriots visited by son of WWII vet

The Fountain View Village Patriots were visited by a son of a World War II veteran at their recent meeting.

Dave Hagen spoke to club members Nov. 3, according to a press release by club president Bruce Frobes.

Hagen's parent's, Arlyn and Thelma, were part of the "Greatest Generation" during World War II, with his father Arlyn serving in the Normandy Landing, the Liberation of Paris, the Battle of the Bulge, the Remagen Bridge, as well as Post VE-DAY Occupation.

Hagen also told club members that his mother had saved all of his father's letters from the front line, which he showed to members at the meeting.

For more information on Fountain View Village, visit cogirusa.com/communities/fountain-view-village/.

Artists' Gallery to hold live demo for gourd artist

The Fountain Hills Artists' Gallery is set to hold a live demo for a local gourd artist.

Artist Michele Mulleady will demonstrate her creative process 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Nov. 17 at the gallery, 16858 E. Avenue of the Fountains, Suite 103, according to a press release.

Mulleady enjoys the unique shape, texture and character of each gourd, allowing her to make each piece she creates one of a kind.

For information, visit fountainhillsartistsgallery.com.



An example of the work of Michele Mulleady. (Submitted photo/Fountain Hills Artists' Gallery)

Club briefs for the week of Nov. 9

Community Center bridge winners posted

Contract bridge is played every Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Community Center. Membership in the Community Center is required to participate.

Winners from Oct. 30 include Merry Hill Klein in first place, Gerd Brinkman in second place and Cathy Marco in third place.

Social duplicate bridge is played from 12:30-3:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of the month. For the North/South group on Nov. 3, first place went to Cliff King and Anita King; second place went to Sally Gibbs and Donna Herrman; and third place went to Elaine Dowling and Suzy Muzzarelli. in the East/West group, first place ent to Merry Hill Klein and Joyce Stehlik; second went to Suellen Russell and Karen Lindley; and third place went to Sharon Harvey and Martha Craner.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly welcomes newcomers

Those looking for weight-loss support and to start or continue their journey of weight loss are invited to join TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) Fountain Hills chapter every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Chapter meetings are held at Joy Church, 13430 N. Saguaro Blvd. Use the front entrance of the church and follow the signs.

Al-Anon holds regular meetings

Al-Anon family meetings are held each Saturday from 9:15 to 10:15 a.m. at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in the classroom building.

The only requirement to attend is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend. Attendees will find hope as members share their experiences, strength and hope.

Shepherd of the Hills is located at 16150 E. El Lago Blvd.

Fall morning in Fountain Hills



Resident Peter Volny wanted to share his view of "another spectacular Fountain Hills sunrise" with readers, submitted Friday morning, Oct. 30. (Submitted photo/Peter Volny)

Town manager receives recognition



Fountain Hills Town Manager Rachael Goodwin, left, received the Arizona Cities and Town's Week proclamation, awarded by Vice Mayor Gayle Earle, during the town council's Oct. 20 meeting. The week of Oct. 18-24 was proclaimed as Arizona Cities and Town's Week in Fountain Hills. Goodwin plays an essential role with the town in providing services that ensure safety, quality of life and community well-being. (Independent Newsmedia/Andrew Lwowski)



Gloria Joan Melin

Gloria Joan Melin, a longtime resident of Fountain Hills, passed away at home on October 25, 2026, at the age of 88.

Originally from Detroit, Michigan, Gloria and her husband, Fred, spent a decade as snowbirds before making Fountain Hills their permanent home in 2018.

Her family was her life and her proudest achievement. She would do anything for her large family. Sunday dinners were always at Mom's, and Christmas was especially precious to her. Her home filled with many more children than she had ever given birth to, and she welcomed every one of them. She also loved karaoke, where she was happiest listening to Fred sing.

Gloria is survived by her husband, Fred; her children Skip (the late Toni), Colleen (Mel Smith), and Freddie (Shelley); her grandchildren Brian, Jenny, Lisa, Tracy, Sarah, Sean, James, Rachel, and Kristi; twenty-one great-grandchildren; and several great-great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her children, Cookie Busquaert (survived by her husband, Mike) and Mark Cleary, and her granddaughter Carrie.

A Celebration of Gloria's Life will be held at a future date.

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NORTH VALLEY PREPS

Fountain Hills sophomore breaks school record

All eight Falcons qualify for state

By Andrew Lwowski
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sophomore Nate Schlossberg set the new Fountain Hills High School cross country record with a time of 16:40 during the Falcons Sectionals meeting Thursday, Nov. 5, at Crossroads Park in Chandler.

The previous record was set in 2012 by Scott Jarriell at 16:46.

Schlossberg began his race with a 5:17 in the first mile.

"It felt amazing to break the record," Schlossberg said. "I have worked so hard for it and I tried my absolute best in that race and I delivered."

Now with his name etched in school history, Schlossberg says it's an honor and expressed his respect for the Jarriell family for their records before him.

"The top four guys in the Sectionals raced hard until the final half mile when Nate pulled away," head coach Andrea Hall said. "Nobody could close the gap and he easily won...We knew it was possible to break the record and get the win, but everything had to fall into place. We had a great day, perfect race plan and he was mentally and physically ready for both to happen."

Schlossberg said his goals for State is to earn a top-15 finish and move up 30-plus places from his freshman season.

"I am confident in my abilities to perform well at this state meet this year," he said.

Maddox Bryan was the second Falcon to cross the finish line and snagged the final medal spot with a 14th-place finish and a 19:25 time.

Levi Lara came in with a time of 21:02, followed by Logan Harrison's 21:07 and Julian Baggenstos' 21:20.

"A team is only as strong as their fifth runner, and Logan and Julian are the toughest guys I've had in cross country," Hall said. "They are giving 100% and dig deep to the finish line every single race."

The girls also had a strong outing, led by sophomore Ellie Prescott who finished seventh and earned a top-10 spot for the second straight year.

Both freshman Lexi Hall and Alison Cruz Lopez medaled and qualified for state. Lexi Hall finished behind Prescott for eighth place and Lopez finished 14th.

"This girls team has really turned it on in the second half of the season," Hall said. "They work together, push each other and are always encouraging. It is so rewarding to see all three make the State team."

The AIA State Championships is Nov. 14 in Cave Creek. The boys will race at 8:15 a.m. and the girls at 9:05 a.m.

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





Top: Sophomore Nate Schlossberg separated himself from the pack to finish with a new school record ahead of the overall State meet. (Submitted photo/Andrea Hall)
Bottom: Head coach Andrea Hall, left, and the Falcons cross country team had a successful Sectionals meet where all qualified for State. (Submitted photo/Andrea Hall)

Pet selling scams increasing in Arizona

By Joe Ducey
BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

She wanted a Chihuahua puppy and thought she found it online.

The woman paid half of the $425 price, and would pay the other half when she received the dog. It seemed fair. Then she got the texts.

The shipping company needed $800 for a special shipping crate. The insurer demanded $1,000 for in transit pet protection. Overnight puppy nanny care would cost $450. She paid it all with cash and gift cards.

When the woman smelled a scam and wanted a refund, the "breeder" wanted $1,200 more to start that process. She paid it all. There was no puppy. She lost $3,800.

Better Business Bureau ScamTracker shows online scam pet sellers taking thousands from eager buyers excited to bring home a cute pet at a great price.

The American Kennel Club says the majority of online pet sellers are scams.

And the scams seem to work the same way: low advertised price followed by many undisclosed fees.

A Chandler woman says, "they kept asking for more and more money after saying we were done paying for stuff." She lost $2,100.

Many of the complaints point to two big scam warning signs: They're asked to pay with gift cards or cryptocurrency and they are never allowed to see the pet in person.

If you're looking for a pet online:

- Research the breeder/business name and look for accredited breeders at bbb.org.
- Run a general online search for complaints. If you can't find the name or there are no reviews, beware.



Online pet scams are increasing around the state. The Better Business Bureau recommends several steps to avoid getting scammed. (Metro Creative Connection)

- Talk to the seller and see the pet in person. If that's not possible, demand a live video call to do it.
- Do not send money through wire transfer, gift cards or cash apps. Use a credit card for and follow up to make sure it was not misused.
- If you're concerned about a website, conduct a reverse image online search of pet pictures. If they show up on multiple sites, it's likely a fraud.
- And consider a visit to your local animal shelter first.

The American Kennel Club allows you to search for breeds and locations at its marketplace website, marketplace.akc.org.

If you lost money in a scam, contact your local police and file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

Report it to BBB at bbb.org/scamtracker.



BUSINESS STORIES

MORE ONLINE
See more Business news at yourvalley.net.

‘Reverse Richelle’ teaches reverse mortgages

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

For those intimidated by a reverse mortgage, fear not.

Richelle Hopkins is here to help with her Fountain Hills Business Reverse Richelle, a partner of Mutual Omaha Mortgage.

Her business, which was founded in 2023, aims to help Fountain Hills residents ages 55 and older understand reverse mortgages and not be afraid.

“Some of my clients have a mortgage on their property, so we pay off their forward mortgage with the reverse mortgage, which eliminates a mortgage payment,” Hopkins said. “Other people have a home that’s free and clear and they’re basically sitting on all of this equity that is locked up and they don’t know how to access it without a monthly mortgage payment becoming a burden.”

The focus of Hopkins’ business is educational. Her first consultation is free, and she offers follow-up meetings in case her clients need to know anything else or have any other questions.

“I’m an educator at heart. I educate these people about how a reverse mortgage works, from the history to the process, and I’m here with my clients in a concierge experience,” Hopkins said. “I’m not just a one-and-done transaction. My clients are with me for life. They are able to call me down the road if they have any questions that pop up.”



Richelle Hopkins of Reverse Richelle aims to educate people about reverse mortgages. (Independent Newsmedia/Connor Van Ligten)

It was important for Hopkins that her business be conducted in person, instead of over the phone or Zoom.

She wanted to make sure clients could learn from her firsthand.

“I bring a personal approach to the community. I meet with people at their kitchen table and I encourage adult children to come. I’m basically that local connection that people can meet at their kitchen table rather than over the phone,” Hopkins said. “...Being able to actually sit at the kitchen table helps, especially since people learn differently.”

And a big part of that is dispelling the fear her clients may have.

“Reverse mortgages are typically taboo because people don’t know enough about them. So with Reverse Richelle, I’m right out the gate in their face,” Hopkins said. “And I help uncover or dissolve the mystery in reverse mortgages...I sit down and I go through history, truth and facts, and updated information. I dispel a lot of the myths that are out there, and I bring a customized education to that, because everybody’s situation is different.”

Hopkins aims to uncover what her client’s needs are and makes sure they understand the mechanics of a reverse mortgage and how it could help them.

“I am an educator for people who just want to learn the facts,” Hopkins said. “My intense experience allows me to go through and truly customize each conversation in each proposal.”

Ultimately, Hopkins hopes her clients come away from their meeting with her a little bit less scared of a reverse mortgage.

“My goal ultimately in my professional career is to bring reverse mortgages as a household name to the table, just like any other mortgage product,” Hopkins said. “If I can impact one family at a time, educate them, and come in and be a solution that is given using their home equity to help them overcome what is stopping them from their living their best retirement life, that is my goal.”

For information, visit mutualreverse.com/lo/richelle-hopkins/.



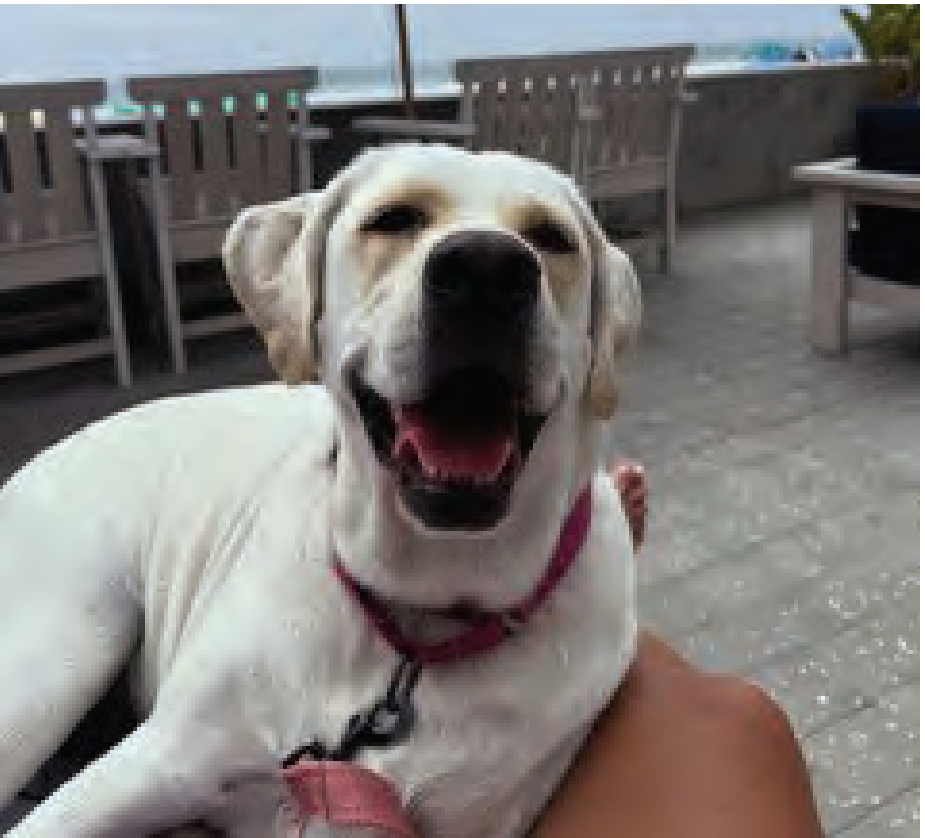
Phil’s Filling Station recognized

Phil’s Filling Station received the Mayor’s Business Spotlight during the Fountain Hills Town Council meeting on Oct. 20, presented by Mayor Gerry Friedel. Friedel stated Phil’s Filling Station has become a staple in town, calling it “a cornerstone gathering place.” The restaurant came to be in 1999 and offers a nostalgic feel and an extensive Coca-Cola collection. “Phil’s has become known for bringing people together outside the dining room,” Friedel added. “Cruising at Phil’s created a popular gathering place for car enthusiasts, events and visitors.” (Independent Newsmedia/Andrew Lwowski)

PET OF THE WEEK:
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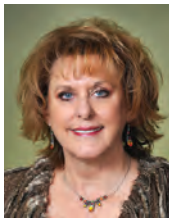
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The Fountain Festival of Fine Arts and Crafts returns Nov. 13-15. (Submitted photo/Fountain Hills Chamber)

ARTS AND CRAFTS

ABOUT: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Nov. 13, 14, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Nov. 15, in downtown

INFO: View and purchase the work of hundreds of artists in Fountain Hills in every category and medium, while also enjoying the food from numerous vendors.

WEB: experiencefountainhills.org/p/upcoming-events/annual-event/fountain-festival-fine-arts-crafts

MEET SANTA

ABOUT: 9-10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.-noon Nov. 28 at the Fountain Hills Community Center, 13001 N. La Montana Drive

INFO: Meet Santa and enjoy some food at these two local community events. The second event is for families with kids who have autism or special needs to meet with Santa in a safe environment.

WEB: fountainhillsaz.gov/239/Community-Center

ART GALLERY DEMO

ABOUT: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Nov. 17 at the gallery at 16858 E. Avenue of the Fountains, Suite 103

INFO: Local gourd artist Michele Mulleady will demonstrate her creative process in a free session at the gallery.

WEB: fountainhillsartistsgallery.com

PARKINSON'S WORKSHOP

ABOUT: 10:30 a.m. Nov. 18 at the Fountain Hills Community Center 13001 N. La Montana Drive

INFO: Experts on Parkinson's disease will come discuss the disease, symptoms, treatment options and more.

WEB: secure.rec1.com/AZ/fountain-hills-az/catalog

Local artist holds open house for community

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Fountain Hills resident Jack Morris has been doing art for nearly his entire life.

Morris will be parting with many of his beloved pieces at his open house 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Nov. 20-21 at 17019 E Calle Del Sol.

These art pieces include paintings, collages, birdhouses, jackets and more.

"I'm pretty much selling all the paintings and collages that I have at half price," Morris said. "The reason being, for any artist, you'll build up a lot of work. And the only thing you want to do is move it out, so you can make more art and create some new stuff."

Some of that work was contributed by Morris' sister, Michele Morris Regan, who contributed on the decorated jackets that will be sold at the open house.

Morris Regan said she got the idea from when Jack sold decorated shirts when they lived in Mexico.

"I went to Goodwill for the jackets, and I told Jack to just paint up," Morris Regan said. "I started putting in positive affirmations. I'm a yoga instructor, so I'm trying to bring in a more spiritual side of it."

Jack said that he's excited about his fans coming in to purchase his art.

"I'm excited for people that are my followings coming in to see my new work," Morris said. "I have people out in Rio Verde. Their whole house is Jack Morris."

Michele said that Jack's art has been a huge part of her life for so long and is always excited to see what he comes up with.

"I grew up with his artwork. My mother was an interior designer and she could display his art so beautifully in our childhood home," Morris Regan said. "I liked seeing his journey, because you could tell with Jack that if he was in a dark place, his art was very dark. Right now, it's very bright, because he's in a good spot emotionally."



Jack Morris and his sister Michele Morris Regan pose with some of Jack's art he will be selling on Nov. 20 and 21. (Independent Newsmedia/Connor Van Ligten)

Local author to release new picture books for kids

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Fountain Hills resident, author and art director Matt Clement is about to release two picture books to the public.

His books, "Seven Little Donks and the Secret Map" and "Queen Michelle and the Tiny Seeing Lens," follow the adventures of a group of seven traveling miniature donkeys in a magical kingdom.

Clement said he got the idea when he lived in Atlanta.

"When we lived in the outskirts of Atlanta, when I would drive my kids to school, every day for seven years we passed this little meadow and sometimes there would be little donkeys in it," Clement said. "Over time, we began to greet them. We'd be excited when they showed up, and disappointed if they weren't there."



Local resident Matt Clement is publishing his first two picture books on Nov. 13. (Submitted photo/Matt Clement)

Clement said he and his kids would play games related to the donkeys to pass the time, such as giving them names, making up an origin, which eventually became the backstory for the lore of his books.

"One day, I sat down and I just started pouring it into print, and started writing in verse what this story and backstory of these little donks might be," Clement said. "The story was poured out around five years ago, and we moved to Arizona. There's a large presence here in Arizona with donkey rescues, and so that became the impetus for the purpose of this story. Ultimately, I just decided it was time to illustrate and get it done and put it out in print."

Clement said he thought it would be fun to produce a book that would support teachers and donkey rescues at the same time.

"The idea of supporting them through a creative outlet is the purpose of this book and this series. I appreciate what those places do," Clement said. "Every book comes with an activity pack that allows for coloring pages, a treasure hunt, and they're available at a discount to rescues. Sell the book, and get some money for your rescue."

Although his kids are in college now, they also found a lot of joy in seeing their father make his passion project a reality.

"The donks started out as something we drove past every day. Over time they became part of our life, and our relationship with them kept growing until they were a cornerstone of our family," said Matt's son Nolan Clement. "This book has been in the making for over seven years, and it's been special watching my dad stick with it the whole way.

Nolan's brother Harrison agreed.

"My dad wanted to bring this idea to life for the longest time, and it brings me so much joy to finally see him do it," said Harrison. "He poured his heart into every page. The donks have been part of our family for as long as I can remember, so seeing them in a real book feels like watching a piece of home come alive."

Area Home Sales

October 19, 2026 - October 23, 2026

The Verdes

16969 E Bobwhite Way	$520,000	18649 E Mcdowell Mountain Dr	$660,000
19007 E Lazo Ct	$1,250,000		

Homes sold this period:	3	Median Price:	$660,000	Average price:	$810,000
Same period last year:	3	Median Price:	$793,853	Average price:	$805,790

Fountain Hills

14120 E Canyon Ridge Ln	$1,978,142	15625 E Greystone Dr	$1,250,000
14151 E Canyon Ridge Ln	$2,216,868	17412 E Grande Blvd	$535,000
12137 N Finch Dr	$570,000	14136 E Harmony Ln	$2,200,000
13700 N Fountain Hills Blvd Apt 254	$221,900	16653 E Kingstree Blvd	$855,000
13700 N Fountain Hills Blvd Apt 255	$249,900	15734 E Robin Dr	$910,000
13700 N Fountain Hills Blvd Apt 321	$349,500	14617 E Shadow Canyon Dr	$1,240,349
13700 N Fountain Hills Blvd Apt 333	$212,500	16702 E Westby Dr Apt A	$395,000

Homes sold this period:	14	Median Price:	$712,500	Average price:	$941,726
Same period last year:	21	Median Price:	$799,900	Average price:	$941,478

Properties listed may have been sold by various Brokers &/or Owners.

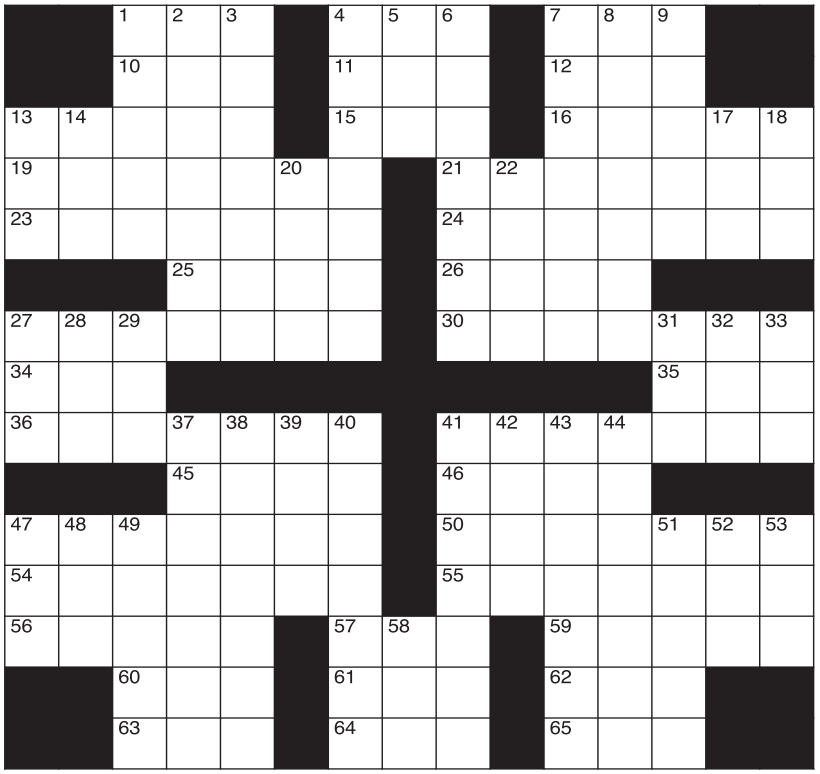


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15. Breeze through
16. Ladyfish genus
19. We all take them
21. NoblemanÕs jurisdiction
23. Members of U.S. Navy
24. Rummy-like card game
25. Unable to move
26. Type of horse
27. Parted
30. WomanÕs cloak
34. South American plant
35. Prohibit
36. Something one takes
41. Dish detergent manufacturer
45. Romanian river
46. Personification of pity
47. Makes upset
50. Discuss again
54. Medical instrument
55. Support
56. Informal term for money
57. Catch doing something wrong
59. Prehistoric people
60. Large African antelope
61. Automobile
62. ÒLosing My ReligionÓ rockers
63. High-resolution scientific instrument
64. A major division of geological time
65. Attempt

CLUES DOWN
1. Indoor plant
2. Fit to be sold
3. Rather
4. Collected
5. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
6. Irish rap group
7. Ageless
8. Lists indicating curriculum
9. Pokes at
13. Public television station
14. They __
17. Cooking tool
18. Separately managed account
20. Iron-containing compound
22. Swiss river
27. Former French coin
28. Electronic countermeasures
29. Taxi
31. Helps little firms
32. Unhappy
33. Midway between northeast and east
37. Glowing
38. Lists of items to be discussed
39. An informal body of friends
40. Indispensable quality
41. Neural structures
42. Brews
43. A place to dock
44. Festive singer
47. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
48. Northernmost point of mainland Wales
49. Most worthless parts
51. Type of ÒbearÓ
52. Take or consume
53. Defunct European organization
58. Swiss river

SOLUTION ON PAGE 31

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Mesa • November 13, 2026 • Mesa Marketplace Swap Meet
Apache Junction • January 6, 2027 • Central Arizona College
Surprise • January 19, 2027 • The Colonnade
Litchfield/Goodyear • February 17, 2027 • Tuscany Falls Clubhouse(Pebble Creek)
Chandler • February 23, 2027 • Sun Lakes Country Club
Peoria • March 25, 2027 • Westbrook Village
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Miscellaneous

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CROSSWORD SOLUTION
PUZZLE ON PAGE 28

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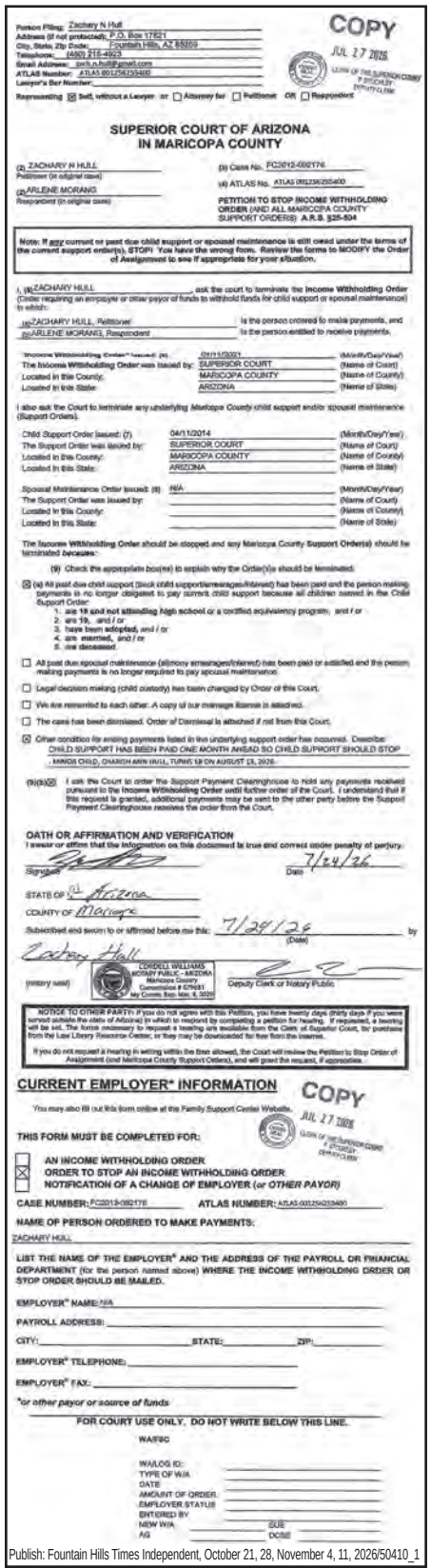
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Public Notice



COPY
JUL 27 2026

SUPERIOR COURT OF ARIZONA
IN MARICOPA COUNTY

(2) ZACHARY N HULL, Petitioner (in original case)
(3) Case No. FC2012-092176
(4) ATLAS No. ATLAS 001234253400
(5) ARLENE MORANG, Respondent (in original case)

PETITION TO STOP INCOME WITHHOLDING ORDER (AND ALL MARICOPA COUNTY SUPPORT ORDERS) A.R.S. §25-504

Note: If any current or past due child support or spousal maintenance is still owed under the terms of the current support order(s), STOP! You have the wrong form. Review the forms to MODIFY the Order of Assignment to see if appropriate for your situation.

I, (6) ZACHARY HULL, ask the court to terminate the Income Withholding Order (Order requiring an employer or other payor of funds to withhold funds for child support or spousal maintenance) in which:

(7a) ZACHARY HULL, Petitioner is the person ordered to make payments, and
(7b) ARLENE MORANG, Respondent is the person entitled to receive payments.

"Income Withholding Order" issued: (8) 01/11/2021 (Month/Day/Year)
The Income Withholding Order was issued by: SUPERIOR COURT (Name of Court)
Located in this County: MARICOPA COUNTY (Name of County)
Located in this State: ARIZONA (Name of State)

I also ask the Court to terminate any underlying Maricopa County child support and/or spousal maintenance (Support Orders).

Child Support Order issued: (7) 04/11/2014 (Month/Day/Year)
The Support Order was issued by: SUPERIOR COURT (Name of Court)
Located in this County: MARICOPA COUNTY (Name of County)
Located in this State: ARIZONA (Name of State)

Spousal Maintenance Order issued: (8) N/A (Month/Day/Year)
The Support Order was issued by: (Name of Court)
Located in this County: (Name of County)
Located in this State: (Name of State)

The Income Withholding Order should be stopped and any Maricopa County Support Order(s) should be terminated because:

(9) Check the appropriate box(es) to explain why the Order(s) should be terminated:

☒ (a) All past due child support (back child support/arrearages/interest) has been paid and the person making payments is no longer obligated to pay current child support because all children named in the Child Support Order:
1. are 18 and not attending high school or a certified equivalency program, and / or
2. are 19, and / or
3. have been adopted, and / or
4. are married, and / or
5. are deceased.

☐ All past due spousal maintenance (alimony arrearages/interest) has been paid or satisfied and the person making payments is no longer required to pay spousal maintenance.

☐ Legal decision making (child custody) has been changed by Order of this Court.

☐ We are remarried to each other. A copy of our marriage license is attached.

☐ The case has been dismissed. Order of Dismissal is attached if not from this Court.

☒ Other condition for ending payments listed in the underlying support order has occurred. Describe: CHILD SUPPORT HAS BEEN PAID ONE MONTH AHEAD SO CHILD SUPPORT SHOULD STOP - MINOR CHILD, CHARISH ANN HULL, TURNS 18 ON AUGUST 13, 2026.

(9)(a)(☒) I ask the Court to order the Support Payment Clearinghouse to hold any payments received pursuant to the Income Withholding Order until further order of the Court. I understand that if this request is granted, additional payments may be sent to the other party before the Support Payment Clearinghouse receives the order from the Court.

OATH OR AFFIRMATION AND VERIFICATION
I swear or affirm that the information on this document is true and correct under penalty of perjury.
Signature: Date: 7/24/26
STATE OF Arizona
COUNTY OF Maricopa
Subscribed and sworn to or affirmed before me this: 7/24/26 (Date) by Zachary Hull
(notary seal) LOWELL WILLIAMS NOTARY PUBLIC - ARIZONA Maricopa County Commission # 579681 My Comm. Exp. Mar. 6, 2030
Deputy Clerk or Notary Public

NOTICE TO OTHER PARTY: If you do not agree with this Petition, you have twenty days (thirty days if you were served outside the state of Arizona) in which to respond by completing a petition for hearing. If requested, a hearing will be set. The forms necessary to request a hearing are available from the Clerk of Superior Court, for purchase from the Law Library Resource Center, or they may be downloaded for free from the Internet.

If you do not request a hearing in writing within the time allowed, the Court will review the Petition to Stop Order of Assignment (and Maricopa County Support Orders), and will grant the request, if appropriate.

CURRENT EMPLOYER* INFORMATION
COPY
JUL 27 2026
You may also fill out this form online at the Family Support Center Website.

THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETED FOR:
☐ AN INCOME WITHHOLDING ORDER
☒ ORDER TO STOP AN INCOME WITHHOLDING ORDER
☐ NOTIFICATION OF A CHANGE OF EMPLOYER (or OTHER PAYOR)

CASE NUMBER: FC2012-092176 ATLAS NUMBER: ATLAS 001234253400

NAME OF PERSON ORDERED TO MAKE PAYMENTS:
ZACHARY HULL

LIST THE NAME OF THE EMPLOYER* AND THE ADDRESS OF THE PAYROLL OR FINANCIAL DEPARTMENT (for the person named above) WHERE THE INCOME WITHHOLDING ORDER OR STOP ORDER SHOULD BE MAILED.

EMPLOYER* NAME: N/A
PAYROLL ADDRESS:
CITY: STATE: ZIP:
EMPLOYER* TELEPHONE:
EMPLOYER* FAX:
*or other payor or source of funds

FOR COURT USE ONLY. DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE.
WA/FBC
WA/LOG ID:
TYPE OF W/A
DATE
AMOUNT OF ORDER
EMPLOYER STATUS
ENTERED BY
NEW W/A SUS
AG DCSE

Publish: Fountain Hills Times Independent, October 21, 28, November 4, 11, 2026/50410_1

Notice to Creditors

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA
In the Matter of the Estate of:
Elizabeth Dianne Alexander, Deceased.
Case Number: PB2026-006952

NOTICE TO CREDITORS OF APPOINTMENT OF PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT:

1. **Appointment:** Kristine Irene O'Connor has been appointed Personal Representative of the Estate of Elizabeth Dianne Alexander, who died on July 25, 2026.

2. **Deadline to File Claims:** Creditors must present claims within four (4) months of the first publication date, or within sixty (60) days of receiving direct notice, whichever is later, or they will be permanently barred.

3. **Submission of Claims:** Claims must be mailed or delivered to the Personal Representative at the address provided below.
17220 E. Hillcrest Dr. Fountain Hills, AZ 85268

Publish: Fountain Hills Times Independent, November 11, 18, 25, 2026/51593_1

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November 3, 2026

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