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INSIDE
Volleyball 5A title claimed
14



NOVEMBER 25, 2026
Scottsdale's Nonpartisan Newspaper
FREE

SUSD bond passage a positive sign to some

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

While the numbers aren't official yet, Scottsdale Unified School District's $375 million capital improvement bond appears to have been accepted by the voters, and supporters say that means the district can keep the district's schools safe and offering relevant educational experiences for students.

As of 9 a.m., Nov. 13 the bond was passing with 54,958 yes votes (54.37%) to 46,123 no votes (45.63%). The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors are expected to canvass the results Nov. 18.

"We're going to make sure the schools are working good for the neighborhoods," said Denny Brown, a co-chair of the Still Yes to Children committee that

• See **Bond** Page **24**

SCOTTSDALE FOOD PANTRY: helping people for over 50 years

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Lynn Zambon got introduced to the Scottsdale Food Bank as a donor a long time ago, but she took things up a notch and started volunteering about 15 years ago when she retired.

She likes the work; it's very gratifying.

"No matter how small the gesture we do here, it makes a big impact," Zambon said.

Clients pull up to the pantry's two carports, and Zambon — or one of the food bank's 60 volunteers — brings out the care packages with a smile and maybe even a laugh if they get to talking.

A typical food box is fresh produce, (mostly frozen) meats, cheeses, can goods, rice and beans.

"A lot of staples," Zambon said.

But clients are also asked what they particularly need, and the food bank is often able to provide things like baby food, diapers, and personal hygiene products, even dog and cat food.

• See **Pantry** Page **24**



"No matter how small the gesture we do here, it makes a big impact," Scottsdale Food Pantry volunteer Lynn Zambon said. (Submitted/Scottsdale Food pantry)


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NEWS IN BRIEF

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Virginia Bermudez has served in several leadership positions in the Scottsdale Police Department. (Submitted Photo)

Scottsdale PD promotes new deputy director of strategic services

Virginia Bermudez has been promoted to Scottsdale Police Department deputy director of strategic services.

Bermudez has been with the City of Scottsdale since 2014 and has served in several leadership positions, including city court services supervisor, police records manager, and police planning and research and accreditation manager, according to a press release.

Most recently Bemudez has served as interim deputy director of Strategic services since January 2026.

In her new role, Bermudez oversees planning, research and accreditation, records, police resource management and fleet, and facilities.

Scottsdazzle brings holiday magic back to Old Town

Scottsdale's annual Scottsdazzle celebration returns Saturday, Nov. 28, with a free tree lighting event featuring live music and a special nod to the city's 75th anniversary.

The kickoff takes place 7 - 9 p.m. at the Scottsdale Waterfront, 7135 E. Camelback Road, launching a month of holiday entertainment, family activities and opportunities to shop and dine in Old Town.

The evening will feature the 10-piece band Phat Cat Swinger, dance performances, an aerial light show produced by Pulse Drones, and the lighting of Scottsdale's 36-foot holiday tree.

Families can explore Toyland, a hands-on children's activity area; meet holiday characters, including Santa and Mrs. Claus; enjoy seasonal sweets; and browse the Mercantile Market along the decorated canal banks.

Scottsdale-based ALECA gets its own license plate

A portion of the proceeds from a new, custom, Arizona license plate designed by the Arizona Law Enforcement Canine Association will go toward supporting the nonprofit.

The license plate design will be available for Arizona residents to purchase beginning in 2027, according to a press release.

"We are incredibly honored to have an official license plate sanctioned by our home state of Arizona," ALECA President Tony Sanborn said in the release. "Residents can now support ALECA's mission year-round with our signature design. ALECA comprises hundreds of dedicated police canines and officers and our organization delivers critical continuous training to ensure and uphold the public's safety."

ALECA's mission is to train, educate, equip and support police canine units by providing guidance, knowledge, research, development and live action training drills year-round to support them.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Nov. 8, 1898

Nov. 11, 1989: The City of Scottsdale hosted its first Veterans Day celebration at McCorminck-Stillman Railroad Park by dedicating the Merci boxcar. The Merci car was one of 49 railroad cars the citizens of France gave to each U.S. state in thanks for the relief after during WWII.

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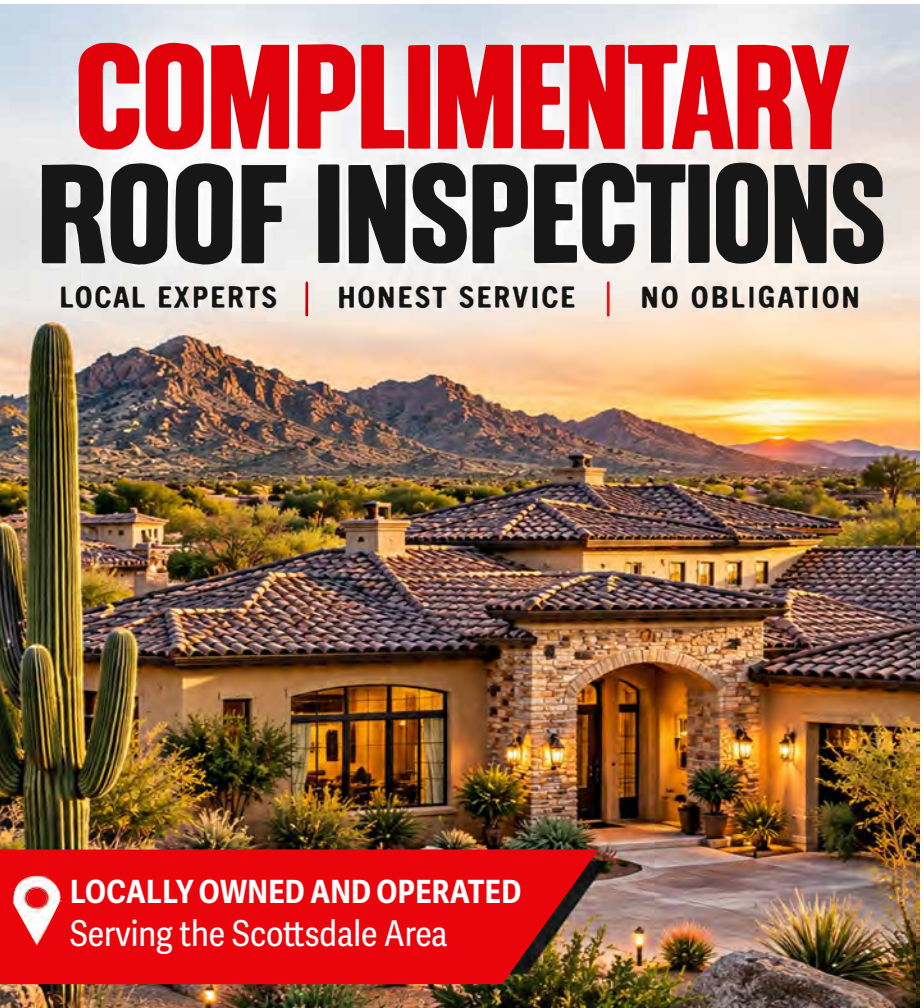

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BUSINESS IN BRIEF

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Terry Black's BBQ is making its first foray into the Arizona market with the purchase of 3925 N. Brown Ave., in Old Town Scottsdale. (LevRose Commercial Real Estate)

Old Town site to become Terry Black's BBQ

A new partnership will help finance the development of one of the nation's largest sustainable aviation fuel projects, a woody biomass-based biorefinery planned for Washington State. This week, Northwest Advanced Bio-Fuels (NWABF) announced a funding partnership with Black Gold Equity Partners, a private equity platform that finances and transforms innovative businesses into institutional-quality operating platforms.

"One of the greatest challenges facing the sustainable fuels industry isn't technology - it's access to capital," said Dave Smoot, Scottsdale Business Owner and Founder of Northwest Advanced Bio-Fuels. "Black Gold Equity Partners understands what it takes to build a project like this one."

38-acre residential site in north Scottsdale sold to developer

A 38-acre residential development site located at the southeast corner of 128th Street and Ranch Gate Road, in Scottsdale, has sold to developer Weekley Homes for $16 million.

Kidder Mathews Senior Vice President Brian Rosella and Senior Associate Joseph Calistri represented the seller, Ranch Gate 40 LLC, according to a press release.

One of the last remaining large parcels available for residential development in North Scottsdale, the property offers the potential for 32 single-family homes.

"This deal illustrates the 'flight to quality' mindset that developers and homebuilders are im-

• See **Business** Page **11**

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Medicare And You™

Stay Vigilant This Annual Enrollment: Protect Yourself, Know Your Options, and Never Go It Alone



Jim Schmidt, Medicare And You™

By Jim Schmidt

Trusted & Seasoned Medicare Authority, Advocate, & Advisor

Welcome back! Last month I promised to show you the red flags of Annual Enrollment, and right on schedule, the phones are ringing. The Annual Enrollment Period runs through December 7th, and any change you make takes effect January 1, 2027. This is the season when the wolves in sheep's clothing are busiest, so let's talk about protecting yourself, knowing where you stand, and why you should never have to navigate any of this alone.

The phone call you never asked for.

Here's a rule every Medicare beneficiary should know by heart: if you did not ask for help, and you did not give anyone permission to contact you about your Medicare, no one should be calling you about it. Medicare's marketing rules prohibit agents, brokers, and plans from making unsolicited calls. A stranger calling to say your plan is "changing," that you "qualify for more benefits," or that you need to "verify" your Medicare number is breaking a major Medicare compliance guideline — period. And remember, Medicare itself will never call you out of the blue asking for your Medicare number, Social Security number, or bank information. Medicare doesn't sell anything.

What to do when they call.

Hang up. You don't owe a scam caller a polite goodbye. Never confirm your Medicare number, date of birth, or any personal information. Write down the date, time, phone number, and company name the caller used. Then turn them in. Report it to 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or to the Senior Medicare Patrol at 1-877-808-2468, a free program that helps stop fraud in its tracks. Every report protects you and your neighbors. And if you ever suspect you've been switched to a plan you didn't choose, call me right away. That can be fixed, and I'll help you do it.

Know what you have before you decide what you want.

The best defense against a high-pressure pitch is knowing exactly what you have. Pull out your ANOC — the Annual Notice of Change I asked you to hold onto last month — and know your premium, copays, out-of-pocket maximum, and whether your doctors and prescriptions are still covered in 2027. Then look at the full picture: what your current plan offers next year, and what competing plans from other carriers offer in your area. A plan waving "shiny add-ons" isn't automatically better than one that quietly covers your doctors and medications at a lower cost.

The right broker in your corner.

That's where a trusted, local broker earns your confidence. A proper review is respectful and unhurried. It starts with your needs, not a sales script. A good broker lays your current coverage side by side with what the market offers for the year ahead, explains the differences in plain English, and tells you honestly when your plan still fits. You should never feel pressured, and you should never be asked to sign anything on the spot.

That's the standard I've held myself to since 2006, because a broker's role is serious. This isn't a magazine subscription or a phone plan. This is your health plan! It deserves honesty, care, and someone who treats it that way.

Not just for Annual Enrollment — all year long.

Too many people learn the hard way that the person who enrolled them in October is nowhere to be found in March. That's not how it should be. Your broker should be there all year — when a claim is denied, when the pharmacy says your drug isn't covered, when you move, lose a spouse, or simply have a question keeping you up at night. Medicare doesn't stop being confusing on December 8th, and your support shouldn't either. If you're on a Medicare Advantage plan and something isn't working come January, the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period, January 1 through March 31, allows one plan change. You have options.

You are never alone.

Medicare has a way of making good, capable people feel isolated — sitting at the kitchen table with a stack of mail and a ringing phone, unsure who to trust. You don't have to live that way. Simple question or complicated situation, you deserve real answers from someone who knows you, and who will still pick up the phone next year and the year after that.

About the Author:

Jim Schmidt is a trusted Medicare Advocate here in Arizona, since 2006. Jim never charges a fee for those that are in need or reach out to him. Contact Jim any time at 480-296-3900 or JimSchmidt@Medicare-AndYou.Reviews

I do not offer every plan available in your area. Any information we provide is limited to those plans we do offer in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE to get information on all of your options.

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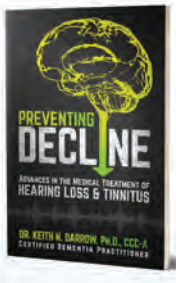

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EDUCATION NEWS

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SUSD to open arts magnet school in 2028

By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Scottsdale Unified School District will open an arts magnet school in the fall of 2028.

The district governing board voted 4-0 to put the school in the former Echo Canyon K-8 site, which was closed this year as a money-saving measure needed due to declining enrollment and low state funding.

Board Member Dr. Matthew Pittinsky was present virtually for the staff presentation on the issue but left before the vote.

District staff presented the board with two timing possibilities in opening the school — either fall of 2027 or fall 2028.

Board Vice President Mike Sharkey proposed the board simply approve opening an arts magnet school and leaving the opening date to the committee put together to study the issue, but when there was not support on the board for that, he supported the 2028 option.

While he did not vote, Pittinsky voiced support for 2028 before he dropped off the line.



The Scottsdale Unified School District Governing Board voted unanimously Nov. 17 to open an arts magnet school in the old Echo Canyon K-8 site that will open in the fall of 2028. (Independent Newsmedia/J. Graber)

It's going to cost roughly $6 million to get the school up and running — including $3.3 million in renovations and upgrades to the building — according the presentation.

Board Member Amy Carney asked where the district was going to get the money when it just closed four schools in the last two years because of budgetary shortfalls.

Superintendent Dr. Scott Menzel said there is some money set aside for maintaining the building anyway; some money could come from the $375 million capital improvement bond that voters passed Nov. 3, and fundraising could also be done.

"So if someone wants to pay for the black box theater (that will need to be added to the building), you could do some naming and fundraising," he said.

Jason Rose, who lives across the street from the former Echo Canyon, personally pledged $50,000 toward marketing the school and promised "an annual, six-figure pro bono amount" from his public relations firm Rose and Allyn PR.

"Tonight is public service at its best, imagination replacing closure," he said.

Sharkey said opening the school would be an investment in the future.

"When I voted for the tough decision to close two schools a couple of months ago, I said we both need to address our excess capacity through school closures and invest in growth," he said. "We cannot close our way to growth in this district."

The school will serve fourth through eighth grade students, who will be required to apply to attend.

The school will need approximately 450 students to be financially viable, but it will take some time to get up to that number.

Staff members predicted 330 to 364 students in grades four, five and six would attend in the first year.

In the second year, enrollment is predicted to be between 496 to 562 students, adding grade seven

• See **School** Page **11**




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School

• From page 10

and possibly eight.

In the third year, enrollment is anticipated to be 595 to 628 students in grades four through eight, but staff encouraged the board to give the school three to five years to determine if the school is a long-term success.

Carney asked what would the district do if the school doesn't hit its first year goal.

A staff member said the first step would be to begin addressing the issue before the end of the school year by speaking to families and making adjustments to respond to students' needs throughout the year.

Five members of the public spoke in support of the school, regardless of what date it opened, but two speakers asked the board to postpone the vote.

A member of the Arcadia Camelback Mountain Neighborhood Association as well as Shonna James, president and executive director of the Shemer Art Center, said they both had learned of the vote that day and had too many questions about the school still.

"We are all for arts in education, but we want more information about how it's being planned, what it's going to entail, what possible partnerships and collaborations might be for our students in our community."

The district administration published the meeting agenda at 5 p.m. the day before the meeting.

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Business

• From page 6

plementing in their regional acquisition strategies throughout Arizona," Rosella said in the release. "Large residential development opportunities in desirable locations are increasingly difficult to find, making this a great deal for all involved."

Downtown East shopping mall hosts new stores

Phoenix-based retail brokerage specialist Western Retail Advisors today announced a series of new leases at Downtown East, a 93,000-square-foot shopping center in Old Town, where a now-open Whole Foods has helped fuel



Anchored by a new Whole Foods, the Downtown East shopping mall is attracting other new stores. (Submitted/Western Retail Advisors)

leasing momentum and attract a growing mix of retail, wellness and service-oriented tenants.

Owned by Miller Plaza LLC, Downtown East is located at 7620-7628 E. Indian School Rd.

Over the past two years, the center has enjoyed exterior renovations and a lease-up strategy designed to modernize the property in step with the evolution of Old Town, according to a press release.

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NEIGHBORS NEWS

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Senior dog sanctuary reaches landmark 1,000th rescue



Buddy, a 10-year-old Havanese mix, is the 1,000th rescue by Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary in Scottsdale. (Submitted photo/Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary)

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A senior dog sanctuary in Scottsdale recently accomplished a landmark achievement.

Forever Loved Pet Sanctuary hit 1,000 rescues earlier this fall when they took in Buddy, a 10-year-old Havanese mix who came to the shelter after his owner could no longer take care of him.

"It's a little hard to wrap my head around 1,000 senior dogs, but I'm incredibly proud of our organization, all of the volunteers, foster homes, board members, donors, all who have made that possible," founder and executive director Luisa Chocron said.

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Sanctuary

• From page 12

"Without every single one of them, it wouldn't be possible. So it's pretty incredible and I'm really proud and I hope all of those who have been with us along the way are proud of it as well."

Chocron started Forever Loved in 2013 and said that the process for a senior dog to get adopted has changed dramatically over the past 13 years.

"When we first started in October 2013, we had dogs waiting from anywhere from two to six months to get adopted. That's not the case anymore," Chocron said. "...They get adopted much quicker now. Some we don't even have to put up on our website because someone sees them on social media and by word of mouth they get adopted quicker."

Even with the milestone number, shelter manager Sabrina Leong said that their focus remains on providing quality care and a forever home for each dog that comes their way.

"Our full focus is on having a high quality of life for our dogs rather than rescuing as many as possible and only giving them medium quality care," Leong said. "...Being able to give that care to senior dogs or any senior animal is so important because it really teaches you a lot about compassion and about caring for another living being."

Leong has worked at animal shelters for multiple years and has seen both young and old animals of many different kinds.

She said that it is important to take extra care of senior dogs due to their age.

"They are typically a little bit more fragile, a little bit more vulnerable in their older age, we really want to make sure that their space is comfortable, that they get so much one on one attention," Leong said. "Any health or behavior problems are closely monitored so that we can address any potential issues as soon as possible. Since we are a smaller and more close-knit rescue, it's really important for us to be able to utilize that and use our foster network as efficiently as possible so we have the luxury of being able to find the most appropriate home for our dogs based on their needs."

Going forward, Chocron hopes that the shelter can move into a larger facility and maybe even start rescuing some feline friends.

"We rescue about 80 to 100 dogs a year. We would love to be able to double that, and we would also want to incorporate senior cats and have a cat area," Chocron said. "...I think a more public facility will allow people to really understand what we've created and see it firsthand."

Leong hopes that people see the milestone number Forever Loved has achieved and realize how that can affect community perception of senior dogs.

"It's not just a number, but it's also evidence of the community changing their viewpoint on senior animals," Leong said. "We see the change within our own organization, but we ultimately hope it bleeds out even further into the community."

For more information, visit foreverlovedpets.org.

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SPORTS NEWS

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Notre Dame Prep claims first 5A volleyball title

By Brittany Bowyer
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

PHOENIX — Notre Dame Prep volleyball put a bow on an outstanding 2026 season by bringing home the 5A state championship trophy on Saturday night.

The top-ranked Saints were able to sweep reigning champion and No. 3 seed Chaparral in front of a packed crowd at Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

For the Saints, they couldn't believe the moment they'd worked so hard for was finally theirs to cherish.

"It's just amazing," Coach Alexandra Sandoval said. "This is such a big deal for them. They've worked so hard, and it's such a deserving moment for them. We're just so happy for them that they get to experience this."

It is the school's fourth volleyball title, and first since the 4A crown in 2021.

"It feels so surreal," senior Lucy Solorzano said. "Every year it's the same goal, the state championship, but you don't know truly how much it means and what it feels like until you get there, and especially until you win. It's genuinely just the most surreal, unbelievable feeling ever, and it's amazing. I love every second of it."

The Saints knew it was going to be a battle, but they were prepared. The two schools faced off twice earlier in the season with Notre Dame Prep getting the upper hand both times.

"I think for us, obviously going in 2-0, we are going in confident," Sandoval said. "We know exactly what we're doing, we know what we're capable of. We always have to expect our opponent, no matter who they are, to make changes, which they did. But for us, when you see a team three times, you're also very comfortable and kind of learn their players a little bit more."





Left: Senior Lucy Solorzano was given the MVP award following her team's championship game win. (AZ Newsmedia/Chandler Parkinson)

Below: Senior Lucy Solorzano goes for a kill against Chaparral at the 5A State Championships on Saturday, Nov.14, 2026. (AZ Newsmedia/ Chandler Parkinson)

Set one got underway with the top seed finding a quick rhythm. Following a kill from Lucy Solorzano and an ace from junior Kenzie Schwab, NDP was up 8-3 and Chaparral called a time out.

Notre Dame Prep was able to continue building on the lead, with Solorzano exploding for two more kills and an ace to make it 14-6.

Chaparral called another timeout at this point to try to avoid the Saints pulling away any further, but it wouldn't be until the Saints built a 20-12 lead that the Firebirds would start to rally.

Starting with a serve out of bounds, the Firebirds started to ascend from the hole they were in.

NDP was able to take a 24-17 lead, but struggled to close out the first set, allowing Chaparral to score three straight. The Saints called a timeout to try to get the final point, but the Firebirds were determined to make a comeback.

After the time out, Chaparral notched a kill from junior Morgan Thorne, a point from a ball hit out of bounds and an ace from sophomore Sarah Hodgson to cut the lead to 24-23 and force the Saints into using another timeout.

Chaparral was able to tie things at 24 with a kill from freshman Ellie Milton. However, Notre Dame Prep found the spark they needed behind senior Aubrey Stevens, who got the kill to make it 25-24 before a violation by the Firebirds would give the Saints the set point.

Taking set one 26-24, the Saints were up 1-0.

Chaparral grabbed a second set lead, but NDP came back and tie things at five off a tandem block from senior Elizabeth Hackleman and sophomore Kiley Hail. A ball hit out of bounds by the Firebirds gave the Saints the 6-5 lead, leading Chaparral to call a timeout.

Coming out of the timeout, NDP scored four straight to make it 10-5. From there, the Saints slowly built the lead, working their way to a 20-10 advantage off a block from Lucy Solorzano and a kill from junior Sofia Wallen.

At this point, the Saints were hot, and they went on to close out the set 25-12 on a ball hit out of bounds by Chaparral. After two

• See **Title** Page **18**

Sponsored Content



Primary Care is Getting a Makeover in Scottsdale. And it's About Time.

Longer appointments, less waiting, and no fees. Corner Health is rethinking how primary care works in Arizona

Finding a primary care provider close to home shouldn't be this hard. Yet, nearly one in five adults in the state doesn't have a personal doctor or healthcare provider, according to 2024 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For those who do, getting an appointment can mean waiting weeks or months, only to spend a few rushed minutes discussing their health concerns.

A growing network of local providers thinks Arizonans deserve better, and they're working with Corner Health to build a different kind of primary care practice to prove it.

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The model gives highly vetted, experienced nurse practitioners the freedom to own and operate their practices, while Corner Health handles the behind-the-scenes work. Providers get to spend more time caring for patients and building lasting relationships instead of getting bogged down in paperwork and corporate red tape.

Meet Your Neighborhood Primary Care Providers in Scottsdale.
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Scottsdale, AZ 85260
Book an appointment:

Sandra Lerdal, MSN, APRN-BC, AGPCNP-BC
Lerdal Health & Wellness
12657 N Tatum Blvd, Ste 132,
Phoenix, AZ 85254
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Services vary by practice but may include preventative care, annual wellness visits, chronic condition management and women's health. Appointments across the network are typically available in under two days.

To find additional providers, visit CornerHealth.com.



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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.

Thank you to the community



Dr. Scott Menzel

It has been said that you can judge a community by how it treats its children. Scottsdale once again has demonstrated a deep commitment to future generations by approving the request for a $375 million bond proposal that will ensure our school facilities meet the needs of current and future students.

Over the course of our 130 years serving the community, there have been periods of rapid growth and also periods of decline in enrollment. Through all those changes, the one constant has been a clear and consistent recognition that investing in the system of public education is an essential component to having a vibrant and thriving community. As I reflect on all of the work by countless volunteers to support a "yes" vote on the bond issue, I am filled with gratitude and appreciation.

Over the next five to six years, we will be working diligently to implement the plan to improve our facilities, including safety and security measures, learning environment improvements, and life cycle upgrades that will ensure our learning environments are healthy, safe and appropriate for the everchanging educational landscape.

On behalf of the SUSD staff and governing board, thank you for continuing to invest in our students and the future of our community.

Dr. Scott Menzel
SUPERINTENDENT, SUSD

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

Councilwoman Whitehead making promises she can't keep



Barry Graham

Councilwoman Solange Whitehead's column in the Arizona Progress & Gazette promises a newly-elected Democratic legislature will protect our zoning and fix short-term rentals. Residents should view that claim with the skepticism her record has already earned.

Whitehead championed road diets, voted to force taxpayers to fund ideological bureaucracies, watched our roads deteriorate and promoted a false narrative about water security to build support for a developer-driven water scheme. She also voted to fund a city-run regional-intake homeless shelter and to move migrants and individuals from the Phoenix "Zone" into our family neighborhoods, along with over 6,000 high-density apartments, including Axon's. She then voted to cancel the resident referendum on Axon's apartments — before accepting $5,000 from an Axon executive.

That's the record of someone making promises she can't keep.

That same record is why her latest promise should be met with caution. Whitehead, who was endorsed by Democratic Socialists, cheers a partisan turnover at the Capitol while selling residents a false sense of security. If states like California are any guide, our legislators won't be looking at our low-density, tourism community as something to save — they'll see a target.

Whitehead blames Republican legislators for the short-term rental law while omitting that SB1350 passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. She claims Republican majorities stripped local zoning authority. A few limited measures did constrain cities, but they were modest next to the California-style assault on single-family zoning and forced transit-oriented multi-family development already underway elsewhere. That's the playbook our new legislature is studying.

By telling Scottsdale residents we needn't continue our fight to protect the character of our community, she's actually endangering it.

Whitehead is selling you a fantasy that the new legislature will save Scottsdale. The reality is that Scottsdale is in their crosshairs. The sooner residents recognize that, the better prepared we will be.

Barry Graham
MEMBER, SCOTTSDALE CITY COUNCIL

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Opinions

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Scottsdale's future needs our attention

The election is over, but Scottsdale's most pressing challenges remain: water security, housing affordability and growth. The incoming city council owes residents clear priorities — and meaningful opportunities to help shape them.

Water funding deserves particular scrutiny. In June, the council unanimously removed $67.7 million designated for advanced water-purification infrastructure and $48.2 million for the Bartlett Dam improvement project. It substituted a broad $100 million allocation for unspecified future water projects.

Officials cited pending state regulations and opposition to direct potable reuse. But replacing specific commitments with a general allocation leaves important questions unanswered. Which projects will move forward? When? And what will delays mean for Scottsdale's long-term water supply?

Housing decisions demand equal attention. State laws have required Scottsdale to adjust local zoning to accommodate casitas and middle housing. Meanwhile, the Axon development dispute has raised questions about corporate influence, local control and residents' ability to participate in decisions affecting their neighborhoods.

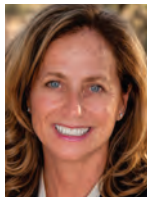
These issues require more than campaign slogans. We need transparent decisions that account for infrastructure, affordability and the people who live and work here.

Scottsdale's future belongs to all its residents. Our council should listen beyond the city's most influential voices and we should make sure it hears us.

Attend meetings, participate online and ask specific questions. The ballot box was one opportunity to shape our city. Showing up now is the next.

Laraine Rodgers
SCOTTSDALE

New Legislature could be good news for Scottsdale



Solange Whitehead

A Scottsdale Independent article pointed out that the incoming Legislature will look quite different from the last. I'm hopeful that could bring good news for Scottsdale.

Protecting local zoning authority was a campaign priority for several incoming legislators. That's a notable shift from previous Legislatures, which repeatedly passed bills stripping cities of local control and allowing by-right development. Many were vetoed by the Governor.

Three other priorities I'll be watching closely:

•Political signs: Restoring local authority to address the proliferation of signs that tarnish Scottsdale's image and undermine roadway safety.

•Water: Closing loopholes that allow developments to proceed without demonstrating an assured water supply.

•Short-term rentals: Reforming Arizona's 2017 Airbnb law, which stripped cities of meaningful oversight.

The short-term rental law unleashed a largely unregulated industry into residential neighborhoods. Scottsdale has seen

• See Opinions Page 18

Be a Civility Advocate!

Civility Checklist

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

☐ **Take the high road.** Respond to the topic — not the person. Refrain from demonizing others for their opinions. Assume those you disagree with are, like you, genuinely interested in improving the community.

☐ **Be respectful.** Bullying, public humiliation, insults, name-calling, harassment, and threats directed at another person — or that person's race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. — have no place in civil discussions. Find ways to respectfully disagree without questioning someone's character or motives.

☐ **Be truthful.** Base your opinions/arguments on facts. Value honesty. Make only accurate statements when making your point and avoid exaggeration and stereotypes. When appropriate, cite your sources of information that others may question.

☐ **Don't misrepresent.** Always identify your opinions as opinions (not stating opinions as facts). Never misrepresent the views of others or falsely claim your opinions represent someone else. If quoting the words of others, identify and credit the source.

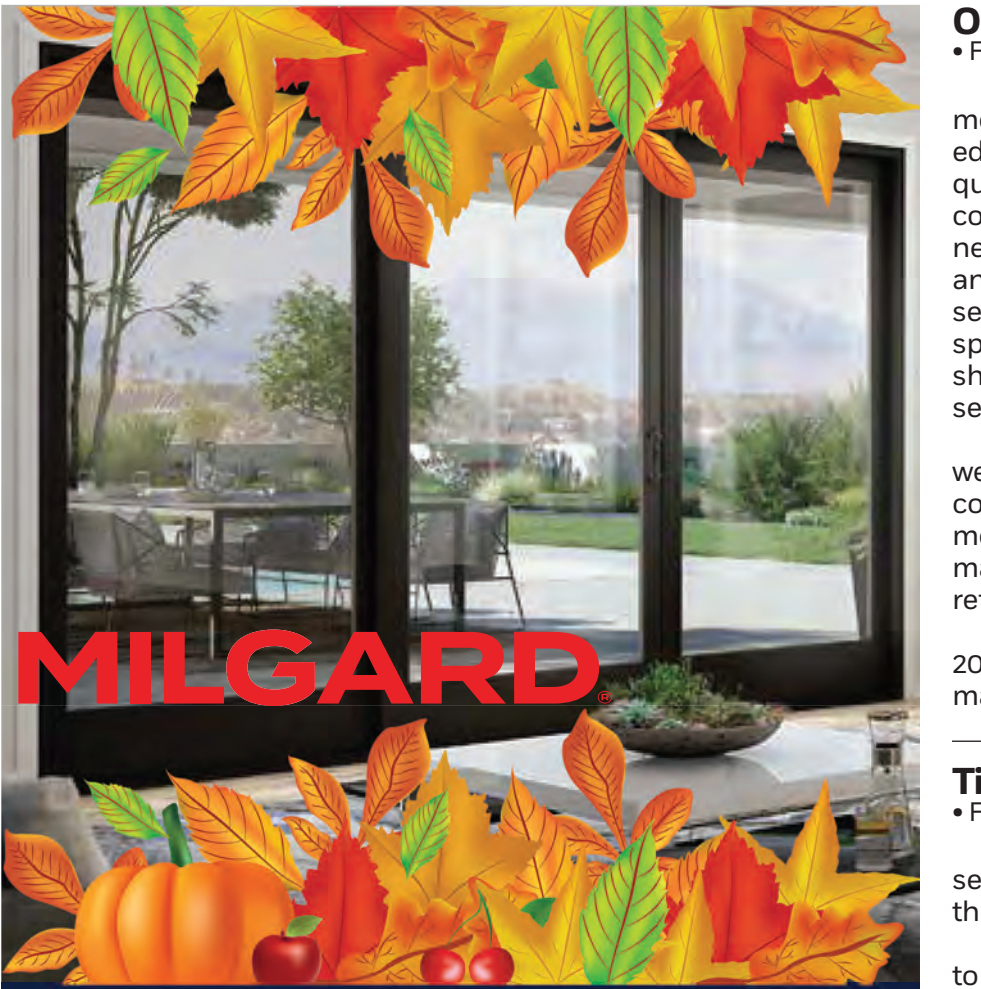
☐ **Listen & learn.** It's both polite and respectful to listen to those we disagree with (as well as those we support) and be genuine in our attempts to understand their point of view. Expand your mind by thoughtfully seeking out views that don't agree with your own.

☐ **Look for common ground.** When disagreeing with others, look for even small areas of agreement — which can be the gateway to working together for the greater good.

☐ **Respect privacy.** Keep private things private — whether it involves your own information or those with whom you disagree. Revealing private information about someone else is rude, unethical, potentially harmful and, in many cases, illegal.

☐ **Set a good example.** Practice civil behavior online as well as in public and in your interaction with others. Encourage others to practice these civil behaviors. And it's OK to challenge disrespectful behavior — but be courteous, respectful and helpful in your approach.

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



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Opinions

• From page 17

more than 5,000 homes converted to vacation rentals. The consequences include higher housing costs, fewer families, declining neighborhood school enrollment and increased demands on city services. Scottsdale police responded to 665 calls for service at short-term rentals in just the first seven months of 2026.

During my time on Council, we've worked hard to restore local control and use every enforcement tool the Legislature has made available. But meaningful reform remains out of reach.

That could finally change in 2027. Cities across Arizona have made short-term rental reform a priority, and several incoming legislators have pledged support.

Restoring local authority could allow Scottsdale to cover enforcement costs through registration fees and fines rather than shifting them to taxpayers. It could also enable enforcement of our two-adults-per-bedroom occupancy limit and meaningful three-strikes policies for repeat offenders.

I look forward to working with state and local leaders on these common-sense reforms. We have an opportunity to protect the quality of life in Scottsdale and communities across Arizona.

Solange Whitehead
MEMBER, SCOTTSDALE CITY COUNCIL

Title

• From page 14

sets, the Firebirds were feeling the pressure.

In set three, both teams fought to establish dominance. Notre Dame Prep was able to break away to a bit of a lead with a block from Hail and Stevens and a kill from Stevens, but Chaparral kept things close.

After a kill from Lucy Solorzano, a block from Sylvie Solorzano and a kill from Hail, the Saints led 17-12, bringing Chaparral to call a time out as their chances of a repeat were slipping through their fingers.

The Firebirds were able to dig deep, going on a 5-2 run to cut the lead to 19-17 and force the Saints to call a time out. Chaparral came back to tie things at 19 on an ace from freshman Natalie Falkenborg and a block from Thorne.

However, Notre Dame Prep was able to turn on the jets and run away with the match and crown.

It was only fitting that two of the seniors who contributed all over the court all season were the two who closed things out. Hackleman slapped the ball down to make it 24-20, while Lucy Solorzano had the final kill to seal the deal.

"I looked for my girl (Hackleman) first," Lucy Solorzano said, after watching the final point come to fruition. "I've been with her since I was 12, and we've been through it together. I was immediately so happy I just went and hugged her and I hugged everyone else and it was such an amazing experience."

Lucy Solorzano, who finished the game with 12 kills, an assist, two aces and a block, won the game's MVP award.

"It feels amazing," Lucy Solorzano said about winning the award. "I feel so loved, I'm so grateful."

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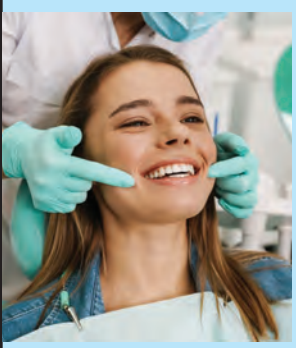

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Law Talk

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Conversations Worth Having Before Carving the Turkey

By: Allison Gloss
THE LAW OFFICE OF LIBBY BANKS

Thanksgiving is one of the few days each year when the whole family is under one roof. The kids and the grandkids travel in, the extra chairs come out, and the whole day is spent cooking together in the kitchen. This is also one of the best opportunities you will have to talk about something that most families avoid: what happens when you are gone or when you can no longer make decisions for yourself.

The best time to have this conversation is when everyone is healthy, calm, and together. Waiting for a crisis means having the hard conversations in a hospital hallway, under stress, and possibly being too late. The holidays give you built-in time and a natural theme. Thanksgiving is about gratitude, and this conversation is an act of it: you are telling them that you care enough to spare them the confusion.

Start with why, and not numbers. You do not need to open with account balances or read your Trust aloud. Start with your reason. Try something like, "We updated our estate plan this year, and I want you to know who is responsible for what and where everything is kept." That single sentence opens the door without demanding a full discussion.

Focus on the information your children will actually need:

- Who you have chosen as successor trustee, executor, and agent under your financial and healthcare powers of attorney, and why.
- Where your documents are kept and how to contact your attorney.
- Your healthcare wishes, including who makes decisions if you cannot.
- The reasoning behind any unequal or unusual gifts.
- Who should receive sentimental items.

Maybe this conversation has you realizing your plan is out of date. Perhaps a child has married, a grandchild has been born, or the person you named as trustee has moved away or passed. The holidays are a good time to act on that. Many people have extra time off between Thanksgiving and the new year, and a few free hours is often all it takes to review your documents and schedule an appointment to have your documents updated. Don't let a busy calendar push it into next year.

Documents are only half of a good estate plan. The other half is a family that understands it. When children know your wishes, they can honor them rather than argue over them, and they can grieve without also having to decode your intentions. This year, after the turkey is carved and the dishes are done, consider giving your family something that will matter long after the leftovers are gone: clarity.

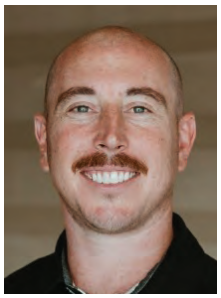
If these conversations are too difficult for you to have with your kids, let us do it for you. Our clients can join our Legacy Care Program that offers a Family Care Meeting and the Successor Trustee Training. In these meetings, we will gladly meet with your family and your successor Trustee to explain your estate plan to them and let them know what they can expect in the trust administration process.

If you are ready to put a plan in place, bring an existing one up to date, or learn more about our Legacy Care Program give our office a call at 602-375-6752 to schedule a free initial consultation.

LaunchPM names Mike DeFranco Director of Project Management

SPONSORED CONTENT — LaunchPM, a Scottsdale-based third-party owner's representative and commercial project management firm specializing in ground-up construction, tenant improvements, and workspace strategy promotes longtime employee Mike DeFranco to the newly added position, Director of Project Management. In this new role, DeFranco will oversee the company's team of project managers and coordinators, while supporting national growth.

DeFranco is an Arizona native and Arizona State University graduate that holds a Bachelor of Science in urban design and urban regional planning. He joined LaunchPM in 2018 as a project manager and rose to Senior Project Manager in 2025. Prior to joining LaunchPM, DeFranco worked for a leading cabinetry company, honing his skills and craftmanship in woodworking and experience supervising and managing installations. During his eight years with LaunchPM, DeFranco has managed multi-million dollar projects in healthcare, manufacturing and office sectors.



Mike DeFranco

"Mike's work ethic and attention to detail are highly valuable attributes. His understanding of project management and effective communication skills make him ideal for taking on this new role of director," states Beth Scarano, CEO and principal of LaunchPM.

LaunchPM is headquartered in Scottsdale at 6900 Camelback Road, Suite 1060. The company manages commercial construction projects for clients throughout the U.S. from planning through move-in. Its portfolio includes clients in a wide variety of market sectors including healthcare, office, education, industrial and nonprofit. To learn more about LaunchPM and its services, visit launch-pm.com.

LaunchPM is a leading solution provider specializing in owner's representation for commercial construction projects. The Scottsdale, Arizona-based firm manages tenant improvement and ground-up buildouts across healthcare, corporate, industrial, education and retail sectors. Founded in 2012 by Principal and CEO Beth Scarano, the firm oversees projects from initial planning through completion. To learn more, visit launch-pm.com.

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Scottsdale real estate market flourishing



By J. Graber
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

More people closed on single-family homes so far this year than in the same 10-month period last year in both the Valley as a whole though Scottsdale's real estate market is flourishing this year, according to data from Phoenix REALTORS.

Closed sales rose 0.8% through October in the Valley. However, closed deals last month plummeted 17.9% compared to a year earlier.

Pending sales slipped 4% year to date, and new listings were down 2.2% compared to the same period last year. In October alone, pending deals fell 45.9%, and new listings slumped 9% compared to last year.

But in Scottsdale, closed sales rose 8% and pending sales rose 4.1% year-to-date. However, when comparing October 2026 to 2025, pending sales slipped 43.5%

"What stands out to me is that

• See **Market** page **23**

Closed sales rose 8% and pending sales rose 4.1% year-to-date in the Scottsdale single-family housing market. (Independent Newsmedia/J. Graber)

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Market

• From page 22

Scottsdale is still getting deals done in a market where buyers are taking their time. October's slowdown is worth watching, but with single-family closings up 8% through October, I see a market that's holding its own and outperforming the Valley." said Sammy Glassman, board president of Phoenix REALTORS. The median sales price in the Valley so far this year remains flat across the Valley at $480,000 when comparing through the end of October with last year. The median price was down 1% compared to October 2025.

But Scottsdale's median home price jumped 5.9% to $1.25 million from $1.18 million in year-to-date comparisons through October this year compared to last year.

During the month, homes sold slightly faster, with days on market dropping from 79 in 2025 to 76 this year in the Valley but days on market rose in Scottsdale from 79 days to 82.

The percent of list price received held at 98% in the Valley. That number is 96.7% year-to-date, which is up just 0.1% over 2025.

"Scottsdale's housing market is showing a shift in favor of buyers," Said Jen Taege, vice president of the board of Phoenix REALTORS. "Pending sales have declined 43.5% year over year while inventory remains consistent. With less buyers transacting, it is creating greater opportunities for buyers in the market today to be selective and negotiate on both price and terms. In short, the data suggests buyers are gaining a stronger negotiating position than they have experienced in recent years."

The 23,044 homes in inventory reflect a 10.6% increase in choices compared to October last year in the Valley. This kicks the month's supply up from 4.1 in 2025 to 4.6 months this year.

But in Scottsdale, there were 1,480 homes in the inventory in October 2026 compared to October 2025. That is an increase of just one home. Over all in Scottsdale, the inventory slipped slightly from 4.4 months to 4.2 months.

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.







Bond

• From page 1

championed the bond.

The five-year bond will pay for infrastructure needs at the schools. Spending would break down to about:

- 34% to learning environment improvements.
- 25% technology enhancements.
- 20% site life cycle renovations.
- 14% school safety and security.
- 5% transportation.
- 2% administrative capital improvements.

"This is the beginning of an important new chapter of work," Superindent Dr. Scott Menzel said in a press release. "Our commitment is not simply to complete projects, but to demonstrate responsible stewardship of public resources and communicate openly with the community every step of the way."

Brown also noted that effects of the bond approval goes beyond schools, as good schools strengthen the health of the community.

"We bring folks into the city, new parents, job opptunities, etc.," he said. "I think also preserving property values is always a huge deal. A good school preserves property values."



Hohokam Elementary is just one of 25 Scottsdale Unified School District schools that will benefit from the five-year, $375 million capital improvement bond passed by voters during the Nov. 3 general election. (Independent Newsmedia/J. Graber)

What the bond passage is not, though, is a vote of confidence in the district's leadership, according to Scottsdale City Councilwoman Jan Dubauskas, who has been critical of the district's administration but did not publicly take a stance on the bond.

"I think it means the residents want to give schools the chance to flourish," Dubauskas said. "I don't think it's a judgment on whether or not the schools are flourishing, but I think what they want to do is give the schools the opportunity."

In fact, she said the district is not flourishing, noting hat the its in-boundary student capture rate was 55% last school year.

"It's tough to ask for more money when you're closing schools," said Dubauskas, who pulled her two daughters from the district after the governing board voted to close their school, Copper Ridge Elementary, next year as part of a money saving measure.

In total, the board has voted to close four schools — Pima Elementary and Echo Canyon, Copper Ridge K-8 and Laguna Prep — over the last two years because of declining enrollment and low state funding. Declining enrollment has been an issue faced by public schools across the Valley and the country as well.

Brown said the school closures were definitely part of the questions voters had but people were ultimately able to distinguish between the two issues.

"It certainly made for a question but it is two separate things ... I think maintaining our schools and maintaining the safety of our schools was critical across the board," he said.

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Pantry

• From page 1

"We always need like dish soap, laundry detergent, things you need at home," pantry operations director Jonathan Montoya said.

Scottsdale provides the paid staff and a 5,000 square-foot warehouse for the food bank, but the supplies that go to the clients are all paid for by grants or come as donations.

A city spokeswoman could not say what the food bank's budget is, but all of the food donations come in through the Scottsdale Community Partners nonprofit. Aside from canned food donated by individuals, the food pantry also collects food and supplies from about 15 Scottsdale area stores daily.

"We rescue food that's going to be tossed out or that the stores can't sell, and then we bring it back in the box truck and the volunteers help us sort through it to check for items that are expiring or are not good," Montoya said. "We try to rescue as much food as we can to help families but also to eliminate food waste."

Food bank staff even compost unusable fresh food in order to avoid food waste, too.

The St. Mary's Food Bank also delivers food once a week.

The Scottsdale Food Bank moved in March from its old location at the Granite Reef Senior Center to its new, larger location at 7601 E. McKellips Road, Building C in order to handle increased operations, but the operation has been going, in one location or another, for over 50 years.

It currently serves two clients every half hour between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. That comes to about 500 clients a month.

Montoya says he often gets sentimental about what he does.

"It's usually daily," he said. "If you go out to a client's car, they might tell you stories. We just ask, 'How are things?' while loading the food in their car. The first time somebody comes, they might not be ready to talk yet, but the next time they come, they might tell you some things that are going on. We're here to listen. We're here to help."

It's about respect and caring for each other because, as Zambon puts it," "people are people."

To schedule an appointment for a pick up, call 480-312-2323.

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In 30 Minutes I Had a Plan for My Shoulder Pain that Didn't Require Surgery or Pills

By Shoulder Pain Expert, Dr. Matthew Hernandez, Ethos Integrative Medicine

"I was losing sleep. I couldn't get comfortable at night and would wake up constantly. That was the most frustrating part. Everything I was told to do was not helping... the pain was only getting worse."

Tim, 46, came to us after exhausting every option outside of surgery. A competitive volleyball player, energetic entrepreneur, and father to two boys, Tim took pride in his active lifestyle and was determined to find a solution for his shoulder pain.

Ice packs and heat compresses were no longer helpful, and relying on pain-pills was not an option he wanted to take. He committed to physical therapy for several weeks with little impact, tried dry needling and cortisone injections without success, and was ultimately told by multiple doctors to stop all activity that aggravated his arm. Tim had done everything his insurance allowed but was still stuck at square one.

What The Other Doctors Missed...

Tim had fallen into what we call "The Gap"— where insurance-based care cycles with no end in sight, surgery isn't an option, and waiting for the pain to get worse seems like the only choice. Most providers only look for what they know how to treat. But our comprehensive 'Deep Dive' approach and expertise allowed us to bridge that gap for Tim.

Using a detailed pain profile, 32-point shoulder inspection, MSK ultrasound scan, and diagnostic injection, we were able to confirm Tim's SC Joint injury and quickly develop a targeted treatment plan to heal the damaged tissue.

A Comprehensive Solution, NO Surgery or Pills

In just 4 weeks, the pain improved significantly, allowing Tim to regain his range of motion, sleep soundly at night, and return to the sport he loves:

"My body is performing better than before, and I have resumed playing volleyball — something I didn't think I would ever be able to do again! If you're tired of the 'just hope for the best' from many in the medical field, and want a complete set of options, Ethos Integrative Medicine is the place to go."

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You're one step away from a pain-free shoulder, too! Imagine being able to comfortably sleep in your side again, play catch with your kid, or put on a t-shirt without pain...

Call 480-573-6171 to schedule your Deep Dive with our specialists at Ethos Integrative Medicine and scan the QR code to access our free report, "Shoulder SOS: The Expert Guide to Decoding Your Pain."

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3. Precision Shoulder Scan: Our advanced musculoskeletal ultrasound exam gives a detailed, real-time view of your shoulder's structures, providing more accuracy than a regular MRI.

4. Ethos Pain Map: This is a specialized method to confirm the exact source of pain in your body. This detailed approach helps us create a personalized strategy, increasing your likelihood of long-term success.

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Get Out Of Pain TODAY: Call 480-573-6171 to Get Started with your Deep Dive at Ethos Integrative Medicine!



Preserve wildlife overpass estimated at $30.8M

By J. Graber
Independent Newsmedia

The cost to build a wildlife overpass over Rio Verde Drive near 128th Street could come in millions less than first predicted.

Initial estimates for the project was somewhere around $35 million, but that may be overshooting the mark by around $4 million, according to a recent report by the Phoenix-based engineering firm of Kimley-Horn, which was hired to do a feasibility of the project.

The report, which was presented to the city's McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission Nov. 5 puts the total price of project (adjusted for inflation) at $30.8 million.

The cost to just build the overpass, which would be 130 feet wide and 110 feet long would be $24.4 million, but that is before all of the necessary other things like the design work fees and relocating utility costs are figured.



A proposed wildlife overpass connecting the north and south sections of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve is expected to be 130 feet wide and 110 feet long, if the Scottsdale City Council approves the project. (City of Scottsdale)

If ultimately approved by the city council, the overpass is scheduled to be built in 2029 and funding for it would come out of the city's preservation fund, which is fed by a 0.15% sales tax passed by the voters in 2004 for improvements to the preserve, as well as the purchase of land and debt repayment.

The fund is expected by city officials to have a balance of $180.8 million in it by the end of the year, though former City Councilman David Smith is currently suing the city to sunset the tax immediately.

Commissioner Rob Hallagan said the public will need to be sold on the idea of the overpass, which has been under discussion for nearly 30 years.

"This is the fourth quarter and this is an education opportunity for all the people who don't have a clue," Hallagan said.

• See **Overpass** Page **27**

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Overpass

• From page 26

The overpass is needed to allow wildlife to move freely between the north and south sides of the preserve, which is bisected by Rio Verde Drive, not only for foraging purposes but also to allow the animals a large enough gene pool to ensure a healthy population.

Jeff Gagnon with the Arizona Game and Fish Department pointed to a loss of all deer in the Phoenix Mountains because the animals could not navigate the development between there and the McDowell Mountains.

"It's hard to say how long it could take (in Scottsdale), but it is a possibility if there is not an ability for those animals to move to and from the mountains, Gagnon said.

Everything from mule deer to bobcats and desert tortoises are expected to use the overpass.

However, people are also expected to use it, too, with plans calling for a pedestrian path that would be separated from the wildlife area by a six-foot wall.

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission will consider the feasibility study again in February. It remains to be seen whether or not the city council will ask for a formal presentation but it is likely to vote yea or nay on the project through the budgeting process, said Scottsdale Senior Director of Parks and Recreation and the Preserve Nick Molinari.

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Toy and pajama drive at U.S. Egg locations

U.S. Egg is partnering with the Foster Alliance for an annual toy and pajama drive through Nov. 30.

U.S. Egg customers throughout the Valley are encouraged to bring pajamas for children from preschool through their teenage years as a priority need, along with new toys, diapers and hygiene items for children in foster care, according to a press release.

U.S. Egg has two locations in Scottsdale at 7119 E. Shea Blvd. and 3238 N. Scottsdale Road.

The Foster Alliance serves more than 12,000 children in Arizona and tribal communities annually.



U.S. Egg is asking customers to donate pajamas for children from preschool through their teenage years along with new toys, diapers and hygiene products for children in the foster care system. (Submitted photo/U.S. Egg)







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Meet the Scottsdale teen with a perfect ACT score

By Connor Van Ligten
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Scottsdale Prep Senior Nila Kumara earned a perfect score on her ACT, which is impressive on its own.

What's more impressive is Kumara was able to do this while competing in three varsity sports, serving in multiple student leadership roles, and spending more than 190 hours volunteering for the Scottsdale Public Library.

"Scottsdale Prep allowed me to be accelerated in math, so I was able to move up one year in my math courses, which allowed me to cover all the material way in advance before my testing," Kumara said. "A lot of preparation outside of school, sitting at home the two weeks before the test and cramming in on the questions that I kept getting wrong on the practice test."

The moment Kumara found out her score is a memory she'll never forget.

• See **Kumara** Page **33**



Scottsdale Prep Senior Nila Kumara earned a perfect score on the ACT. (Submitted photo/Hayley Ringle)

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ABOUT: Wed. Jan 13, 7 p.m. at Mesa Arts Center 1 E Main St and Sat. Jan 16, 7 PM at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, 7380 E 2nd St, Scottsdale.

INFO: An unforgettable live concert featuring every song from the iconic ABBA Gold album—one of the best-selling records of all time—along with additional fan favourites from ABBA's remarkable catalogue.

WEB: iLoveABBA.com



Santa will be at the Christmas tree lighting ceremony at the Scottsdale Quarter shopping mall Nov. 28. (Submitted Photo/Vestar)

LIVE JAZZ

ABOUT: January through June, Ravenscroft, 8445 E. Hartford Drive, Scottsdale.

INFO: Live performances by various artists.

WEB: theravenscroft.com

ART GALLERY

ABOUT: Through Nov. 29 at Royse Contemporary, 7077 E. Main St., Suite 6, Scottsdale.

INFO: "Paintings in Perspective," a solo exhibition by Casey Wakefield. This new collection explores the intricate relationship between perception and experience, inviting viewers to consider how the act of seeing shapes—and is shaped by—our understanding of the world around us.

WEB: roysecontemporary.com

ART EXHIBIT

ABOUT: 11 a.m. 5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and 11 a.m. 7 p.m. Thursdays , Scottsdale Museum of Modern Art, 7374 E. Second Street, Scottsdale INFO: "Chicomoztoc: The Cosmic Throne," the first museum exhibit of Estephania González , explores concepts of spacetime and cosmologies from both physics and Indigenous narratives and how they intersect with personal identity.

WEB: scottsdalearts.org

LIVE COUNTRY MUSIC

ABOUT: 8 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays throughout November, Buffalo Chip Saloon and Steakhouse, 6823 E. Cave Creek Road, Cave Creek.

INFO: Resident band Pick O' The Litter performs live music five nights a week at the Western-style saloon. The venue also offers free line-dancing lessons Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 7 p.m., with couples dance lessons Thursdays at 7 p.m.

WEB: buffalochipsaloon.com

LIVE CLASSICAL MUSIC

ABOUT: 7 p.m. Dec. 17 and 4 p.m. Dec. 20, La Casa de Cristo Lutheran Church, 6300 E. Bell Road, in Scottsdale.

INFO: The Scottsdale Philharmonic will play a selection of holiday favorites for the whole family to enjoy. Santa and Mrs. Claus will also be there.

WEB: scottsdalephilharmonic.com

JINGLE AT JW

ABOUT: Through Jan. 3 at JW Desert Ridge. 5350 E Marriott Drive, Phoenix.

INFO: Register online for a Christmas tradition at Desert Ridge, bring "Elf" to life in a breathtaking frozen world.

WEB: jwdesertridgechristmas.com

CAREFREE MARKET

ABOUT: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Fridays, Nov. 27, Carefree Sundial Gardens, 101 Easy St., Carefree.

INFO: The weekly outdoor market features seasonal produce, locally made foods, flowers and artisan merchandise. The market takes place in downtown Carefree near the town's landmark sundial.

WEB: carefreecavecreek.org

BLUE ZONES

ABOUT: 9-10 a.m. Sundays. Outdoor Movement Moai at Mountain View Park, 8625 E.

• See **To-Do** Page **32**

YOUR EVENTS, PLEASE

We welcome your events for our neighborhood To-Do List page. Please send the following for publication in our calendar: name of the event, time, date and location with address and if there is a cost to attend. Email us: **aznews@iniusa.org**

IN EVENTS

The Apache Junction Independent will host a senior expo Jan. 6 at central Arizona College. Individuals wishing to participate may reach out to the sales team. Email us: **azad@iniusa.org**

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To-Do

• From page **30**

Mountain View Road, Scottsdale. Chaparral Park Lunch and Walk Moai. 11:30 a.m.-noon sack lunch and 12:30 p.m. group walk through Dec. 21 at Chaparral Park, 5401 Hayden Road.

INFO: Blue Zones Project Scottsdale is bringing neighbors together through a series of free gatherings called "moais" (pronounced moh-eyes), and there's something for everyone.

WEB: bluezonesprojectscottsdale.com

CHORAL MUSIC

ABOUT: 3 p.m. Dec. 13, Camelback Christian Church, 6235 E. Camelback Road, in Scottsdale.

INFO: The Carolyn Eynon Singers welcome the holiday season with a festive afternoon of cherished Christmas traditions, uplifting choral works, and music that captures the warmth and wonder of the season.

WEB: cesingers.org

TREE LIGHTING

ABOUT: 5:30-7:30 p.m. Nov. 28, Scottsdale Quarter shopping mall, 15279 N Scottsdale Rd.

INFO: This paid event offers an enchanting evening under the stars including live performances, Santa and festive holiday entertainment all night long. Proceeds will go to the Phoenix Children's Hope Fund.

WEB: scottsdalequarter.com

Kumara

• From page **29**

"My test scores were delayed, and I was sitting in my physics class with my teacher Mrs. Coolidge and the lead college counselor Ms. Monica Ware," Kumara said. "I had called ACT, I had set up my site and I opened up my scores and I saw the perfect 36. I was jumping up and down and hugging Mrs. Coolidge and getting congratulated by Ms. Ware. I called my mom. It was a great experience and I was really happy about it."

There's a lot more to Kumara than just her perfect ACT score. She hopes to pursue political science and economics in college, and is interested in the topic of education and education equity. One day, she'd like to attend law school as well.

"Scottsdale Prep allowed me to delve in Latin and Latin history. It let me see how many similarities and differences there was between our government back then and today. That led me to get more interested in government and policy today and how they are similar or different from the past," Kumara said.

The library also helped her to see a potential path through further education, Kumara said.

"I was also volunteering at the library a lot over those couple of summers when I was figuring out what I really wanted to do," she said. "Because of that, I became interested specifically in education policy and then through a couple of internships and different activities outside of school, I was able to see and observe senate and representative meetings and see how they were passing bills and policies."

Ware said Kumara works as hard as she is talented, and that

• See **Perfect** Page **33**

Perfect

• From page 32

her dedication to her passions both inside and outside school make her stand out among her peers.

Kumara is a National Merit semi-finalist moving forward to the final stage. She was in the top percentile for the PSAT, and has a 4.0 unweighted GPA. Her weighted GPA is the highest amongst all students at Scottsdale Prep.

"I've always been impressed with her. She's very bright and naturally intelligent but also works really hard. Her civic engagement and community involvement is something that is pretty rare at our school to be involved with inside and outside school grounds," Ware said. "I've been impressed with her ability to communicate her future goals while also talking about her past experiences. Her overall hard work and dedication to the community make such a solid impact."

Kumara's involvement in civics is something she does on and off-campus.

"Speech and debate helped me a lot with learning about policy itself, but I wanted to actually interact with elections, campaigns, and candidates. So I started out building a civic education curriculum with an organization called ProGov, which is centered towards young women," Kumara said. "As I learned more myself from creating that curriculum, I got connected with one of the local campaigns. So for the last couple of years, I've been working on local campaigns as well as local initiatives such as Save Our Schools Arizona."

Kumara wants to go to college somewhere that is civically engaged where she can further her education and also get involved in the local community. She isn't sure if she wants to stay in Arizona or go to somewhere like Washington, D.C., or California, but Ware is sure she'll be a great fit for whatever university she decides on.

"I think she set herself up for success in challenging herself early on, even back in middle school, and continuing to grow and flourish. I would not be surprised if she got a lot of acceptance letters and even some scholarships," Ware said. "We can't predict what application season will look like, but she's certainly been putting in the hard work not just to apply, but work really hard on her essays and building a rapport through teachers to set her best foot forward. She's not just depending on her grades."

Ultimately, Kumara's advice to her peers is to find the joy in working hard, and finding something you're passionate about that you'll dedicate countless hours to.

"Find a way to make the hard work enjoyable. Ultimately, it's all towards achieving your goals and your dreams," Kumara said. "Find that initiative yourself, not your purpose, because we shouldn't have to find our greatest purpose in life as teenagers, but knowing what we desire. As long as we have that in mind, that's the biggest reward in all of this."

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PET OF THE WEEK:
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MEET MIKI THE MORKIE

Miki is "six pounds of pure pure love" and lives with his person, K.J. Peres, in Scottsdale.





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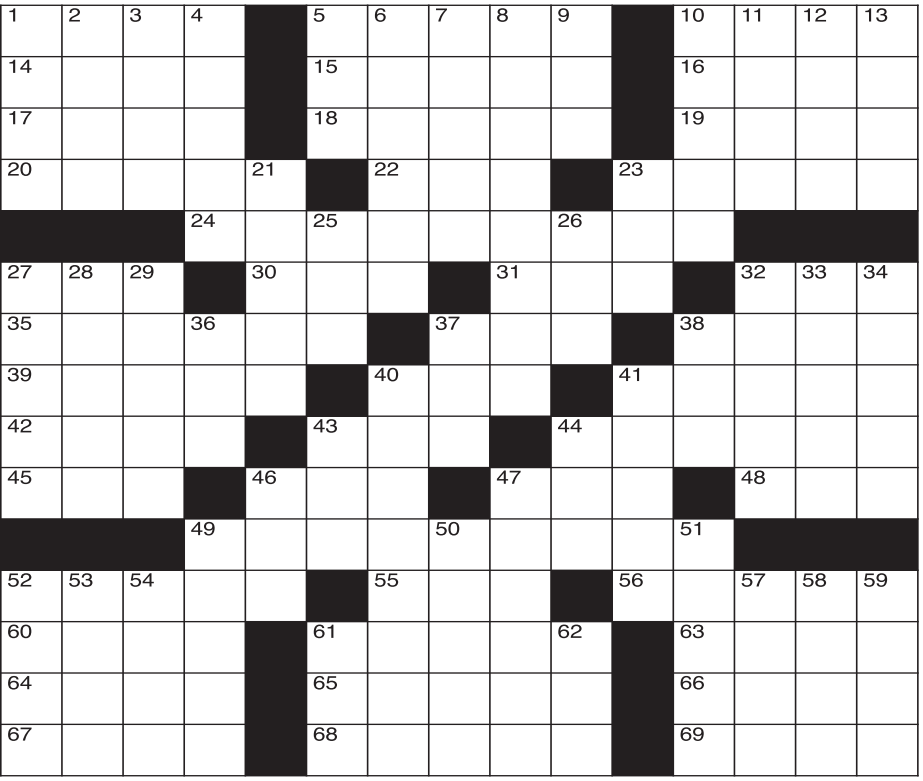

CLUES ACROSS

1. Perceive a sound
5. Pretends to be
10. Type of guitar
14. Actor Idris
15. A citizen of Iran
16. Creative
17. Keep under control
18. Weight unit for precious stones
19. You better call him
20. Fanatical
22. Male cat
23. Jewish spiritual leader
24. One who takes risks
27. A way to nail
30. Cool!
31. Progressive policy supporter
32. "Losing My Religion" rockers
35. Step-shaped recess
37. Round globular seed
38. Somewhat
39. Butterhead lettuces
40. Color at the end of the spectrum
41. Lines where fabrics are sewn together
42. Dodgers great Hershiser
43. Floor covering
44. Traveled aimlessly
45. Rocker Stewart
46. Body art
47. Congressman (abbr.)
48. No seats available
49. Categorizes
52. Iraq-Syria border town
55. Ballplayer's tool
56. Type of sword
60. Baseball team
61. Upper bracts of grass
63. Italian seaport
64. Ancient city in Syria
65. Shoelace tube
66. U. of Miami mascot is one
67. South American nation
68. "Nebraska" director Alexander
69. Upper body part

CLUES DOWN

1. German courtesy title
2. Ancient Greek City
3. Skin care manufacturer
4. A long-legged frog
5. Photo
6. Delivered a speech
7. Lute in northern Indian music
8. Decorated
9. Take a seat
10. Bottom layer
11. Type of horse
12. Ticket part
13. Defunct currency of Guinea
21. Challenges
23. Popular BBQ food
25. Subway rodent
26. By way of
27. Shady garden alcove
28. City in Egypt
29. __ and flowed
32. Large quantities of paper
33. Eurasian wheat
34. Act incorrectly
36. Layer of water right above sediment (abbr.)
37. Al Bundy's wife
38. Ocean
40. Large, round root
41. Sound units
43. Knock
44. Soak in water
46. Hot drink
47. A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
49. Rumanian city
50. Come back from being down
51. Vaccine developer
52. Canadian law enforcers
53. Wings
54. "Perry Mason" actor Raymond
57. Small fry
58. __ Clapton, musician
59. Gamble
61. Semi-liquid food
62. Consumed food

SOLUTION ON PAGE 39

Phoenix Children's

Because Moments Count

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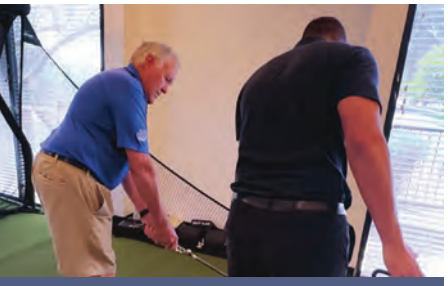
THE ACTIVE ADULTS EDITION · PART 1 OF 3: GOLFERS

In One Visit, Find Out Why Your Back Hurts Every Time You Play. No Surgery. No Pills.

Why back, hip, and sciatica pain has so many Scottsdale golfers taking something off every swing, and what a TPI-certified Doctor of Physical Therapy looks for first.



"Sometimes it's not even the pain. It's the anticipation of pain."
— Chip H., Scottsdale golfer

Dr. Lance Martin, PT, DPT, TPI-certified, checks how a golfer's hips and back share the work of the swing.

By Back Pain Expert Dr. Tom Padilla, PT, DPT
Founder, The Doctors of Physical Therapy, Scottsdale · Bestselling author, Solving the Root Cause of Pain

"Sometimes it's not even the pain. It's the anticipation of pain."

That is how Chip described it. At 51, he was a Scottsdale golfer who didn't want to quit, and he hadn't. He was just taking something off every swing.

You may know the feeling. You swing a little easier now. You think twice before you turn hard through the ball. Nobody in your foursome says anything, but you think about it on the walk back to the cart.

Or the clubs are already in the garage, and you keep telling people you'll get back out once the back settles down.

WHAT EVERYONE ELSE MISSED: THE ROTATION GAP

"There's a lot of linkage in the body," Chip said. "If one area isn't working properly, other parts start compensating."

That is exactly it. The golf swing is a rotation, and most of it should come from your hips and mid-back. When those stop turning, after years at a desk or an old injury you forgot about, the swing still has to happen. So your lower back turns instead. It was never built to do much of that.

Stretching eases it for a day. A massage buys you a weekend. Neither one gets your hips turning again, which is why so many golfers go from one treatment to the next and end up right back where they started.

TWENTY CLINICS, THEN ONE SCREEN

Dylan J., another Scottsdale golfer, had been to close to twenty clinics for low back and hip pain before he came to us.

"Now I can swing a golf club almost every day without thinking about my back."

Chip, after his: "I regained flexibility and was able to turn better." And: "I can play without taking Advil now."

Neither one needed surgery.

WHO THIS IS FOR

If back, hip, or sciatica pain has changed how you play, or whether you play, this is for you.

If you have tried stretching, massage, injections, or another round of therapy and it didn't hold, this is for you.

And if someone mentioned surgery and your gut said slow down, get a second look first.

Or as Chip put it: "If you don't address the root cause, you're not going to get a good result."

WHAT HAPPENS IN YOUR TPI GOLF SCREEN

1. Your Golf Timeline: when it started, what you've tried, and what you want back.
2. Hip Rotation Test: how far each hip turns, and whether one side is doing less.
3. Mid-Back Rotation Test: whether your upper back is helping the swing or sitting it out.
4. Pelvis and Spine Load Check: where your body is actually sending the force of the turn.
5. Balance and Core Stability: what your body braces against when you rotate hard.
6. The Roadmap Promise: you leave knowing what we found and the plan that follows from it, whether your next step is with us or not.

In one visit, you'll find out what's driving your pain, why it keeps coming back, why the things you've tried haven't lasted, and your step-by-step path back to confidence on the tee.

Each month we set aside a limited number of TPI Golf Screens for golfers whose back, hip, or sciatica pain has lasted longer than three months. One-on-one with a Doctor of Physical Therapy.

Requests must be received by December 30, 2026.

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SCAN TO REQUEST YOUR SCREEN



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SUDOKU

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	5					3		
			4	6		5	9	
	1				8		6	7
4		2	5				1	
			8			4		
	6	1					5	
7								3
		5		8	9			
		9			2			

Level: Intermediate

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes.

ANSWER:

8	4	9	6	3	2	1	7	5
1	3	5	7	8	9	6	2	4
7	2	6	9	4	5	9	8	3
3	6	1	2	7	4	8	5	9
5	9	7	8	1	6	4	3	2
4	8	2	5	9	3	7	1	6
9	1	4	3	5	8	2	6	7
2	7	3	4	6	1	5	9	8
6	5	8	9	2	7	3	4	1

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PUZZLE ON PAGE 35

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R	E	I	N	■	C	A	R	A	T	■	S	A	U	L
R	A	B	I	D	■	T	O	M	■	R	A	B	B	I
■	■	■	D	A	R	E	D	E	V	I	L	■	■	■
A	C	E	■	R	A	D	■	L	I	B	■	R	E	M
R	A	B	B	E	T	■	P	E	A	■	S	E	M	I
B	I	B	B	S	■	R	E	D	■	S	E	A	M	S
O	R	E	L	■	R	U	G	■	R	O	A	M	E	D
R	O	D	■	T	A	T	■	S	E	N	■	S	R	O
■	■	■	S	E	P	A	R	A	T	E	S	■	■	■
R	A	B	I	A	■	B	A	T	■	S	A	B	E	R
C	L	U	B	■	P	A	L	E	A	■	B	A	R	I
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