



Maricopa

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March 2020

PEOPLE

Eat, sleep,
breathe
roller derby

GOVERNMENT

Re-imagine
Heritage
District

BUSINESS

Self-employed
and uninsured

FAMILY

Teacher
turnover

GIRL POWER

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of Events



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How tough are you?

Sometimes toughness is personal; sometimes it's part of a culture.

On our cover is Alezet Valerio, the latest in her family of boxers to compete (and win) on the national stage. While boxing's pull generally has diminished in recent years, it remains deeply embedded in the cultural lives of American neighborhoods around the country and is growing in Mexico. For youths, do the benefits outweigh the dangers? You be the judge.

Also not afraid of full-contact sports are the women of the growing Casa Grande Roller Derby league, which includes Maricopa skaters. We catch up with four who lace up for regular bouts in what is still considered a subversive sport after more than 80 years.

A bit of Maricopa culture has been undergoing changes as the City envisions redevelopment of what is called the Heritage District. Several old

homes have been removed from the area that is one of Maricopa's oldest and sometimes roughest neighborhoods. To see how much the entire city has changed just in the past 20 years, check out our history photos.

In this issue, we look at challenges caused by teacher turnover and self-employment health insurance costs. We check in on Maricopa High School's new engineering courses and catch up with City Councilmember Henry Wade.

You can also check our calendar for March's many events.

Happy reading,



Raquel Hendrickson

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KYLE NORBY
The multi-media specialist worked as an activities coordinator for Wyndham Vacation Ownership at the Grand Desert property in Las Vegas before returning home to Maricopa.

ON THE COVER: Alezet Valerio, 14, won a national boxing championship and is part of a family of fighters now living in Maricopa Meadows. Photo by Victor Moreno

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History

Maricopa from the air

The growth of Maricopa was dramatic between 2002 and 2006, when the city was a poster child of the housing boom. The post-recession surge is evident again from the air, showing the spreading residential areas and the businesses along John Wayne Parkway as well as Copper Sky.



2020

Kyle Norby (right: courtesy of Andy Estes, Desert Rat Aviation)



2002



2006

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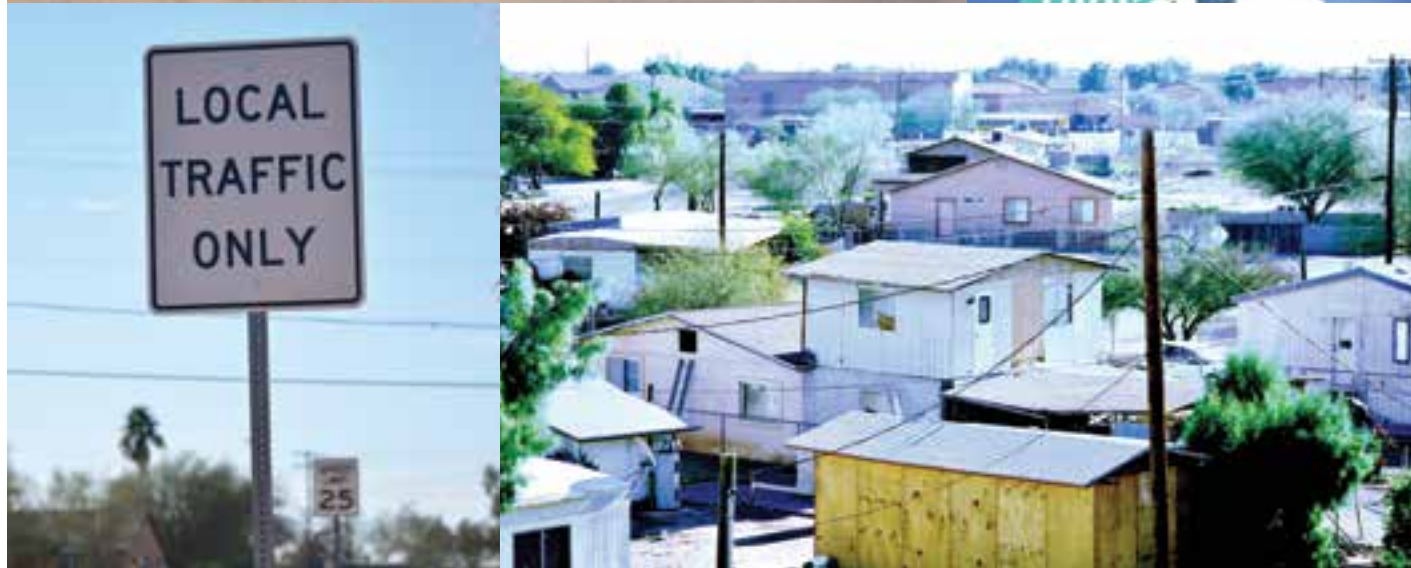
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Street name changes precede grand plans for Heritage District

Story and photos by Raquel Hendrickson

When the folks at City Hall talk about Heritage District redevelopment, they are not just talking about changing street names.

The ideas for the area between Honeycutt Road to the north and the Amtrak station to the south are very big, even revolutionary for an area known for long-standing family homes. Lately, it has been the site of City cleanups and demolitions. The City would like to see an “old town Maricopa” concept arise in a community that has never had a distinct downtown.

In February, the city council approved changing the names of the streets in the neighborhood, with one late change-of-a-change in the mix. After the 911-address paperwork is updated, Pershing Street will be Main Street, Burkett Avenue will be

The Heritage District, the oldest neighborhood in Maricopa, is under the city’s eye for redevelopment. So far, that has included demolitions and street-name changes.



Stagecoach Lane, Maricopa Avenue will be Heritage Lane and a section of Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway between Plainview Street and the curve to Maricopa Road will be called Mercado Street.

Rodolfo Lopez, deputy director of the Economic and Community Development Department, said the purpose is to “somewhat rebrand” the Maricopa Townsite subdivision to “create a sense of place.”

A neighborhood open house was held in November followed by a meeting of the Heritage District Committee in December to work out the new street names.

The plan had been to change slightly Arizona Avenue, a road between Plainview and Burkett/Pershing, to Arizona Lane. However, Councilwoman Julia Gusse wanted one of the roads to reflect the “predominantly Latino” heritage of the area. Because naming streets after some local families might cause conflict within the neighborhood, she suggested instead changing the name of Arizona Avenue to Cesar Chavez Lane for the revered, Arizona-born labor leader.

City Manager Rick Horst affirmed he discussed the issue with Gusse earlier and took it back to city staff, which agreed with the change. The council also agreed.

The new street names come atop a redevelopment vision that would turn the area into a pedestrian-friendly marketplace, hence the street name of Mercado. Lopez said that was also homage to a former mercantile store that existed until 2007.

During a strategic planning session, the council looked at ideas for a “Maricopa Station” that could include revamping the Amtrak station and adding areas for retail,



One city concept is to turn the area into a marketplace and plaza that reimagines the use of the Amtrak station.


restaurants and parking as well as an event plaza for gatherings and concerts. The idea is to have the new Main Street feed directly into a plaza south of the new Mercado Street, a plaza that would include the Amtrak station.

(Maricopa has an existing commercial area known as Maricopa Station northeast of the John Wayne Parkway/Smith-Enke Road intersection that includes eateries from Freddy’s to Chipotle.)

A Horst caveat in the strategic plan was that the City’s role in the Heritage District redevelopment should be as a facilitator, not a driver. So, lining up commercial developers to buy into the vision is a priority.

As creative place-making, the redevelopment of the Heritage District is part of the city manager’s Wildly Imaginative Goals (WIGs).

A similar “economic development enhancement project” is a vision to revitalize the old section of Maricopa just south of the railroad tracks and along the shoulders of the overpass. The plan, called South Bridge, includes retail and green space.

Because most of the WIGs are in the distant future, the new street names will stand as a reminder of grand plans. 



Q&A with City Councilmember Henry Wade

By Raquel Hendrickson

Henry Wade Jr. has been a member of Maricopa City Council six years and is also the director of housing counseling services for the nonprofit Chicanos por la Causa. He just spent one year as vice mayor. A native of South-Central Los Angeles, he spent 20 years in the U.S. Air Force before retiring to become a real estate broker. He spoke with InMaricopa about the development and issues the city is experiencing.

Remind us of your background.

We’ve lived in Maricopa since 2008. My wife Gayle Randolph and I were looking for somewhere to live. We went back and forth between Maricopa, Laveen, Chandler, all over the place. We wanted to settle down and have some roots. We settled on Maricopa actually for two reasons. One was that it was actually faster, believe it or not, to travel on the 347 to the 10 than it was on Baseline Road to come from Laveen over to the 10, and less traffic actually. And houses were \$60,000 cheaper. That had a lot to do with our decision. Love Maricopa. Truly, thoroughly love Maricopa.

What was the most difficult decision you’ve had to make on council?

When we were deciding on whether you could carry guns in public places. That was the most difficult decision for me. I was very distraught with the decision that was the eventual outcome [permitting it] because I felt that people didn’t come out and express their views well enough to be able to give council a little more room to make that decision. So, it was kind of a slam dunk on the other side. I was disappointed in that. Just because people didn’t come out and say anything on it.

How much time do you spend on your council job?

I’m not sure where the splits are. I’m not at 70-plus like the mayor is, but I’m at 40 or 45. Again, having a partner like Gayle, I couldn’t do half the things I do without her. It’s priceless having her.



Kyle Norby



HENRY WADE JR.
City of Maricopa
Councilmember

Age: 65
Hometown: Los Angeles, California
Maricopan since: 2008
Family: Wife Gayle, three sons, two grandsons
Politics: Former chairman of Pinal County Democrats
Military: U.S. Air Force 20 years
Worst-kept secret: Was the grand marshal of the 2019 Arizona Black Rodeo

What have you personally gotten out of being on council?

To be able to satisfy my public-service bug. My commitment. Most people know I’m retired Air Force. I spent 20 years – actually 20 years, 27 days – in the Air Force, and throughout that time I learned and honed those skills of public service and supporting the community and

being involved and engaged. I think that’s what it is. It gives me the opportunity to give back, to do something.

Of which council achievement are you most proud?

That the council could work together to get things done. The overpass is an example. I’m hopeful that the city is observing and paying attention to the beautification of Maricopa through the cleanup. The city manager has been an advocate, a staunch advocate, to make sure that the community looks good when people come through, and I like that. As we did the overpass, the little things that were discovered, the little junk places where people were hiding things, all came out. Here you are, from hundreds of feet in the air, people can see all those things.

The hospital companies have not been really excited about moving here ...

That’s always a concern of mine. They said we needed to 45,000 [population]. So, then we had 45. Then they say, “You need 50,000.”

OK, so we did 50. “Well, maybe you need 55.” We’re pushing toward 55. Let’s stop making the excuses and let’s go ahead and get this done, because we need a hospital here, right? Gayle’s dad lives here. He’s 83 years old. He still lives by himself. He’s still ambulatory; he’s in great shape. He’s slow, he’ll tell you that. Having an emergency clinic here is important to us, as well, and something we need to be concerned with, particularly with Dad. I’m hopeful we can continue to push forward in that direction.

In using your background, when the council gets projects like multi-family housing, what are you looking at specifically to make sure that’s going to be what Maricopa needs?

A credible developer, somebody that we can trust, somebody that’s going to be there through entire project, from start to finish. At one of my Councilmember on the Corner events, I said then, “We will have multi-family housing. Get used to that fact.” And they are not HUD houses. They are not Section 8 houses. We have people here that would be able to utilize those, that we don’t have to worry about the stigma of having apartments that have been subsidized that will bring in people that are less than whatever they might want to consider them. I call them constituents and citizens, and that’s what they are. They need space; just like I need my space, they need their space. 🙌

VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Guns in public buildings:

“I have a difficult time understanding why you need a 9mm in the library with a bunch of kids.”

City manager:

“I think that was one of our best hires since I’ve been on council.”

Growing up in South-Central LA:

“I got some skills out of there. Sometimes folks don’t even know.”

Race relations:

“Gayle’s going to kill me, but I’m going to say something...”

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2 appliance-repair companies create ‘monumental’ merger

By Fran Lyons

Two highly respected Maricopa businesses, each with five-star customer ratings, are combining their companies to form a team based on mutual values and commitment to their vision.

Mr. Appliance and Maricopa Appliance Repair have merged and will operate under the Mr. Appliance name. The qualities each company brought to their existing client bases have merged to create an expanded platform offering the “best of both worlds.”

“We have expanded the family,” said Stacey Spano, Mr. Appliance partner and executive administrator. “We began as competitors, became good friends, and are now business partners.”

Maricopa Appliance Repair, formerly Appliance Works, a family-owned business and the first appliance repair company in town, was established in 2009 by the Jamieson family. Gary Jamieson took over the business from his father in 2015.

“Our aim is to be bigger, better and stronger united as one team,” Jamieson said. “I was mentored by my dad and carry on in his footsteps as I continue to build upon the foundation of lasting customer relationships.”

Mr. Appliance, a franchise owned and operated by Danny and Stacey Spano, opened in 2017. They hit hard with marketing and advertising. However, they encountered a glitch when a digital advertising error mixed the messages of the two companies.

“The confusion this created caused quite an uproar with customers and put each of our companies on the defensive ready to do battle,” Stacy Spano said. “It was a marketing nightmare.”

It didn’t take long for the two teams to move past the competitive stance. Stacey Spano called a meeting, and they soon discovered they had a lot in common. Their friendship came naturally. They developed trust and supported each other.

They recognized how they work is how they live their lives. The partners said respect, integrity and customer focus is fundamental to how they do business while enjoying what they



Danny Spano and Gary Jamieson have merged their companies.

Submitted

do in the process. Jamieson said the purpose and passion in their work ethic is a shared goal: providing excellent service and satisfaction to each customer.


Spano called the resulting merger “monumental.”

The new organization will operate under the banner of “Mr. Appliance; North America’s leading home and commercial appliance repair franchise system.”

“Our platform has a really solid back office that offers advanced technology and proprietary software. Our call center is also very efficient and prepared for prompt response and scheduling,” Stacey Spano said.

“We listen, we understand,” Danny Spano said. “We know how frustrating it is to have a household appliance that you depend on stop working.”

The new company has five employees and is growing to serve Maricopa and neighboring communities. Maricopa and its loyal customers will always come first, the partners say. Stacey Spano said having more technicians on the road will result in faster turnaround times.

“Our professionalism will not sway during the merger because Maricopa Appliance Repair held the same level of customer satisfaction,” Spano said. 

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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City of Maricopa

The acreage in front of Copper Sky Regional Park will start changing very soon. La Quinta Hotel is now under construction but that is only a small piece of what is to come. The City of Maricopa elected leaders and staff studied an economic impact analysis to make the decision to put a development agreement in place with Shea Connelly Development, LLC. as the master developer. At the bottom of the page are a few highlights of the benefits this development will bring to the city’s economy.



– Conceptual Drawing of Seasons Living at Copper Sky



EAST (VIEW ALONG MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD.)

We couldn’t be happier working in conjunction with the City of Maricopa. From our introduction at the Senior Expo 2020 to the initial permitting process, we are encouraged to have so many welcoming city officials and ambassadors. Seasons Living at Copper Sky, an assisted living facility, will break ground later this year, and we look forward to becoming official citizens of Maricopa. – Dan Williams President & COO | Seasons Living

For more information contact:
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Health insurance hurdles high for self-employed

By Kyle Norby

Health insurance has been a hot topic in the nation for a long time. With programs such as the Affordable Care Act, or “Obamacare,” being inconsistent even when available, the health-care hurdles and the ramifications of an unexpected medical problem are an everyday struggle for many Maricopans.

Ray Nieves, owner/operator of 911 Air Repair, recounted his battle with an insurance company after his oldest son was attacked by their dog. In July 2018, Nieves was on a job in Gilbert when he began receiving calls from his wife McKenzie.

“When I’m with a customer I usually don’t answer the phone. Obviously, we’re trying to maintain professionalism,” Nieves said. “So, I kind of just hit ignore.”

When a third call from his wife came in, Ray answered and received horrifying news — their German shepherd had bitten the head of their 3-year-old son Remy.

“The first responders and everybody showed up before I got there,” Nieves said. “They got him wrapped him up, wrapped his head and put him in the ambulance. They were taking him to the children’s hospital in Mesa.”

Remy never lost consciousness, but the doctors determined that his skull was fractured.

“They were really concerned with any skull fragments getting into his brain,” Ray recalled. “So, they had to go and do surgery. They brought a pediatric neurosurgeon who went ahead and ensured that there wasn’t anything in there.”

After a few days of monitoring in the hospital and 19 staples, Remy was back to a happy kid, albeit with a shaved head from surgery. Ray and McKenzie decide to shave their youngest son Rayden’s head as well.

“We tried to help him be a little bit more comfortable,” Nieves said with a smile.

Then the medical bills began rolling in. “[It was] \$10,000 for this, \$2,000 for that,



Submitted

Remy Nieves (right, with brother Rayden) suffered a medical emergency when he was 3, a difficulty for his self-employed father.

\$15,000 here. It added up very, very, very quickly,” he said.

Nieves described the difficulty in acquiring and providing affordable health insurance as a self-employed, small-business owner. In a 2019 survey published by The Kaiser Family Foundation, small businesses in the United States that do not provide health-care benefits to their employees still cite the cost as the central reason. The survey reported the average annual premiums as \$7,188 for single coverage and \$20,576 for families.

“When you are self-employed it’s very difficult to get health insurance,” Nieves said.

“It’s kind of like a pay-to-play thing. I’m paying more than my mortgage to have insurance for my family. You know, 1,500 bucks a month to carry insurance that isn’t even the best insurance available.”

“There needs to be reform when it comes to stuff like that, and I just don’t think that

anybody’s coming forth with long-term solutions,” Nieves said. “I mean, it’s always been a really touchy subject as far as health insurance and stuff go. To me, it seems that it’s a really bad industry because there’s a lot of money involved. You see what the CEOs and stuff are making, and I’m not against them making money. I mean, that it’s capitalism, but it’s also a human right.”

Medicaid programs such as Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) aim to provide care for low-income households that otherwise would not have insurance. The Census Bureau estimated 4,000 Maricopans — 7.8% of its population 50,000-plus — were without health insurance in 2018.

U.S. Department of Health data shows 17.4% of children in Pinal County are not covered by health insurance.

Nieves is not hopeful the status of U.S. health care will change anytime soon: “There’s just a lot of stuff that comes into play, and that just goes to show you why it’s such a difficult problem to solve.”

Dr. Philip Wazny, NMD, believes no one knows how to solve the health-care problem, at least not yet.

“Looking at the medical literature, wages and income have not kept up with deductibles,” Wazny said. “It is at the point where patients are not coming in for what may seem like just a cough, now it’s bronchitis or pneumonia.”

Wazny described this lull in people going to doctors in fear of being charged as an “unfortunate rebound” because people could end up with a far more severe ailment if left untreated, oftentimes high blood pressure or diabetes. He said people should be able to choose how they are treated, but with so many big companies involved, it could be quite a while before the nation sees a shift.

“I really think the doctors get paid through the pharmacies,” said Manny Chavez, owner of Prestige Landscaping, “and I really personally do not like doctors. It went from healthcare to a money gold mine.”

He is not in a position to offer health insurance to employees and said they are covered by liability insurance if they are injured on the job.

“If the employee gets hurt or not, I’m still paying so much for how many hours they work,” he said. “I still get charged from unemployment insurance, and that’s like the biggest killer to me.”

Health insurance and even healthcare was not a priority when he was growing up,


just the work.

“As a Mexican, you were never going to the doctor, and you couldn’t afford it anyway,” Chavez said. “Personally, we were never really supposed to retire. We were supposed to work until our body just quit.”

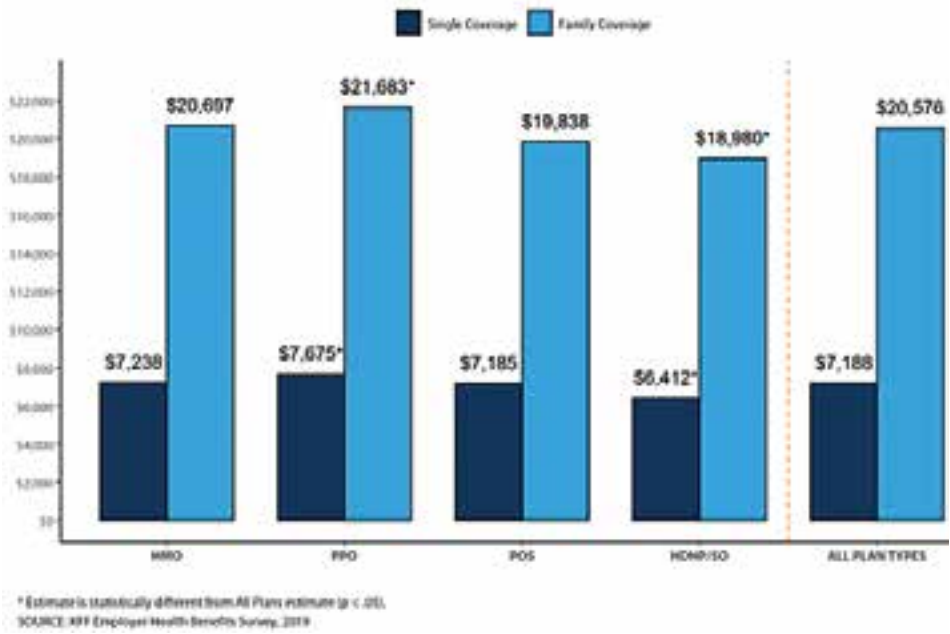
He said the U.S. healthcare system isn’t necessarily rigged on purpose, “it just happened the way it happened, and everybody’s in each other’s pocket.”

With the Affordable Care Act becoming now 10 years old, new steps are being made to further solve problems presented to patients in the medical industry. In December, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions and bipartisan House leaders approved the Lower Health Care Costs Act of 2019.

According to a summary of the proposed legislation by the House Committee on Ways & Means, included in this agreement is the protection of patients and families from surprise billing with a system for “independent dispute resolution often called arbitration.”

These proposals could protect millions of Americans just like the Nieves family who happen to fall victim to the expensive and intimidating health-care system. 

Average Annual Premiums for Covered Workers, Single and Family Coverage by Plan Type, 2019





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Lawmaker seeks federal law on Internet sales tax

State Sen. Vince Leach (R-District 11) introduced a “memorial,” which is essentially a letter from the Legislature to the U.S. Congress, requesting simplification of sales tax collection. The move comes on the heels of the South Dakota v. Wayfair judgment that allows states to collect transaction privilege tax on Internet sales.

“I’m always looking to take good legislation and make it better,” Leach said.

Arizona was among several states to act on the ruling and began collection on “remote-sales” in 2019. In Maricopa for the month of December, that brought in \$58,565, according to the Department of Revenue.

“The result is a labyrinth of state laws with different thresholds, rates and categories,” Leach said. “Clarity and uniformity are necessary to streamline sales tax collection. Congress must take action to address these issues.”

SCM 1003 seeks “uniform national legislation to simplify sales tax or similar tax collection to reduce the burden of tax compliance on remote sellers.”



Sales tax coffers continue year-over-year growth

Collections of transaction privilege tax (sales tax) in Maricopa in December showed the growth in business since a year ago, according to the Arizona Department of Revenue. Overall, collections were 29% higher in December 2019 than they were in December 2018.

Construction brought in the most sales tax during the month, a total of \$444,361, which is up 14.7% from a year ago. Retail sales were up 11.6%. Sales tax collections from bars and restaurants were up 24.45%. Tax collections from grocery sales were up 17%.



Jaylen Brosseau

City takes over recycling

The City of Maricopa took control of the Right Away Disposal (RAD) Waste & Recycling Center at 46250 W. McDavid Road Jan. 27. However, the change did not include home recycling/trash services provided by RAD.

“The City is taking control of RAD in order to continue providing waste and recycling services to our residents,” City Manager Rick Horst said. “This change is being made with anticipation of enhanced services being added in the future.”



School kitchens get highest grade from inspectors

Pinal County’s health inspectors spent most of their time in February checking out school kitchens, which received top marks, but one local food establishment did not receive an excellent mark in the inspections Jan. 16-Feb. 15.

Rob’s Convenience on Papago Road was found to not have hot water at the proper pressure in three sinks. Proper labels were also missing from gallon containers of tea.

EXCELLENT [No violations found]

- Arby’s
- Chipotle Mexican Grill
- Circle K (18141 N. John Wayne Parkway)
- Desert Wind Middle School
- Leading Edge Academy
- Maricopa Elementary
- Maricopa Head Start
- Maricopa Wells Middle School
- Saddleback Elementary
- Santa Cruz Elementary
- Sequoia Pathway K-6
- Sequoia Pathway Secondary
- Subway
- Taco Bell

SATISFACTORY [Violations corrected during inspections]

- Rob’s Convenience

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT [Critical items noted during inspection cannot be corrected immediately requiring follow-up inspection]

UNACCEPTABLE [Gross, unsanitary conditions necessitating the discontinuation of service]

None



ED3 looking for new general manager

Electrical District No. 3 is under old management. The departure of Brett Benedict as general manager after a year was announced in January, and former General Manager Bill Stacy returned from retirement to take over on an interim basis.

Stacy said he expects to be on the job through April or May as the board conducts a national search for a new general manager.

Development around town

Walmart is converting the former McDonald’s restaurant space inside its store at 41840 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy. into a Dickey’s BBQ. The tenant improvement is \$105,000.

The **Pinal County complex** received its permits for new commercial construction at 20025 N. Wilson Ave. and commercial addition construction at 19955 N. Wilson Ave. in February after breaking ground in January. The 2,400-square-foot addition is valued at \$6.1 million. The construction of an 8,314-square-foot admin building at the site has a value of \$2.1 million.

Horizon Retail Construction received its commercial tenant improvement permit to work on the unoccupied **Walgreens** building at 41840 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy. The project is worth \$500,000 and owned by Maricopa 7 LLC.

In touting the development of **Copper Sky Commercial, Estrella Gin Business Park** and **Sonoran Creek Marketplace** on social media, Mayor Christian Price related the anticipated economic impact: 1.5 million square feet of new construction; 1,273 jobs created; \$223 million in capital investment; \$4.67 million annual sales tax and property tax collected; and \$1.42 billion in economic output.

A+ Charter Schools received permits for a foundation as well as grading and draining for its construction location at 41735 W. Alan Stephens Parkway. Both permits are defined as “at risk,” or late in the application process. The charter secured an \$11.3 million bond through BlackRock, a global investment company, for land and facilities.



Walgreens inspector

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Do you suffer from joint pain?

By Kristina Donnay, FNP-C



Did you know the body can repair itself? Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy is a form of regenerative medicine offered at Maricopa Wellness Center. This therapy uses the patient's own healing system.

PRP injections are prepared by taking the patient's own blood and running it through a centrifuge to achieve a high concentrate of platelet-rich plasma. These activated platelets are then injected directly into the injured area. This stimulates and increases the number of reparative cells the body produces. Side effects of PRP are very limited since the injections are created from the patient's

own blood, the body will not reject or react negatively to them.

PRP can treat joint pain, injured tendons, partial ligament tears, sprains, meniscal tears, arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, musculoskeletal problems and sexual dysfunction issues. PRP can reduce the need for anti-inflammatories, opioids, steroid injections, physical therapy and even surgery. The number of treatments depends on the patient's age, health, and the degree of injury. Improvement is normally seen in two to four weeks and additional injections are separated by six weeks.

If you are considering PRP therapy, confirm the provider is using a special double

spin centrifuge designed for PRP and not a normal lab centrifuge. Ultrasound guided injections should always be part of this treatment to achieve optimal results. Finally, ensure the provider is properly trained.

Learn more about PRP by calling or stopping in to meet our licensed staff of professionals and learn more about optimum health.

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1

1. Singing from the second floor, the Mount Moriah AME Church choir performed during a kick-off for Black History Month at City Hall.

Raquel Hendrickson

2. Matt Lemberg, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Casa Grande Valley, introduced a plan to open a branch at Santa Cruz Elementary School.



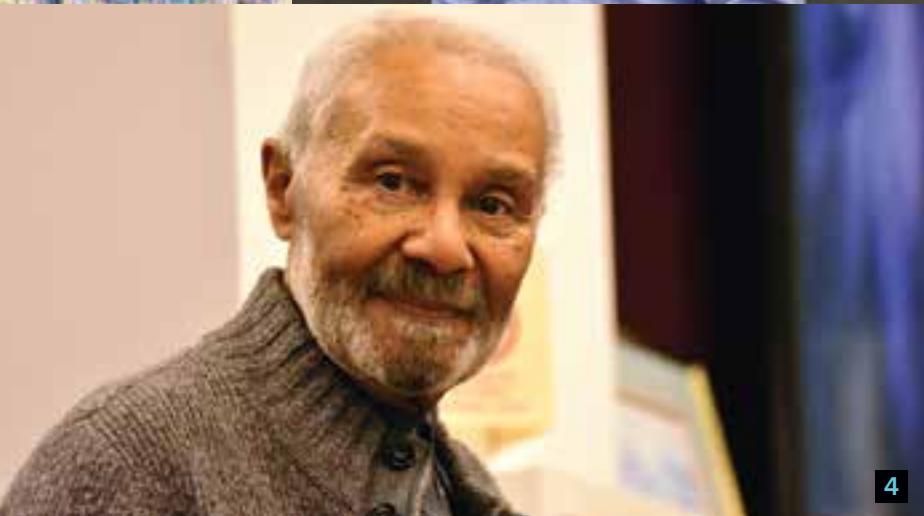
2



3

3. Jon Corwin, general manager of Global Water Resources, described the success of the company's swim-lesson program that involves Maricopa Unified School District and Copper Sky Aquatic Center.

4. City Councilmember Marvin Brown, in receiving a proclamation on black history at City Hall, gave a history lesson on the black experience in America.

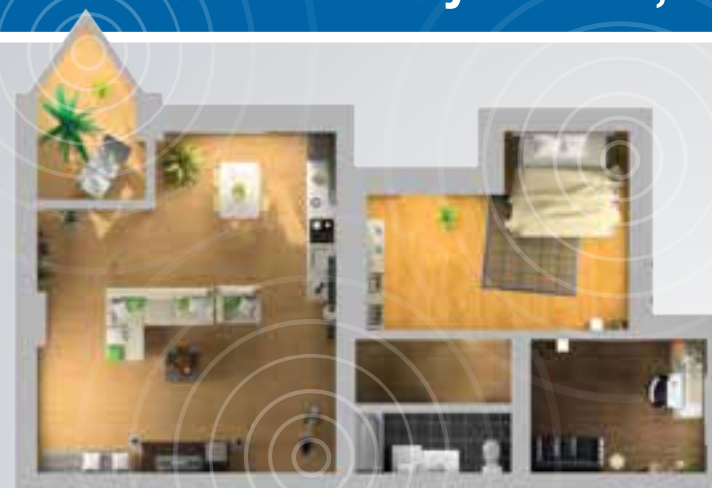


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Local women help pioneer roller derby league

Story and photos by Kyle Norby



When we think of the competitive sport of roller derby, fast-paced, rough bouts and powerful women often come to mind. While true, many of these players may not be whom you'd expect. The modern revival of this roller skate-based sport has a worldwide fandom, but it is much more than a game to the players who participate. For the women of Casa Grande Roller Derby, the sport and spectacle have become a lifestyle, and they see each other as family. Four CGRD women from Maricopa have adopted this lifestyle.

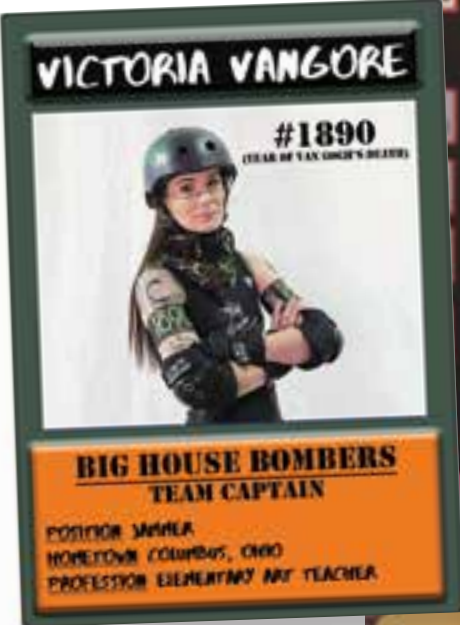


Maricopans (from left) Hannah Norby, Elen Zoretic, April Stovall and Corinna Velasco-Ivancovich are part of the roller derby league.

Originally from Columbus, Ohio, Ellen Zoretic found herself moving to Maricopa in 2011 with most of her family for better weather and cheaper homes. She fell in love with the community. "It's been five years since I started roller derby," Zoretic said. "The truth is that my boyfriend at the time, who I'm still currently with, got into a really serious car accident and he needed to go back to his mom in Illinois and recover. He almost lost his life."

Zoretic said she and her family attended a roller derby match in Phoenix. Loving what she saw, she wanted to pick up a new hobby while her boyfriend was away. Zoretic went to beginner tryouts the next day. Starting on bank track, an angled field instead of flat, Zoretic developed her persona, "Victoria Vangore," often shortened to just "Gore" by her team. After a successful career on the Hot Shots traveling derby team, Gore now plays jammer with the Arizona Coffin Draggers. She also joined the Casa Grande league, became a star player and now plans to focus on being of CGRD's flagship team, The Big House Bombers.

Balancing the team with her everyday job as a teacher has been challenging but worth it, she said. Graduating from Ohio Dominican University with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Zoretic didn't expect to become an art teacher. After coming to Maricopa, Ellen fell into teaching as a substitute for Maricopa Unified School District. After three years, the district offered her a position as an art teacher. She teaches at Pima Butte Elementary and Maricopa Elementary. "This is my fifth year in art, kindergarten through fifth grade," Zoretic said. "I love it. The satisfaction of just knowing that I'm making a difference in their lives and knowing that art is a special area. I mean, a lot of people come to me telling me about their students who have behavioral problems or aren't good in math and writing. Then when they get to art, they just flourish." Zoretic eventually would like to combine her love of art and degree in psychology to work as an art therapist.



Ellen Zoretic

“I try to eat, sleep and breathe roller derby.”



The rough-and-tumble nature of roller derby lets mild-mannered participants have alter egos in competition.

Growing up in Arizona and graduating from Casa Grande and living in Maricopa, April Stovall has seen a lot of change in Western Pinal County. She has worked at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino for 20 years.

"I started in security back in 1999, then I transferred into surveillance and fell in love with it," Stovall said. "I took on facilities about 10 years ago. It just kept growing over time, just working my way up."

While Stovall loves her job, she admits to being a workaholic and wanting something more.

"My daughter graduated from high school, moved out. Things were changing," Stovall said. "Roller derby was on my bucket list. I Googled 'roller derby Arizona.' AZRD (Arizona Roller Derby) came up, and I went to their new-skater orientation. I skated with them for the first three years."

Her derby name, April May Dismember, stemmed from using months and a word that "incorporated strength and power."

"Kind of long, but it's catchy," Stovall said with a smile. She spoke of the fun of getting into her derby character as a nice contrast from her professional, busy work environment.

Once CGRD was established, Stovall and Chachi Patron transferred to the Bombers. April is now the CGRD manager and oversees all the organization's operations as well as jam for the team. April is entering her fifth year of roller derby.

"Roller derby to me is probably the hardest, most empowering thing I've ever done in my entire life," Stovall said. "It's an inclusive sport for people of all backgrounds. I love our mission statement: 'We empower women through roller derby and serving the community as a team.'"



April Stovall

"If you're not falling down, you're not trying hard enough."



Corinna Velasco-Ivancovich has been in the world of derby the longest between the four women. When InMaricopa met Velasco-Ivancovich in 2011, she was a member of the Surlie Gurlies in Phoenix, out with a torn meniscus. Having fully recovered, Velasco-Ivancovich has continued her derby career of 14 years, playing with the Big House Bombers since 2018.

"When I started, I was 36. I just got out of a really bad relationship that was kind of abusive," Velasco-Ivancovich said. "My kid's dad was an alcoholic, and I wanted to get into something that kept me busy."

While Velasco-Ivancovich grew up, she watched her father play hockey. Fascinated by the female hockey players she would see at the rink, she decided to take up a different kind of skating. After learning the sport of roller derby, she joined an AZRD team.

"I think there's a lot of people that'll lift you up," said the 10-year Maricopa resident. "If you don't have like a lot of women that don't have really close friends, they can find friends."

The name Chachi Patron was born from banter with a work friend with whom she would always talk like mobsters.

"She would always call me Chachi, so I was like maybe I'll keep it then," Velasco-Ivancovich said with a laugh. "I came up with Patron because it was kind of catchy and I'm short and stubby like Patron."

A single mother of three for many years, Velasco-Ivancovich married in 2009 and cited her Christian beliefs for many of her and the league's successes.

"There's been a lot of blessings. You can see in the short amount of time, like the whole community supports us."

CGRD continues to grow, most recently with its purchase and revitalization of the Casa Grande Boys and Girls Club gymnasium as their base of operations and practice facility. With local women joining the league frequently, a Maricopa roller derby league may be in the future.



Corinna Velasco-Ivancovich

"We've prayed a lot, and I really think our league has been blessed."



Feb. 8, Maricopa skaters were part of the Casa Grande Roller Derby that had a grand opening and cut a ribbon at its new space at the former Boys & Girls Club gym in Casa Grande and gave a demo of the sport.

ROLLER DERBY

Rules: Teams of up to five players skate two 30-minute periods, which are comprised of jams lasting up to two minutes each. During a jam, four blockers on each team form a pack with their jammer behind them. Jammers must get through the pack and then around to lap the blockers. A point is scored for every opposing blocker lapped. There are 30 seconds between each jam.

Roles: Jammer, wearing a star helmet cover, scores points by lapping opposing blockers. Blocker forms the pack, hinders the opposing jammer from passing through the pack, and helps their team's jammer pass through the pack. Pivot blocker may become a jammer during a legal transfer of the star.



CGRD welcomes new players into their league with open arms, just as they were welcomed when they began. This has led to more “fresh meat,” what they call newcomers. Still fairly new to the Roller Derby scene, Hannah Norby has fully embraced the sport and finds it as a perfect outlet to get some aggression out.

“March will be my year anniversary playing derby,” Norby said. “I thought this sport would be up my alley, so I just took the leap of faith and went to one of the meet-and-greets in Casa Grande. Everyone was so sweet and nice, so I ordered my skates and started soon after.”

In her day-to-day life, Norby is a Culinary Arts teacher at Maricopa High School, where she graduated in 2016. After working a handful of cooking jobs in Las Vegas and graduating from the Art Institute there, she decided to move back to her hometown and apply for the open culinary position. Norby now works with her old culinary mentor from high school, teaching the programs she went through. With a clear passion for the kitchen and the art of cooking, picking a derby identity that reflected it was important.

Keeping the theme of food and chefs in mind, Norby decided on the name, “Julia Wild,” inspired by the famous American cooking teacher and TV personality Julia Child.

“It would have been Julie Wile or Bobby Slay,” Norby laughed. “Wild just really stuck with me and felt like it described me.”

Norby finds the balance between work and derby to be a very familiar one.

“I used to play soccer in high school, and I ended up quitting,” she said. “I had like a few years of not doing anything athletic and I really wanted to get into another sport, something to have fun.”

Confident in the growth of the league and becoming a stronger player, Norby is excited to see new faces and encourages anyone with doubts or who are nervous to come check them out.

“Every girl felt the same way when they started,” she said. “You just have to take that leap of faith.”

Hannah Norby is the wife of author/photographer Kyle Norby.

[Facebook.com/CGRollerDerby](https://www.facebook.com/CGRollerDerby)



Hannah Norby

“Once you do it, you’ll fall in love with it.”



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1. Ulissa Garcia shows off her folklorico attire during Leading Edge Academy's Multicultural Assembly and Fair. *Raquel Hendrickson*
2. Sophomore Josh Deakyn (12) of Heritage Academy drives past Sequoia Pathway junior Nick Radcliff after both teams made the Canyon Athletic Association's Division 3 quarterfinal, won by the Heroes. *Raquel Hendrickson*
3. Maricopa High School sophomore Lexy Rowe (7) is tightly pursued by a Campo Verde defender in the Arizona Interscholastic Association 5A playoffs while sophomore McKinley Hacker (2) follows in support. *Raquel Hendrickson*
4. Marcus Brown, left, and Michael Flood of the MHS varsity football team are spotlighted during Signing Day as they signed letters of intent to Culver-Stockton College and University of Texas at El Paso, respectively. *Raquel Hendrickson*



5



6

5. The MHS wrestling team celebrates Senior Night ahead of qualifying nine wrestlers for state competition. *Kyle Norby*
6. Medal winners for the Great Communicator Lincoln Speech Contest at Legacy Traditional School were (from left) sixth grader Soleil Woodard in third place, eighth grader Emily Enriquez in second and eighth grader Filimon Kednemaey in first. *Raquel Hendrickson*
7. MHS Theatre Company rehearses choreography for its February production of "Newsies." *Kyle Norby*



7



Victor Moreno

Silver Gloves champion focused on boxing future

By Raquel Hendrickson

When 14-year-old Alezet Valerio won her division in the national Silver Gloves boxing tournament, it was just another step in her plan to become a professional fighter.

Boxing in the intermediate bracket (95 pounds, age 13-14), she was part of a crowd of boys and girls punching it out in Independence, Missouri, after winning state and region titles. Alezet (aka Chomina) defeated Malaya Wohosky Jan. 31 in a split decision. The next day, she defeated Araceli Gudino unanimously to win the championship belt.

Then she shared a hug with Araceli, a competitor she had never seen before facing her in the ring.

The Maricopa Wells Middle School eighth grader has been training as a boxer since she was 6 years old. She started competing at 10.

"I'd see my brother doing it and I went and tried it out myself," Alezet said. "Ever since I first sparred, I loved the sport and just fighting, being in the ring, it's just a good feeling."

She is closing in on 40 bouts, only six of them losses. Alezet is ranked second in the nation in her bracket.

"At school I can't get in fights, so to hit someone else feels good," she said. "And when I win, it feels good because of all the hard work I did, it all paid off at the end."

Her mother Abby Garcia said she was not just representing the western region or just Arizona but Maricopa, their new home.

The Valerios moved from Phoenix to Maricopa in October. Taking in nephews, they needed a bigger house. They qualified for a loan and found a five-bedroom house in Maricopa Meadows.

"It's different from where we grew up, way different," Alezet's father and coach Thomas Valerio said. "She went for a run the first day and when she came back, she said, 'It's so clean out here, the grass is green, it smells so good, the roads are nice.'"

By contrast, he grew up in a tough area of Phoenix where he and his brothers fell into gang culture.

"Growing up, we were always fighting in the streets," Valerio said.

That is how one brother died at age 20, already the father of three. Valerio himself was a father by 17. While starting to think what kind of life he wanted for his own family, the streets were still calling.

"I didn't want my kids to live how we

Alezet Valerio shows off the belt she won at the Silver Gloves tournament. Her older brother Thomas Jr. wants to go pro when he is 17, and her little brother Moses is ready to start competing when he is 8.



Victor Moreno

lived," he said.

Suburban pastimes like softball were hardly available. The closest athletic complex was a boxing gym. Valerio remembered his father, a former boxer in Mexico, taking him to the gym starting when he was 8 and thought it would be a good way to focus his kids' energy.

"So, I took them every day out of the streets and into the gym. And they had school and homework," he said. "I just tried to keep them off the streets as much as possible."

Soon he was teaching them what he remembered from his father. The group of his own kids and nephews became Big Bro Boxing. He trains the youngsters in his garage.

While building up his older sons, he got an earful from Alezet, who told him to pay attention to her, too. And for good reason.

"Actually, the girls are way tougher," he said. "She'd get a bloody nose, and she'd have drops of blood coming down and she'd keep going."

Alezet said the Maricopa kids are "soft" compared to those she knew from the Phoenix neighborhood. She attended Kuban Elementary School. Though seemingly slight of build, she is strong and intimidating when necessary.

"The first time I sparred it was against another girl. She was known at the gym we were at," she said. "And they were like, 'Oh, you're gonna get beat up. You're not gonna do good against her.' When I sparred, I was



“When I sparred I was punching her and punching her. And when she started crying, that’s when I knew I could do it.”

Victor Moreno



Submitted

Above, Alezet competing in 2018's Silver Gloves. Below, she poses with her father/coach Thomas. The family moved to Maricopa in October.



Victor Moreno

USA Boxing on youth safety

- Teach boxers ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
- Enforce the rules of the sport for fair play, safety and sportsmanship.
- Ensure boxers avoid unsafe actions such as:
 - Using their head or headgear to contact another boxer
 - Making illegal blows or colliding with an unprotected opponent
 - Trying to injure or put another boxer at risk for injury
- Tell boxers you expect good sportsmanship at all times, both in and out of the ring.

punching her and punching her. And when she started crying, that's when I knew I could do it."

American Academy of Pediatrics frequently condemns youth boxing for its concussion dangers, saying the risks outweigh the health benefits. A joint statement from AAP and Canadian Paediatric Society reads, "Participants in boxing are at risk of head, face and neck injuries, including chronic and even fatal neurological injuries."

Valerio said he teaches his young boxers to fight defensively.

"I teach them how to be smart fighters, not brutal fighters," he said. "I teach them a lot of defense. She'll wear you down. She runs five miles a day. Her cardio is off the roof. She'll wear the girls down in the first round and then in the second round she just takes them apart."

Alezet trains every day with her father and her uncle Hector Valerio.

"There are like no days off at all," she said. "We hit the bags, we run. Some days we work on cardio and strength. Other days we work on legs and stuff. It's like my life. I love it. I don't do any other sports. I've never done any other sports besides boxing."

She said she is good in math, reading and physical education but considers school boring. Boxing gives her motivation to make straight A's.

"If I get anything lower than a B, I can't compete at all."

Her dad talks about her wicked hook, but Alezet said her strength is her focus. "Keeping my mind focused on the fight. That's why some kids quit, because they don't have their mind focused on it. They quit because they want to have fun and they don't have the discipline."

While her oldest brother wants to turn professional at 17 and her youngest brother wants to start competing at 8, Alezet's immediate focus is joining Junior Olympics. That could get her closer to her long-range goal of making the U.S. Olympic boxing team, preferably in 2024 when she is 18. That entails traveling long distances, even internationally, to fight in qualifying bouts.

That is expensive, and they have to carefully choose competitions and engage in fundraisers to keep the dream alive and keep hanging championship belts on the garage walls.

Alezet enjoyed the camaraderie of the Silver Gloves competition. She noticed it expanded from the Arizona boxers all cheering for each other to all the Region 8 boxers representing Arizona, Nevada, California, Hawaii and Utah cheering each other on.

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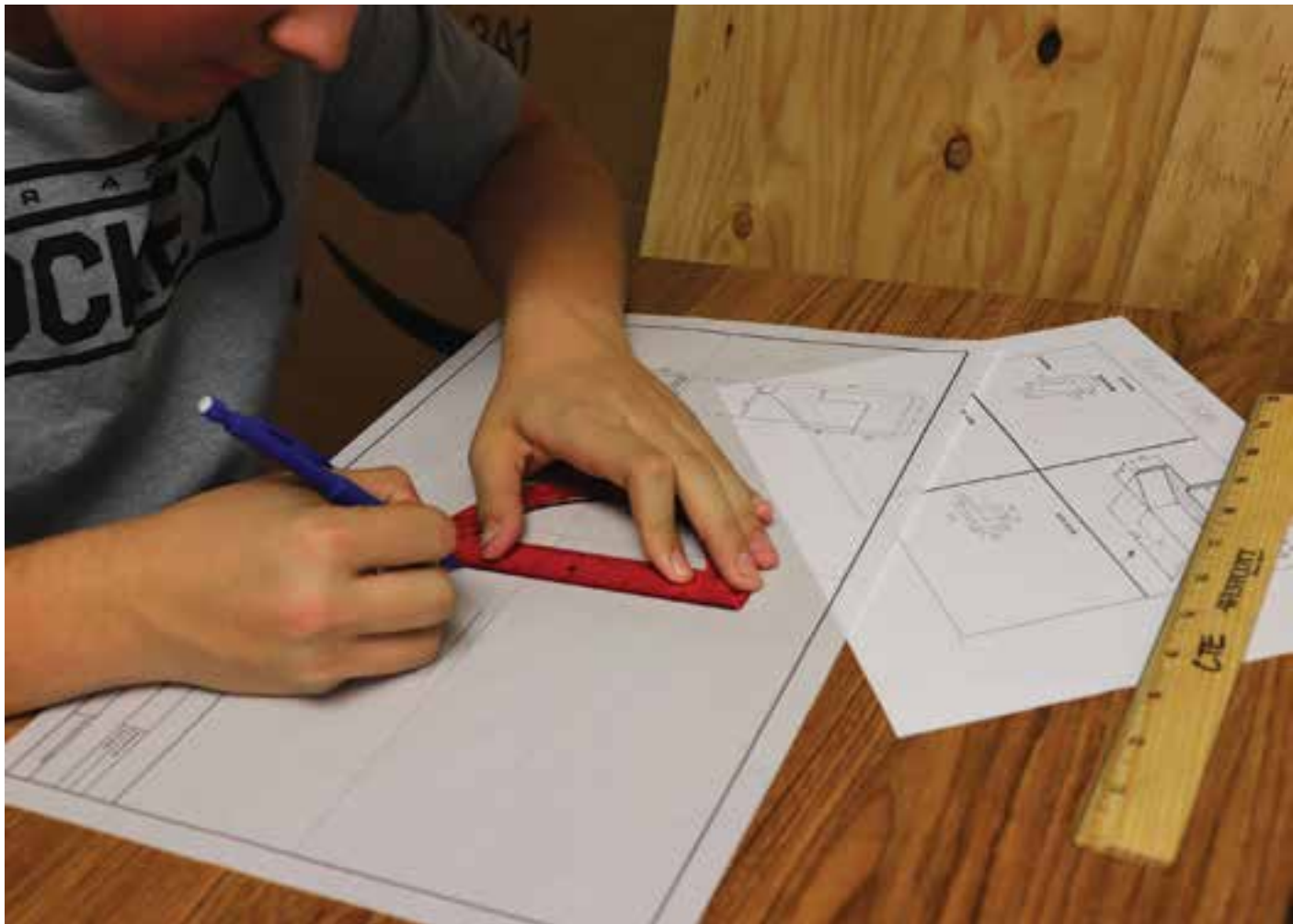
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Engineering debut broadens future aspirations for MHS students

Story and photos by Joycelyn Cabrera

Levi Watlington wishes it could have happened much earlier in his academic career.

The Maricopa High School senior is an aspiring computer scientist and a student of the school's inaugural engineering course.

"If I were to go into a different field, like an engineering field, I think this would really help me," he said. "We built a bridge out of toothpicks. Engineers need to account for suspension and how much weight is going to be on the bridge. We made catapults; it's a pretty fun class."

Engineering finished its first semester at MHS as a Career and Technical Education course. Students are taught different elements of engineering, including electrical, mechanical and software. The program is available in three sequences: Engineering I, Engineering II and Engineering III.

Aian Pableo teaches the course twice a day. Pableo, originally from the Philippines, got his master's degree in



Levi Watlington

electrical engineering before coming to the United States to pursue teaching. He teaches college and high school level classes.

"I'm still adjusting, I'm still learning," he said. "I'm happy when students learn something from me, when they say, 'Ah ha!'"

Michelle Poppen is the CTE director and a vice principal of MHS.

"Engineering can help to build on [critical thinking] skills, bring the math skills into a practical realm," Poppen said. "One of the nice things about CTE is to apply what's being learned in the core subject areas and then being able to apply those skills into real life experiences."

While not the only subject taught in class, circuitry was an in-depth unit the students learned during their first semester with Pableo.

Sophomore Charles Lyndell dreams of becoming an inventor. He said the accomplishments of Thomas Edison inspired him to pursue inventing.

"I've learned different kinds of ways to measure electricity, volts, currents, resistance and some different ways to draw blueprints and ways to read how much electricity there is in something," Lyndell said.

MHS provides 12 CTE programs for students. After surveying the students on campus last year about what programs they would like to see, engineering and fashion design were among the top choices.

Sophomore Kyle Draper said what he learned in his engineering class ties into his after-school robotics club.

"I go and sit down and I learn a new concept. One time we learned about circuits, and it was always very fun to figure out how electricity works and how the circuits are."

Kyle, still unsure of his future career, said he is looking into chemical engineering.

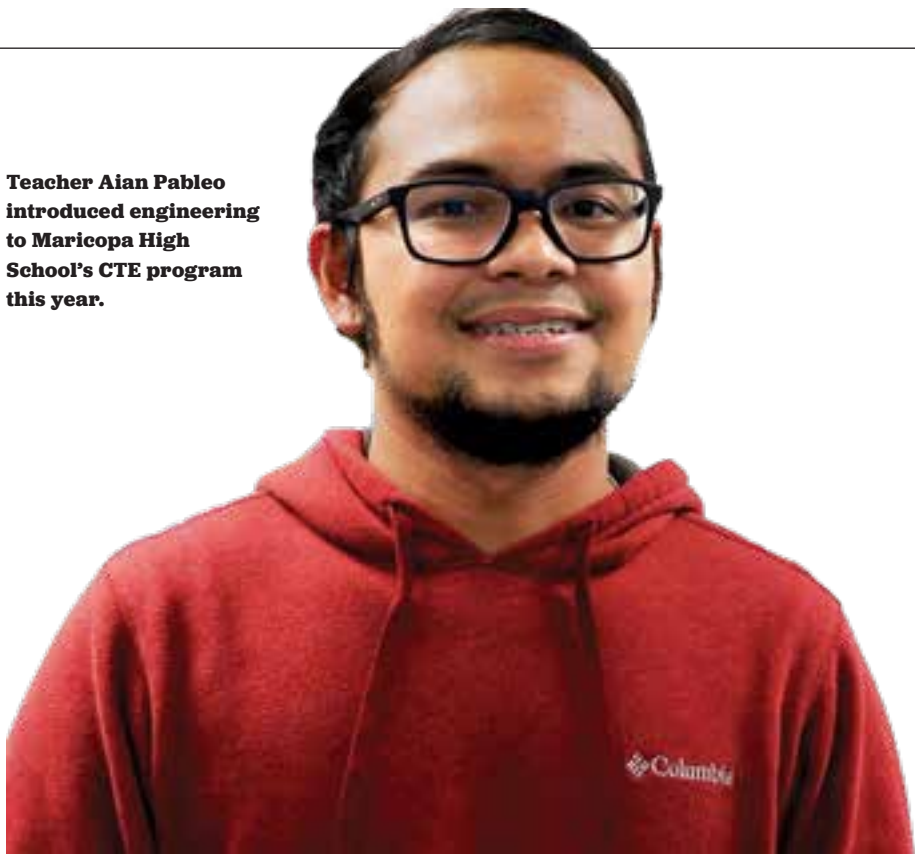
The engineering program is a new opportunity for students at MHS to prepare for their careers after graduation.

"This is a foundation; it's basics for them," Pableo said. "If they were to push through to college for an engineering degree, this would help them."

After finishing his first semester teaching an engineering course at the high school level, Pableo said he is ready to adjust his teaching style according to feedback he gets and mistakes he's made.

"He's one of my favorite teachers," Watlington said. "He's laid back, but also we get our work done and everyone likes him."

Teacher Aian Pableo introduced engineering to Maricopa High School's CTE program this year.



“One of the nice things about CTE is to apply what’s being learned in the core subject areas and then being able to apply those skills into real life experiences.” – Michelle Poppen, CTE director and a vice principal of MHS.



Charles Lyndell

Pathway took staff turnover to extremes as schools battle teacher shortage

By Raquel Hendrickson

Arizona continues to have a teacher shortage, and turnover is a normal part of education, but at Sequoia Pathway, it was particularly an autumn of discontent.

Since the summer break, at least 12 staff members, mostly in the secondary school, submitted their resignations from Pathway. That number includes two principals, and reasons stated for leaving the charter school have ranged from vague to angry.

“I am saddened by the state of things and while I love my students, the staff and my child — I can no longer sit quietly while good people are torn down,” Misti Oosthuizen wrote in her Oct. 22 resignation letter to Sequoia Pathway, a letter that was copied to staff and administrator emails.

Oosthuizen was lead of the Science Department at Pathway.

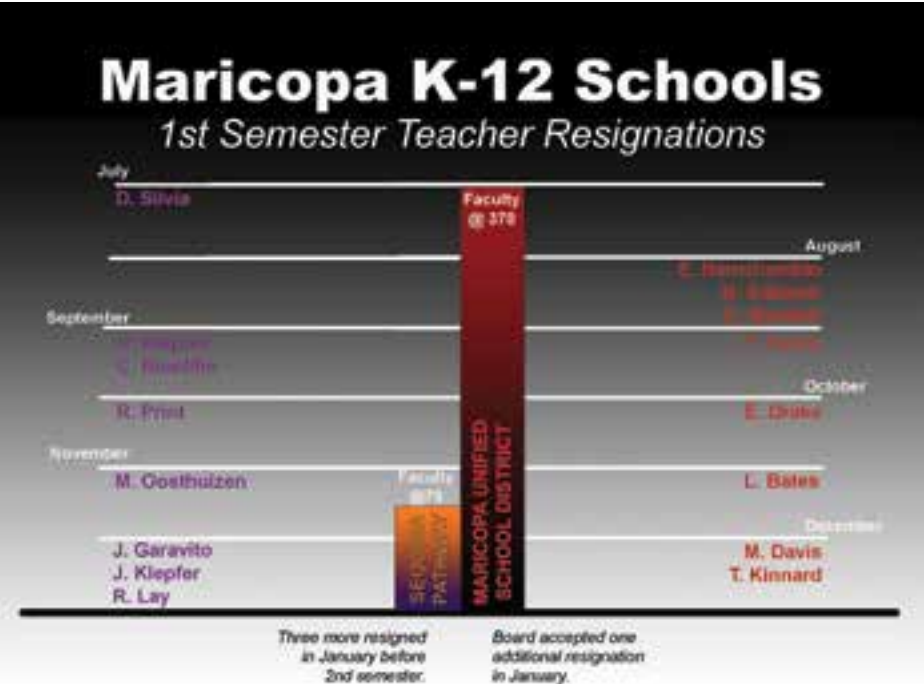
At least 10 staff members resigned by Winter Break out of about 70 certified positions (14%) at the charter school, mostly from the secondary school. By comparison, during the same time period (June-December), eight teachers resigned from Maricopa Unified School District out of 376 teachers (2%).

Other Pathway teachers resigned after Winter Break. Overall, the results forced parent company EdKey to rebuild its staff by mid-year.

Some resignations were directly tied to disagreements with new administration at the secondary school, which started with the June 17 resignation of Principal Diane Silvia.

Silvia mentioned no discord in her letter, saying instead she was going to spend more time with her first grandson. But by the start of the new school year, staff was beginning to quit the secondary school.

Special Education teacher Heidi Klepfer left Aug. 9. Math teacher Cindy Roadifer resigned Aug. 15. Joe Klepfer also later resigned. Among other assignments, the Klepfers had coached junior high volleyball. More than two pages long, Heidi Klepfer’s resignation letter cited the disagreements over management of the volleyball program, disengagement of administrators and “inconsistency of communication” as reasons for departing the school.



File

Roadifer described “being railroaded by a spineless upper administration” in her letter to EdKey Inc. She hinted students were not held accountable for their actions and said the school was now as overcrowded as other public Maricopa schools.

EdKey’s response to overcrowding was to announce plans to construct a new building. At the end of the 2018-19 school year, Sequoia Pathway’s enrollment in K-12 was 1,146, with 300 in the high school grades, according to the Arizona Department of Education.

Culinary teacher Rhonda Print resigned Sept. 11 without citing a reason, but she later told a Facebook parent group it was because of the administration.

Resignations weren’t the only problem. EdKey administration would not say how many staff members had been terminated.

But Kevin Struble’s departure drew the most publicity in October as students protested outside the school in an effort to bring him back. It was a reminder of the 2015 student protests that ultimately led EdKey to re-hire two fired administrators, one of whom was Silvia.

This time, the results were different, and Oosthuizen resigned the next day.

Teachers and families complained about a variety of issues, some even formally to the

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools. After InMaricopa requested copies of those records and the charter board office had its legal counsel review the “numerous pages,” EdKey filed a complaint in court against the charter board to have the request withheld.

“Pending direction from the court, the Board is unable to release those records,” ASBCS Executive Director Ashley Berg said.

For its part, MUSD had three teachers resign during the summer break, middle school teacher Evan Nechamkin, high school teacher Carol Mandell and Exceptional Student Services teacher Herman Edelson.

After the start of school in late July through December, resigning staff included high school teachers Yadira Fierro and Lori Bates, middle school teacher Eric Drake, elementary technology teacher Morgan Davis and kindergarten teacher Taylor Kinnard.

Of the eight who sent in letters of resignation, five reflected positive experiences, citing personal or family reasons for leaving. Mandell and Fierro expressed frustrations with re-assignments, and Mandell was also irritated with campus disruptions, including “perceived active shooter events,” and an aggravating relationship with another teacher.

“I think you and your district need to use this as a visionary letter of sorts to regroup

and take teacher/peer entitlement and school threats/violence seriously,” she wrote.

MUSD tries to keep its hiring on pace with its resignations and retirements as there is monthly turnover in certified and classified employees.

According to Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman, there are 2,000 unfilled teaching positions statewide.

“The truth is, there are already thousands of qualified, passionate teachers in our state who could fill these positions,” Hoffman said in her address to the Legislature. “But years of cuts to education funding have built a system where inequities thrive – be it teacher pay, student resources or community supports.”

Special Education, in particular, has a “severe shortage,” Hoffman said. Both MUSD and Pathway lost special education teachers in the human-resources process last semester.

“Contributing to the shortage is the fact that special education teachers face higher rates of burnout as they balance teaching among high caseloads, mandatory paperwork, limited resources and high turnover of support staff,” Hoffman said.

“We offered more letters of intent to teachers this year than any of the prior years. We are very early in the hiring season, but this was a great first step.”

– Tom Beckett, MUSD Human Resources Director

In February, 11 more certified teachers announced their resignations from MUSD effective at year’s end or sooner, including another ESS teacher.

The district issued nine letters of intent for certified teachers during a Jan. 25 job fair.

“We offered more letters of intent to teachers this year than any of the prior years. We are very early in the hiring season, but this was a great first step,” said MUSD Human Resources Director Tom Beckett, who planned to issue contracts to current employees by the end of February. “At that time, we will see staff committing to the district for the

2020-21 school year. Informally and formally we have heard of some departures, but we are optimistic our teacher retention rate will rise from last year’s 85% rate.”

Sequoia Pathway had to work even faster to fill spots at its secondary school.

At the beginning of December, English Language Arts teacher and soccer coach Juan Garavito resigned from the charter school. At the end of December, Elementary Principal Rachael Lay announced her departure. Neither cited negative experiences.

Nearly as surprising as Lay’s resignation was that of history teacher Trecia Koozer, who had been with the charter school 11 years. She announced her decision on a Facebook parent-group page Jan. 4 without rancor. Like many of those who left before her, she thanked all for great memories.

Some of the teachers, including Garavito and Koozer, have since been hired at other schools in Maricopa.


While long-term substitutes plugged the holes for the fall semester at Sequoia Pathway, most of the emptied positions had been filled with full-time teachers by the start of the new semester.

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Without consequences, letter grades are useless

By Murray Siegel

In November, letter grades for Arizona schools were published. Schools going up a grade, such as from B to A, celebrated, while those whose letter score was downgraded, were concerned. The public can certainly ask, “What do these letter grades mean?”

The grades are based on student performance on standardized tests and growth in student ability, yet to truly understand these grades, a sports scenario may prove useful.

Imagine that NFL teams were given a letter grade based on performance. Based on the 2019 regular season, the San Francisco 49ers would have an A and the Cincinnati Bengals would be an F team. What if all the Bengals players were traded to San Francisco and the 49ers players went to play in Cincinnati. The Bengals would probably be an A team. Although coaches can make some difference, the performance of NFL teams is primarily based on their players, and teams can cut players who do not display sufficient motivation.

Letter grades for schools do not measure the teachers or the administration, they measure the students, and, more accurately, the financial status and educational level of the students’ parents. Imagine ABC School had a score of A and DEF School had an F. If the schools swapped all students but kept the faculty and staff, do you believe that ABC would still be an A school?

The bias of scores based on family education and income perpetuates itself. Parents with more education and greater income will look to buy a home where there are schools with top grades, thus maintaining the student performance scores. I think most teachers would tell you if they could “cut” underperforming or disruptive students from their classes, scores would rise.

If we were truly interested in maximizing learning, we would discover a means to motivate students to always make a meaningful effort in the classroom. Students who do well and grow, must be rewarded in a relevant way, and those who do not should face a real consequence. Until then, letter grades for schools are quite useless.

If letter grades have little worth, how can we evaluate a school? One way is to see how students perform four or five years after leaving a school. Also, interviews can be conducted with a random selection of students a few years after graduating, where the survey asks students to reflect on their previous school. This method does not provide immediate results, yet those results would be quite telling.

The careers of administrators and teachers should not be held hostage by uncaring students.

Murray Siegel, Ph.D., has 44 years of experience teaching mathematics. He is a volunteer at Butterfield Elementary School.



Murray Siegel



Do your eyes light up?

By Harriet Phelps

Do your eyes light up when you enter a room and see your child?

We express a lot with our eyes and upon meeting our children, after a long day, they read a lot from our expression. The reverse is true from what we pick up, too.

Today, in our environments, we have a lot of distraction. It is difficult to focus sometimes on the present moment. I am an observer and it seems unfortunate to me when we dine out too many families are looking at their phones. Many young children are entertained with tablets and their favorite program. There is less eye contact and conversation going on during the meal.

Each month Be Awesome Youth Coalition sponsors an evening for parents and their children called Wednesday Wisdom at Ultra Star.

One evening featured two teenagers telling about their personal experiences with substance use, abuse and recovery. Their stories took a lot of courage because their journey was difficult. The primary need was to belong in their family and schools and with peers. They used alcohol and drugs to join in, seek acceptance and power. One teen began using at the age of 14, had four overdoses and near-death incidents and was in recovery by 17. Substance abuse is robbing our teens of their agency.



Harriet Phelps

Therefore, eye contact is very important to make connections. I recently read that eye contact is like Goldilocks and the three bears. Too much eye contact may feel rude, too intrusive or intimidating. Too little may give the message that you are uncomfortable or insecure. Just right produces feelings of interest, likability and connection with another person. Respecting cultural meaning around eye contact is important as well.

We send approval and happiness to engage with the other person who will usually respond with an answering smile. Try it. Next time you are in public, make eye contact and smile. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Baby’s earliest survival patterns include eye contact with the mother and then father for being fed and cared for. A newborn’s first response with the parent is a smile. They instinctively lock eyes with their caregivers. That power to be cared for and survive impacts all stages of life. In communication, it is not what we say that is important but our actions that we pay attention to.

Humans thrive with connection. Home is our safe haven, and we automatically assign great importance to the signals we give and get when we look into each other’s eyes.

As always, be awesome.

Harriet Phelps, Psy.D., is a volunteer mentor for Be Awesome.

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1. 41039 W. Robbins Drive, Homestead

The most expensive home sold in Maricopa Jan. 16-Feb. 15 was a two-story Horton home on a corner lot in Homestead. It sold for its asking price, 3.7% higher than its sale price a year ago. The private pool is salt water with travertine decking. The property sold for its asking price.

Sold: Feb. 14	Bathrooms: 2.5
Purchase Price: \$360,000	Community: Homestead North
Square Footage: 3,527	Features: Corner lot, four-car garage, granite countertops, wet bar, covered patio, pool, synthetic grass, built-in barbecue, two balconies
Price per sq. ft.: \$102.06	
Days on market: 48	
Builder: DR Horton	
Year built: 2007	
Bedrooms: 4	



Raquel Hendrickson

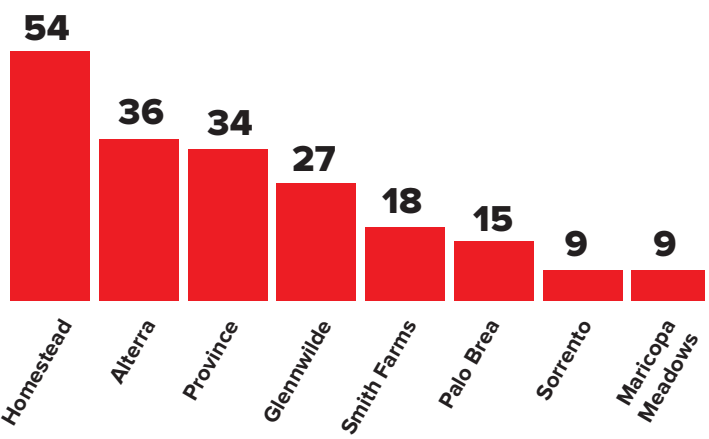
1. 45004 W. Sage Brush Drive, Alterra

The least expensive home sold in Maricopa Jan. 16-Feb. 15 was a cozy, 14-year-old, one-owner home with all the basics in the Alterra subdivision. It had new xeriscaping in back with a patio. It sold for \$4,000 under its asking price.

Sold: Feb. 8	Year built: 2006
Purchase Price: \$175,000	Bedrooms: 3
Square Footage: 1383	Bathrooms: 2
Price per sq. ft.: \$126.53	Community: Alterra South
Days on market: 199	Features: New paint, new carpet, clean backyard, near Copper Sky
Builder: unknown	

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 2. 45182 W. Gavilan Drive, Acacia Crossing | \$180,000 |
| 3. 42979 W. Martie Lynn Road, Senita | \$185,000 |
| 4. 43859 W. Baker Drive, Rancho El Dorado | \$186,500 |
| 5. 41328 W. Pryor Lane, Homestead North | \$191,000 |

January Home-Building Permits by Subdivision



For a full list of last month's Maricopa home sales, see InMaricopa.com/Real-Estate.

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Realtor: How HOA fees play into purchasing power

By Dayv Morgan

When it's time to put a home on the market, many sellers don't think about the impact high fees will have on resale. It is important to keep in mind what buyers in the area will consider when shopping for a home in Maricopa, including homeowners association fees.

The majority of the HOAs have not raised their monthly fees since the beginning of 2019, however one-third of the 18 communities now have monthly dues that exceed \$90 per month. The lowest fees are paid by residents of Rancho El Dorado at \$44.76 per month, while the highest expense is for the Province Villas, which come at a monthly cost of \$365.44.

Buyers should research the costs associated with HOAs and how that may affect their purchasing power and resale value.

Let's take a look at an example: At a 4.5% interest rate over 30 years, \$50 a month in HOA fees equates to about \$10,000 in purchas-

ing power. We'll say a buyer is qualified for up to a maximum of \$200,000 and the lender estimated the HOA at \$50 per month. The buyer could make a \$200,000 purchase in Homestead North, where the HOA is \$48.50. But, if he purchases in Rancho Mirage where the HOA fee \$99.21, he will only be able to afford a home up to \$190,000, assuming taxes and interest are the same.

Another cost often overlooked is HOA fees that must be paid at closing. Palo Brea, for example, has over \$1,500 in disclosure and capital improvement fees, compared to Rancho El Dorado's \$400 disclosure and transfer fees. While these fees could be negotiated to be paid by the buyer, the buyer will likely want a lower price in return.

Even worse, the buyer could walk away altogether at the thought of having to pay the HOA over \$1,500 when they sell in the future.

Dayv Morgan is a Maricopa Realtor and owner of HomeSmart Success.

HOA FEES

	Monthly Dues	Transfer Fees	Capital Improvement Fee
Acacia Crossings	\$76.47	\$350	N/A
Alterra	\$62.92	\$125	N/A
Cobblestone Farms	\$93.44	N/A	\$221.15
Desert Cedars	\$75	N/A	\$225
Desert Passage	\$99	\$150	\$397
Glennwilde	\$92.25	\$150	\$286.60
Homestead North	\$48.50	\$97.50	N/A
Maricopa Meadows	\$73.10	N/A	\$492.40
Palo Brea	\$70	N/A	\$1,140
Province (detached homes)	\$231.33	N/A	\$694.20
Province (villas)	\$365.44	N/A	\$694.20
Rancho El Dorado	\$44.76	\$155	N/A
The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado	\$67	\$80.40	\$361.80
Rancho Mirage	\$99.21	\$159	N/A
Santa Rosa Springs	\$73	N/A	\$146
Senita	\$68	N/A	N/A
Sorrento	\$75.50	N/A	\$377.50
Tortosa	\$91	N/A	\$284.00
Villages at Rancho El Dorado	\$86	N/A	N/A

*In addition to the fees above the seller will pay a resale disclosure fee, ranging from \$250-400.

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No need to panic over freon

By Joan Koczor

Many of you have heard or read about Freon R-22 and how the oils in R-22 destroy the ozone. According to the Clean Air Act of 1990, R-22 is a harmful refrigerant and currently being phased out of use. Homeowners are now recommended to use Puron, or 410A, refrigerant to maintain indoor comfort.

In 2004, there was a 35% reduction in R-22 production the quantities available have diminished over the years. Now in 2020 a 99.5 % reduction in the production of R-22. Simply put, the law of supply and demand will prevail with the price of each pound of refrigerant increasing dramatically. Prices have risen from \$100 to \$300 a pound.

My concern is if R-22 becomes unavailable — or unaffordable — and we have to use 410A, does that mean we need to replace the air conditioning unit? So, I

asked an expert in the A/C field – my son Dan. Information he provided is based on his years of experience in the heating and air conditioning business.



Joan Koczor

He said R-22 can be replaced. To do so, you would need to replace the unit; the A coil inside and the condenser outside. Lines could be cleaned, but it is best to replace.

Dan also said there is no need to panic. Many units in Maricopa and cities in Arizona may already be using 410A. Each A/C unit has a label that lists the type of freon being used. It's easy to check what type of Freon is in your A/C unit.

If your current A/C service person suggests changes that are expensive, get a second opinion. If you question the repairs they are suggesting, get a second opinion. Disreputable service persons target seniors. They are the most vulnerable. Seniors know



there is a need for a properly working A/C unit, especially in the Arizona heat.

Dan advises to always question a service person who cleans your A/C unit and tells you they had to add freon because of a leak. An A/C system is sealed so there is no need to replace freon unless a noticeable leak is present. Just a practice some A/C service persons use, especially targeting seniors, to increase the cost of the service call. 🗨

Joan Koczor is a senior advocate and a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Board.

Make your 'forever' home adaptable

By Ron Smith

In February, InMaricopa provided an introduction to the topic of aging-in-place. We will continue the topic to help provide insight into many of the facets of aging-in-place. Whether you're just approaching retirement, already in retirement or are trying to help a relative who is currently facing aging issues, there should be many topics of interest to you.

Planning is not the typical strength of most people approaching retirement. Per a 2018 study conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of Northwestern Mutual, one-third of Baby Boomers have less than \$25,000 in retirement savings. In addition, many approaching retirement have their eyes focused on an active-adult lifestyle. The notion of aging and all the things that potentially accompany it are often not high on the new retiree's planning sheet.

Aging-in-place considerations should be

factored into retirement decisions as early as possible. We often don't think about access problems caused by entry steps, staircases, narrow doors and hallways until that first knee or hip operation.

Having to move to another house because your initial "forever" home can't accommodate your needs can be both costly and disruptive.

What you want is an "adaptable" home, i.e. one that can change to meet changing needs caused by growing old. The more adaptable the home is, the less costly it will be to make those necessary accommodations in the future. Better yet, it might help

avoid a costly move due to the high cost of a retrofit needed to remain in your own home.

Keep in mind, accessibility is not the only consideration because other issues, like the need for skilled nursing care or dementia safety, may demand another solution.



Ron Smith

As part of your planning, considerations for the availability of other senior-support services in the area are helpful to maintain support networks, social connections and in-home medical assistance when needed.

It is probably unwise to assume aging won't happen. Planning for aging-in-place is a personally responsible way of coping with unexpected changes that can be life-altering events and potentially lead to institutionalized long-term care.

Aging-in-place planning can help a person live in their own home longer. There are many excellent resources available through AARP and the National Institute on Aging to aid in your planning. 🗨

Ron Smith is an aging-in-place advocate. He is also a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Committee and a member of the Maricopa Senior Coalition.

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Calendar

MARCH

2
Sequoia Pathway Softball vs. Heritage-Mesa
4 p.m., Pacana Park
19000 N. Porter Road

Maricopa Historical Society – Overland Mail Company
5 p.m., Maricopa Public Library
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road

3
MHS Girls' Tennis vs. La Joya
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Baseball vs. Paradise Valley
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

5
MHS Girls' Tennis vs. Valley Vista
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

6
MHS Boys' Tennis vs. Westview
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

Artists Town Hall Working Session
6 p.m., Maricopa Public Library
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road

7
Tortosa Community Spring Garage Sale
7 a.m., Tortosa Community

Master Gardener 2019 Spring Plant Sale
8 a.m., Maricopa Agricultural Center
37860 W. Smith-Enke Road

Salsa Festival
Noon, Copper Sky Regional Park,
44345 W. Martin Luther
King Jr. Blvd.

Arroyo Grille Wine Dinner
7 p.m., Arroyo Grille at Ak-Chin Southern Dunes
48456 W. State Route 238

8
The Forester Family in Concert
8 a.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

11
MHS Boys' Tennis vs. Cibola
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

12
MHS Boys' Tennis vs. Apollo
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

Republicans of Maricopa Monthly Meeting
6:30 p.m., Copper Sky Police Substation
17985 N. Greythorne Drive

13
MHS Softball vs. Independence
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

14
Copa City Dems Meeting
4 p.m., Copper Sky Police Substation
17985 N. Greythorn Drive

Danny Funderburk in Concert
6 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

17
MHS Beach Volleyball vs. Westwood
4 p.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

19
Zonta Club of Maricopa Monthly Club Meeting
6 p.m., The Villages Clubhouse
20991 Butterfield Parkway

20
MHS Boys' Tennis vs. Gila Ridge
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Beach Volleyball vs. Dobson
4 p.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

21
Farm Science Day
10 a.m.-2 p.m., U.S. Arid-Land Agricultural Research Center
21881 N. Cardon Lane

Love of Chocolate Fun Run
8 a.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Spring Fling Craft & Vendor Event
8 a.m.-4 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

Live Concert – Mini KISS
7 p.m., UltraStar Multi-tainment Center at Ak-Chin Circle
16000 N. Maricopa Road

24
MHS Girls' Tennis vs. Skyline
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Beach Volleyball vs. Shadow Ridge
4 p.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

25
MHS Girls' Tennis vs. Gilbert
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Baseball vs. Sunrise Mountain
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Softball vs. Notre Dame Prep
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

26
MHS Boys' Tennis vs. Independence
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.



Raquel Hendrickson

Chocolate Fun Run a sweet workout

Sun Life Family Health Center hosts its annual “Love of Chocolate” Fun Run March 21 at Copper Sky Regional Park.

The 5K run starts at 8 a.m., and the 1-mile walk starts at 8:10 a.m. There will be seven age groups competing, and the event is managed by StartLine Racing for real-time results.

All participants will receive a participation medal, a goodie bag of chocolate treats, a Dri-Fit shirt and a runners’ brunch of granola bars, fruit, water, Gatorade, etc. Special awards go to the top three in all age groups in the 5K.

- 14 & under
- 15-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 70 & up

Registration is \$40 for the 5K (3.1-miles) and \$35 for the walk. If you want to support the event without participating in the race, you can be a “Sleep-In Supporter” and get all the swag by donating \$30. Race-day registration is \$50 for the 5K and \$40 for the walk.

All funds raised go to Sun Life’s mission of delivering affordable, accessible and high-quality health services, wellness and education to all people. The not-for-profit healthcare organization has 14 centers, including two in Maricopa.

Check out the course maps at the website.

 **SunLifeRun.org**
 **SunLifeFamilyHealth.org**



IF YOU GO

What: Love of Chocolate Fun Run
Who: Sun Life Family Health Centers
When: March 21, 8 a.m.
Where: Copper Sky Regional Park, Great Lawn, 44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

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MARCH
28

Raquel Hendrickson

Golf tourney benefits Lions Club charities

Maricopa Lions Club will host its fifth annual four-person Charity Golf Scramble in March.

The event is at The Duke at Rancho El Dorado with Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino as the title sponsor. Funds raised go to local and state programs, including projects for sight and hearing, diabetes, education, community health and welfare.

"We are asking for donations towards this fundraiser in an effort to improve our community and help those who are less fortunate," said Curtis Dornath, director of the event.

Entry fee is \$90 per person. The tournament is limited to the first 32 teams. Sponsors can also chip in funds from \$150 to \$300.

All golfers will receive a round of golf, cart, range balls, tee packet and lunch at the Silver Spur Grill. There will be a first-place team prize in three divisions: open, senior 60-plus and mixed 2/2. The day will also include raffle drawings.

The Lions Club is a nonprofit organization, and donations are tax-deductible.

Entries are due March 21. If there are still team slots available after that date, entry fee will be \$100 per person.

The tournament is Gold Card point eligible for Saguaro members, who pay an entry of \$25.



IF YOU GO

What: 4-Person Charity

Golf Scramble

When: March 28, shotgun start 8 a.m.

Where: The Duke at Rancho El Dorado, 42660 W. Rancho El Dorado Parkway

How much: \$90/person

Info: CDornath@gmail.com; 541-223-3598

Calendar

27

MHS Softball vs. Campo Verde
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

28

Lions Charity Golf Scramble
8 a.m., The Duke at Rancho El Dorado
42660 W. Rancho El Dorado Parkway

Professional Firefighters Custom Car Show
9 a.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Maricopa Track Invitational
9 a.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

Copa Color Fun Run

10 a.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Little Whiskers Family Carnival
Noon, UltraStar Multi-tainment Center at Ak-Chin Circle
16000 N. Maricopa Road

'Til Death Do Us Part'

7 p.m., The Duke at Rancho El Dorado
42660 W. Rancho El Dorado Parkway

Springtime Serenade
7 p.m., Maricopa Agricultural Center
37860 W. Smith-Enke Road

31

MHS Girls' Tennis vs. Westwood
3 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Baseball vs. Campo Verde
3:45 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

MHS Beach Volleyball vs. Casteel

4 p.m., Copper Sky Regional Park
55345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

SUNDAYS

Narcotics Anonymous
7 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

MONDAYS

Narcotics Anonymous
7 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones (PAL)

7 p.m., Maricopa Behavioral Health Services
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway, Suite 103

TUESDAYS

Senior Donuts & Coffee
1-4 p.m., Copper Sky Multigenerational Center, Room A
45345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Celebrate Recovery Coffee & Karaoke
5 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

WEDNESDAYS

Babytime
9:30 a.m., Maricopa Public Library
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road

Harrah's Club 777 Toastmasters
3 p.m., Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino
15406 N. Maricopa Road

S.M.A.R.T. Kids

3:30 p.m., Maricopa Public Library
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road

Maricopa Police Explorer Post Meeting

5 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

THURSDAYS

Family Story Time
4 p.m., Maricopa Public Library
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road

Narcotics Anonymous

7 p.m., Ak-Chin Social Services
48227 W. Farrell Road

FRIDAYS

Senior Game Time
9 a.m.- noon, Copper Sky Multigenerational Center, Room A
45345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Learn to Bowl like a Pro — with a Pro

6 p.m., UltraStar Multi-tainment Center
16000 N. Maricopa Road

Al-Anon Meeting

7 p.m., Community of Hope Church
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.



For details on these and other local events — and to list your own — visit InMaricopa.com/Calendar.

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