



Maricopa

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June 2020

Coronavirus Special Edition

THE COMEBACK

Businesses begin slow
return after COVID-19

 Business
Directory

PEOPLE

Food banks
in the
trenches

FAMILY

Graduates
drive up
for diplomas

GOVERNMENT

Even crime
changed during
the pandemic



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It's been a long, long time

Almost before we understood what we were facing, we were in the middle of a COVID-19 crisis that pulled us away from each other, shuttered doors of some businesses and all schools, canceled important events and even had people turning on each other over how they chose to deal with it.

Not that it didn't have a good side. As one reader told us, "It been interesting getting to know the people living in my house."

Given the go-ahead by the Governor's Office in mid-May, businesses cautiously tested the waters of fully re-opening. Owners and management studied guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and their respective industries to make sure they were covering all the bases. Still without knowing the final toll the crisis will have on their books, small business owners are at the heart of the pandemic's impact on the community.



In this issue, we want to spotlight those coming back from forced hibernation and those who found ways, often inventively, to provide limited service during the 10 weeks of shutdown. We were there as doors opened to still-leery customers. We talked with those tasked with shouldering the demands of food supply and broadband internet. We also look at early economic signs and how the local government tried to prepare for the long-term hit.

Not forgotten are hundreds of high school graduates and the adults who were determined to give them the sendoff they deserved.

It was a long 10 weeks. Thanks for being resilient, Maricopa. Let's all help each other come back.

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With a background in public relations, she enjoys writing about the genuine good deeds of others.



JOAN KOZOR
An advocate for senior issues, she is passionate about getting important information to the people who need it.



VICTOR MORENO
Specializing in portraiture, the photographer had a busy spring with graduates.

ON THE COVER: Brooke Young-Amaro, part of the crew at Native Grill & Wings, serves the Rivera family, from left: Raelynn, Alan, Reanna and Brody. Photo by Victor Moreno

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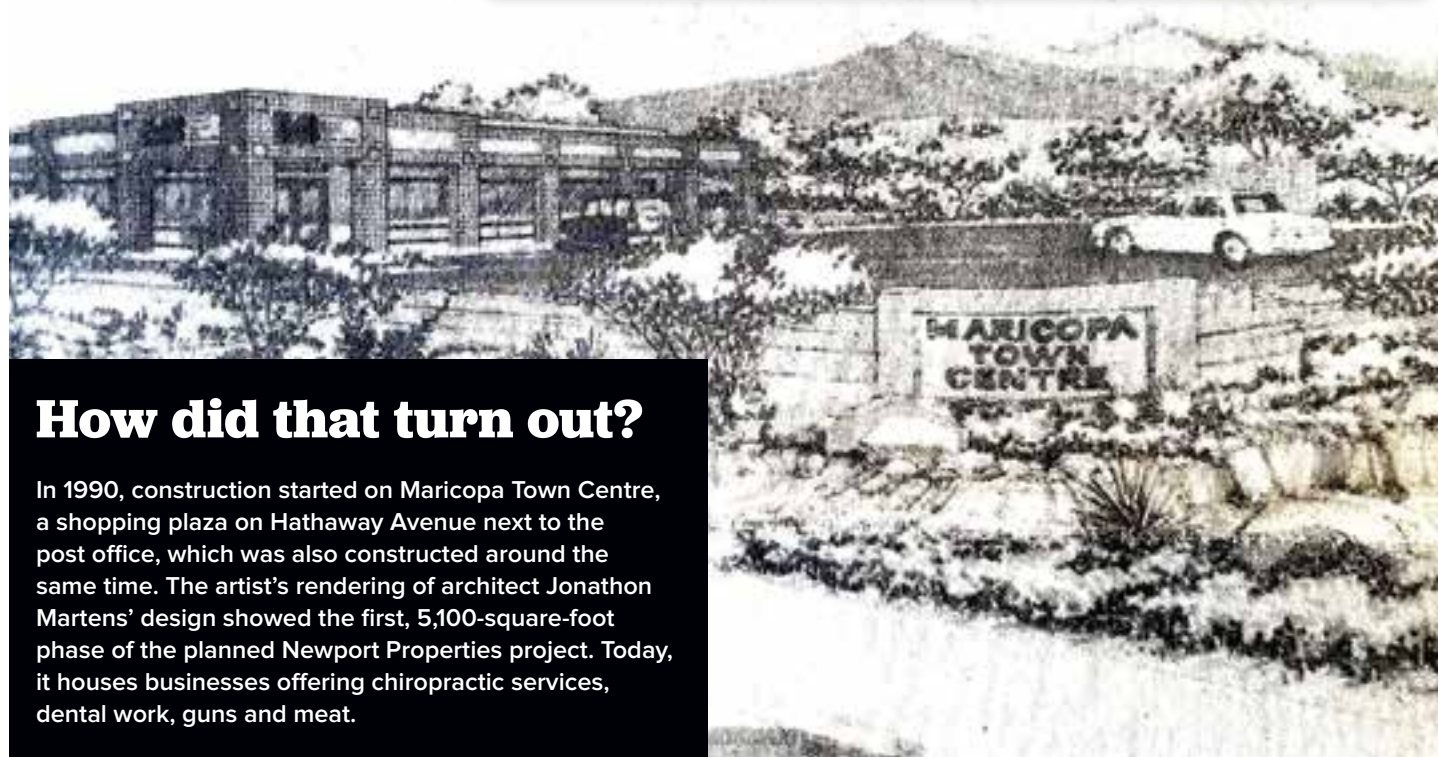
BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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History



Kyle Norby



How did that turn out?

In 1990, construction started on Maricopa Town Centre, a shopping plaza on Hathaway Avenue next to the post office, which was also constructed around the same time. The artist's rendering of architect Jonathon Martens' design showed the first, 5,100-square-foot phase of the planned Newport Properties project. Today, it houses businesses offering chiropractic services, dental work, guns and meat.

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Meet the candidates for Pinal County assessor

This election year, two people are running for the office of Pinal County Assessor. Mike Cruz is challenging incumbent Douglas Wolf in the Republican primary, with early voting starting in July.



MIKE CRUZ

Age: 34
Residence: Casa Grande
Years in Pinal County: 5



DOUGLAS WOLF

Age: 64
Residence: Unincorporated area in southern Pinal County
Years in Pinal County: 12

Learn more about the candidates at InMaricopa.com.

Why are you the best person for the job of county assessor?

I am an Arizona native who is committed to this state and this county. Given my background in taxation and public relations, I am the only candidate with this skill set, which uniquely qualifies me to lead this office and to represent the true voice of Pinal County. As a public relations professional, I intend to use that experience to reach the people of Pinal County and to provide the best in class service to our taxpayers.

I am the two-term incumbent assessor and was elected president of the Arizona Association of Assessors in 2019. My 35 years of private sector business experience in residential and commercial real estate, and computer software matches perfectly with the duties of the office.

What are the biggest issues at stake in the campaign?

Property Owner Voice - This office needs a leader that is willing to work with everyone and be actively engaged in all the communities in this county. A higher level of communication and transparency is needed to ensure taxpayers have access to the information they need and can do business as they want. **County Growth** — Pinal County is growing at a rapid rate. We need a leader that will work with everyone to ensure all land and property is prepared to meet tomorrow's demands in a sustainable manner. **Land classification** — Due to a myriad of issues specific to Pinal County, such as limited water supply and land development, the assessor's office is critical to ensure long-term prosperity for businesses and property owners in this county which is essential for jobs and the economy.

The choice for the voters is whether to support an experienced, proven, effective and fair person to continue as assessor. Also, I refuse any campaign donations as it is my belief that contributors expect something in return. Any money spent in this campaign is my own. Pinal County is positioned to be the preferred destination for many new and exciting businesses as evidenced by Nikola and Lucid Motors and the Nacero natural gas plant. These new, vibrant businesses will generate jobs, and property taxes, reducing taxes for homeowners.

How do you earn the trust of the residents of Pinal County?

I earn the trust of residents by listening to the people of this county and building relationships with communities. I have participated in many events to meet voters and engage them at a personal level. From the Pacana Park Pumpkin Walk to the annual Maricopa Salsa Festival, I have been present and accessible to ensure the voice of Maricopa is represented.

By continuing to treat everyone fairly and equitably as prescribed by the law. The assessor takes two oaths of office. One oath is identical to all other elected officials, the second (ARS 11-542) pertains to fair and equal valuations. I take my oaths very seriously and strive daily to meet their requirements. Everyone who contacts my office is treated exactly the same and that will continue if I am re-elected as I am not obligated to any special interests.

Maricopa to Offer Housing for All Stages of Life

City of Maricopa

As people age and their circumstances change, their housing needs change as well. Soon, Maricopa will host a range of housing options that offers choices for all stages of life. Diverse housing stock also contributes to a more economically sustainable community by attracting business geared toward, or employing, various ages and lifestyles. Whether you are a young professional, a new family, or an empty nester, you will be able to change your house while still calling Maricopa your home.

Oasis at The Wells



Maricopa's first multifamily development will consist of 120 units – a mixture of one, two, and three-bedroom apartment homes. The complex will be located between Walmart and Banner Health Center at the northwest corner of Porter Rd and Shea Way Blvd. When completed, the project will offer an affordable housing option for renters. Construction is underway and the developer expects to begin leasing by the beginning of 2021.

Bungalows on Bowlin



A mixture of single and multifamily homes for a total of 196 units, Bungalows on Bowlin is a planned high-density rental housing project on the northwest corner of John Wayne Parkway and Bowlin Road. The development boasts an impressive abundance of landscaping and open space, with shaded pedestrian paths and a tree in every backyard. Having already received entitlement and design approval, the developers are preparing to pull building permits

New Single Family Residential



There are nearly 22,000 built single-family homes in subdivisions, with more than 38,000 single family lots platted. This totals more than 60,000 single family homes planned, under construction, or already built. The City annually issues nearly 1,000 single family residence permits. Homes are currently being built in Homestead, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado, Province, Rancho Mirage, Santa Rosa Crossings, Santa Rosa Springs, Tortosa, and more.

Seasons Living at Copper Sky



Adjacent to Copper Sky Recreation Complex, Seasons Living at Copper Sky will provide seniors options for independent living, assisted living, and memory care, without having to leave Maricopa. With a fitness center, theater, chapel, library, salon, and private dining, residents will have everything they need on site. With Copper Sky and new commercial projects coming soon, there will be more recreation opportunities for Seasons Living residents right outside their windows.



Maricopa proved prescient in adopting emergency fund

By Raquel Hendrickson

When Maricopa City Manager Rick Horst recommended the city council adopt a General Fund Disaster Contingency Reserve last year, it was more from experience than prophecy.

Having worked for cities hit by wildfires, earthquakes, floods and hurricanes, he already knew a thing or two about disasters. That included long-term impact on government revenue.

The disaster reserve was one of several fiscal policies adopted in 2019.

“It’s a little bit convoluted, because we have our regular reserve, which we have set at a minimum of 30% of the general fund,” Horst said.

Council put \$1 million in the disaster contingency fund. The emergency reserve is for any declared emergency to provide support for recovery efforts as directed by council.

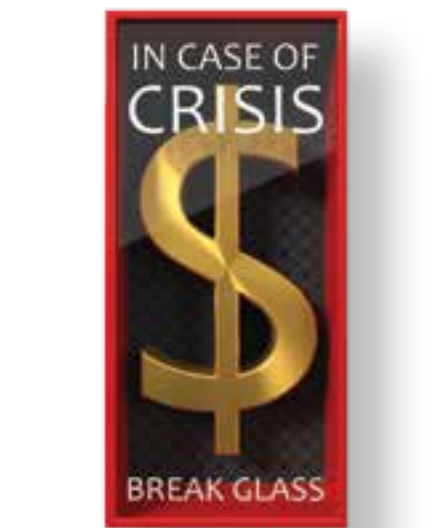
“The mayor did declare an emergency

regarding the COVID, so we are authorized to use those funds,” Horse said. “We’re not sure we’re going to have to use them, but they’re one of the contingencies in case we find that our revenues fall shorter than we anticipated as we move into our next fiscal year.”

According to Pew Charitable Trusts, half of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas do not have emergency reserve funds. Well-managed, such a fund can help a city’s credit rating, Pew research found.

Maricopa’s new budget for fiscal year 2020-21 will have six to eight different trigger points to put the fund to use in case revenues are not stabilized. While sales tax revenue mostly remained strong through March and April and real estate has been highly active, the eventual impact on municipal revenue is only a guess.

Reducing planned additional expenditures comes before dipping into the emergency contingency funds.



“We have the ability to not hire new personnel, not move forward certain new projects, other expenditures, so there’s a number of items before we get to this,” Horst said.

Then, if the cost of a disaster compromises city services, the emergency reserve kicks in.

“Before we would cut services or existing staff we would tap into this fund,” Horst said.

The whole package

It is election season, and candidates are vying for more than a seat of authority.

In the case of Maricopa City Council, there is an \$18,000 annual salary on the line, plus a \$100 monthly car allowance. Council members can also participate in the City’s medical insurance program.

As city employees, the councilmembers can sign up their families for health insurance. The City adopted a new plan this year, and employees still are not required to contribute part of their paycheck to their coverage, though those hired (or elected) after July 1 will have to contribute something to their family coverage.

Monthly Premiums for Benefit-Eligible Employees

Employees Hired Before 7/1/2020

	Total Premium	City Contribution	City per Paycheck	Employee Contribution	Per Paycheck
Employee	\$421.22	\$421.22	\$210.61	\$0	\$0
Employee + Spouse	\$826.36	\$826.36	\$413.18	\$0	\$0
Employee + Child(ren)	\$760.51	\$760.51	\$380.26	\$0	\$0
Family	\$1,122.66	\$1,122.66	\$561.33	\$0	\$0

Employees Hired After 7/1/2020

	Total Premium	City Contribution	City per Paycheck	Employee Contribution	Per Paycheck
Employee	\$421.22	\$421.22	\$210.61	\$0	\$0
Employee + Spouse	\$826.36	\$661.09	\$330.56	\$165.27	\$82.64
Employee + Child(ren)	\$760.51	\$608.41	\$304.20	\$152.10	\$76.05
Family	\$1,122.66	\$898.13	\$449.06	\$224.53	\$112.27

COVID-19 shutdown leads to more shoplifting, fewer assaults, but domestic violence stats expected to rise

By Kyle Norby

In recent weeks, national news reports have documented a rise in domestic violence and suicide cases as people quarantined at home during the pandemic.

“Now, with families in lockdown worldwide,” the New York Times reported in April, “hotlines are lighting up with abuse reports, leaving governments trying to address a crisis that experts say they should have seen coming.”

The city of Maricopa, however, has not seen dramatic increases in domestics and suicides, according to officials, though some other categories of crime have spiked in recent months.

According to data provided by the Maricopa Police Department, the category of assaults that includes reported domestic abuse has increased 5% in March over the

same period last year. (There were 45 related arrests in March, officials said.)

Both Maricopa Police and Fire/Medical departments report they have seen no noticeable spikes in behavioral health calls, normally attributed to suicide and suicide attempts.

But that may not be the whole story.

Meagan MacCleary, community service program director of Against Abuse Inc., a Pinal County organization that provide services to domestic violence victims, predicts cases will stack up once the pandemic is over.

“Now, more than ever, victims have fewer opportunities to make private phone calls to reach out for help since they are confined in the home with their abuser,” she said. “It’s too early to have any statistics yet on exactly how much domestic violence has increased in

Pinal County during this pandemic, but we are ready and prepared to assist victims who reach out once these unprecedented times are over.”

With this perspective in mind, organizations like Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACESDV) have created a guide on how victims can contact help safely during the few moments of solitude they have.

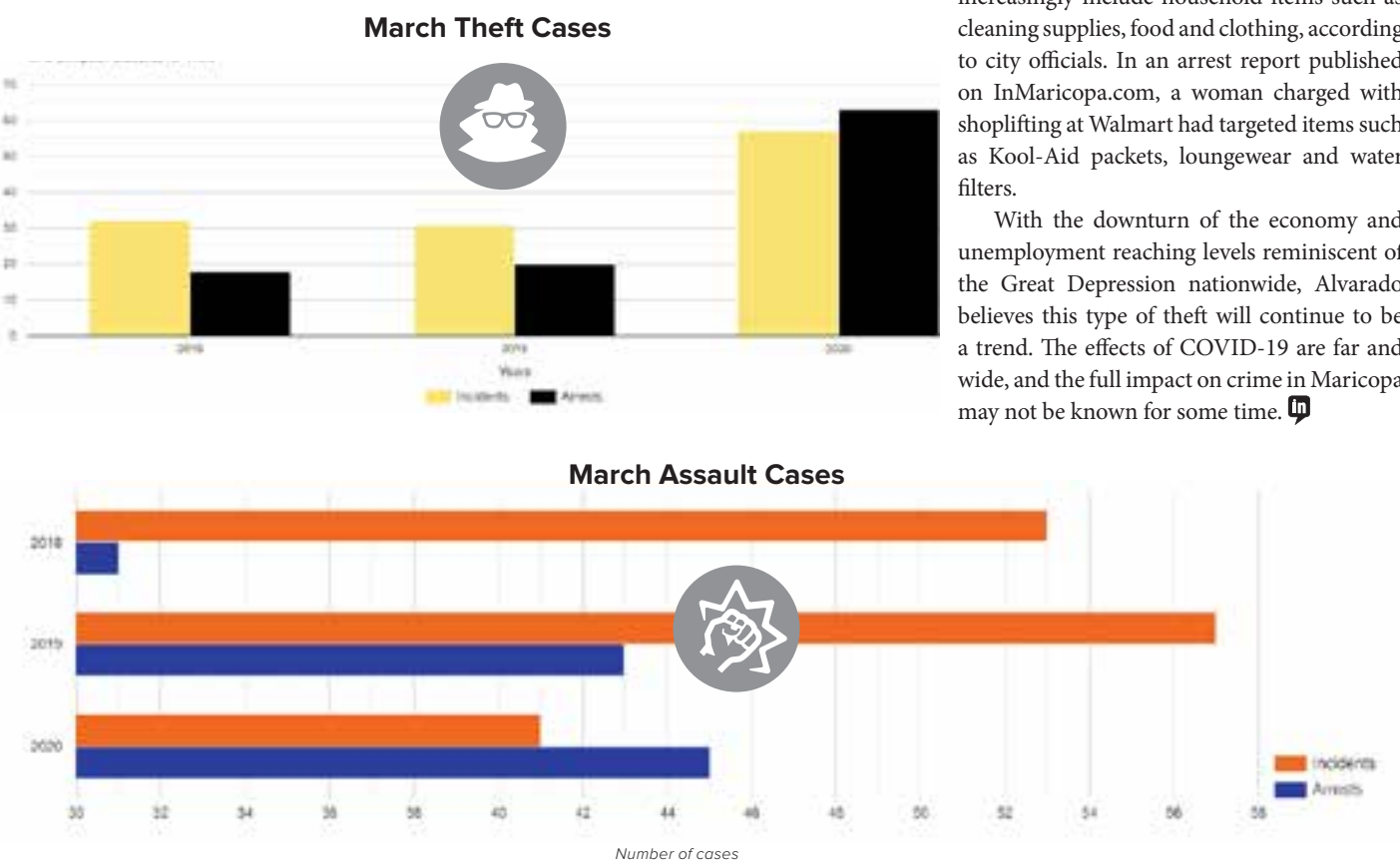
ACESDV strongly recommends victims create a hidden “go-bag” of essentials, including a phone charger, money, medication and food that can be quickly grabbed for an escape from an abusive household if needed. Victims may find it easier to call a domestic abuse hotline during a walk outside, assuming it is safe to do so.

The fallout of COVID-19 has led to an increase in other types of crime.

Statistics on crime occurring since the onset of the pandemic, for instance, show a strong spike in the number of thefts, mostly incidents of retail shoplifting, according to MPD spokesperson Ricardo Alvarado. There were 63 theft arrests in March, an increase of 250% over the same period in 2019. There were 20 arrests and 18 arrests in 2019 and 2018, respectively, for theft.

Typically, shoplifting incidents include electronics and higher ticket items. During the coronavirus quarantine, however, thefts increasingly include household items such as cleaning supplies, food and clothing, according to city officials. In an arrest report published on InMaricopa.com, a woman charged with shoplifting at Walmart had targeted items such as Kool-Aid packets, loungewear and water filters.

With the downturn of the economy and unemployment reaching levels reminiscent of the Great Depression nationwide, Alvarado believes this type of theft will continue to be a trend. The effects of COVID-19 are far and wide, and the full impact on crime in Maricopa may not be known for some time.



Source: Maricopa Police Department

Businesses carefully come back to life after COVID-19

By Raquel Hendrickson

As some Maricopa businesses made a cautious comeback in May, so did Maricopa shoppers. “We were going crazy at the house,” said Kandy Christopherson of Rancho El Dorado.

Since Gov. Doug Ducey issued the “Stay at Home” executive order in March, Christopherson’s main excursions were to the grocery store and Costco. So, when retailers like Ross started to roll out the re-openings in mid-May, she was there.

In fact, she and her family were there for two and a half hours before the doors opened. When deals are on the line, they know how to queue.

For daughter Abbie Christopherson, the patient wait was for “retail therapy” at a favorite store. Being stuck at home, she said, made her feel angry, and some serious deals seemed like the release point she needed.

Luring customers with deep discounts did create lines, but Maricopans were still cautious about being in crowds, especially among those not wearing facemasks.

“I don’t wanna be the government lab rat to see if it’s safe yet,” Adrian Basil said.

Others agreed, including Esther Gerard, who was still playing it safe. “This is not over and will come back in the fall,” she said.

Most restaurants stayed open for curbside



Victor Moreno

Above: Dr. Tin Nguyen of Smiley Dental and his assistant wear full personal protective equipment as they work on a patient during a May office visit.

Below: Maricopans line up for the re-opening of Ross Dress for Less.



Raquel Hendrickson

mandatory facemasks and temperature checks for workers, capacity reduced by about 50%, enhanced sanitation protocols and disposable menus.

“It is going to be interesting to find out when we get to capacity how long the wait is going to be ... the governor basically said go to your favorite restaurant, eat your dinner, go home, [don’t] stay too long,” Kieny said. “Well, we don’t have sports now so there isn’t really much hanging out, and hopefully most of the patrons will come in, get their meal, have good service and then go home to let the next people come through. We’ll just have to see how it goes.”

Earning trust was also part of the re-opening process for one of the area’s biggest employers, Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino.



Victor Moreno

“Over the past several weeks the Tribal Council, along with Caesars management, have been monitoring the situation here in Arizona and across the country, making sure we had the best and most accurate information needed to re-open the casino,” General Manager Robert Livingston said.

The May 15 re-opening was only partial. There were fewer slot machines with more distancing and limited seating at the blackjack table. Poker, keno and BINGO rooms were unavailable as were the spa and gym. Some of the eateries were open.

Like Harrah’s Ak-Chin, UltraStar Multi-tainment Center had a partial opening, using only a third of the facility, and that was at half capacity.

“We were thrilled that we got a very controlled, measured opening response,” General Manager Adam Saks said. “We were able to handle a very manageable flow, experience our new procedures, let our team settle into the things that they need to do in a very organized fashion. It was really nice.”

UltraStar opened the bowling alley, arcade and 347 Grill as phase one. The next two phases are not on a strict calendar. Saks said the customer response to precautionary measures



Kyle Norby

taken by staff “has been nothing but positive.”

For now, opening the theaters has little purpose, because major production companies are not releasing new films until July 1.

“Our overall job that we wanted to accomplish was that our guests as well as our employees felt safe in this environment that we have,” said Laurie McCartney, assistant general manager.

Top: Pat Kieny, left, owner of Native Grill and Wings, welcomed diners back into his popular restaurant on May 13.

Above: People wait to enter the Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino during its May 15 reopening after being closed since mid-March.

Gaining the trust of guests and employees required spending the last two months preparing, Saks said. That allowed management to give employees a “cohesive, clear plan that consisted of education, of PPE, changing procedures.” That includes guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and National Restaurant Association and new protocols added by Chef Frank Abeta.

The company provided all employees whimsical facemasks, and much of the staff is gloved. Bowling balls and shoes are disinfected between every user. The entry into the restaurant is limited, half the tables were removed and several booths darkened. Customers pay at a cashier station with a barrier in place. Menus are disposable, utensils are wrapped and no condiments are on the tables.

As UltraStar will be using a fraction of its employees for an unknown amount of time, Saks said they had to make the difficult decision to furlough members of the team. Returning staff had to sign several documents saying they will adhere to the new protocols.

“It’s just not like the old days,” Saks said. “The rule of thumb in a restaurant has always



Kyle Norby

Peggy Whitaker of Maricopa chats with an employee at the bowling alley at UltraStar on reopening day.

been wash your hands and don’t touch your face. When you saw a server scratch their face, you went by him in a side station and said, ‘Hey, Jim, you can’t do that. That looked rough on the floor.’ Now, [if] you’re seen scratching your face, you could lose your job.”

The challenge, for UltraStar and other Maricopa businesses is anticipating every touch point and making sure that point either has a strict cleaning schedule or is shut down. Two of the businesses most in demand by residents, restaurants and salons, have to

go through a similar cleaning protocol and limited access.

Hair and nail salons, where staff worked in gloves and facemasks, were the first choice for many Maricopans wanting to take advantage of new openings while others wanted to make the most of getting out of the house.

Autumn Simpson’s first trip out in nearly 10 weeks was to the grocery store, but she’s ready to be more adventuresome. “Within the next couple weeks, I’ll try going to some museums/science centers in the summer, going to a restaurant, going to a hotel pool and maybe joining a gym. I’m being cautious but have to get used to going in public again at some point.”

Based on customer response, some businesses may adopt temporary measures as long term, like takeout menus and curbside service at restaurants. Whatever the full rollout looks like in coming weeks, Maricopans are ready for the service.

“Now, I’m just waiting on the buffets to open back up,” said Robert Shimkus. “I’m tired of my cooking.”

Bob McGovern contributed to this story.

Maricopa Comeback

In addition to providing hyperlocal COVID-19 information, InMaricopa is offering readers free masks to keep your family and others’ safe. We also created a makeshift pantry with food, water and other supplies.

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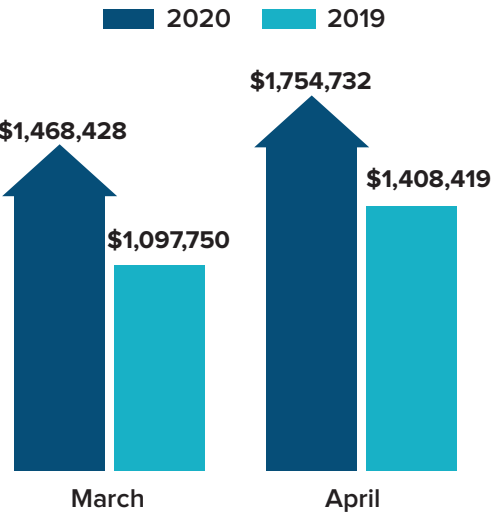
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Maricopa sales tax collections tell story of COVID-19

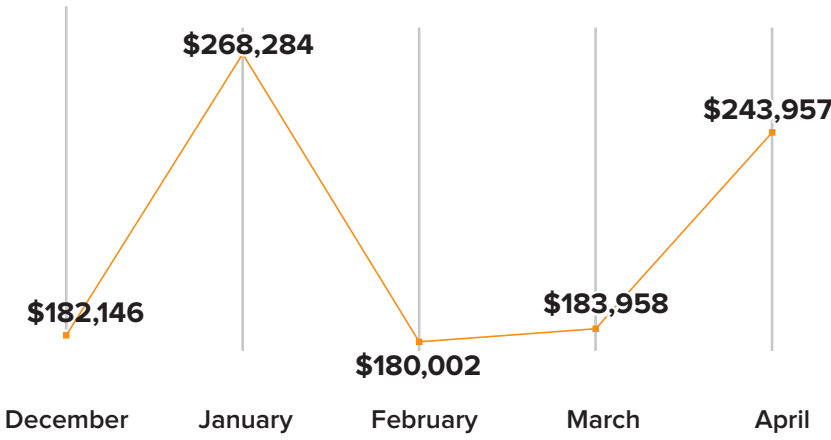
With more than a month of “Stay at Home” policy in place during the COVID-19, there were worries Maricopa retail and restaurants would take financial hit. A look at sales tax collections during March and April show a very busy marketplace generally. However, retail sales, while strong, may have been rung up in far fewer stores than usual.

Overall sales tax collections



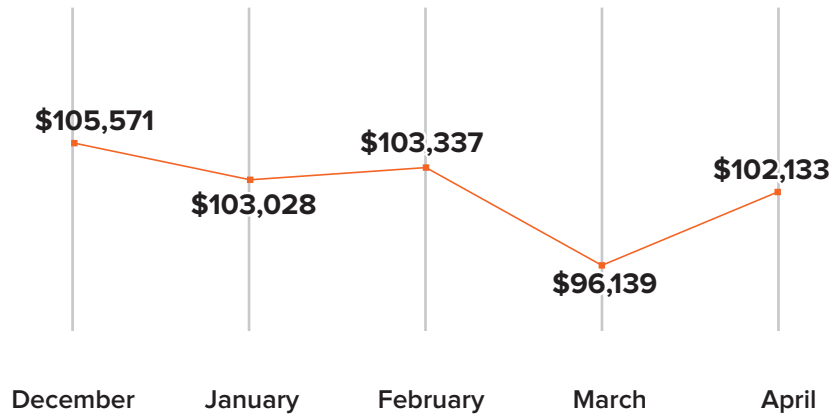
Groceries

Grocery sales were very strong through the pandemic, whether Maricopans were buying food in traditional grocery stores or going to discount stores. The amount of sales tax collected grew through the peak months.

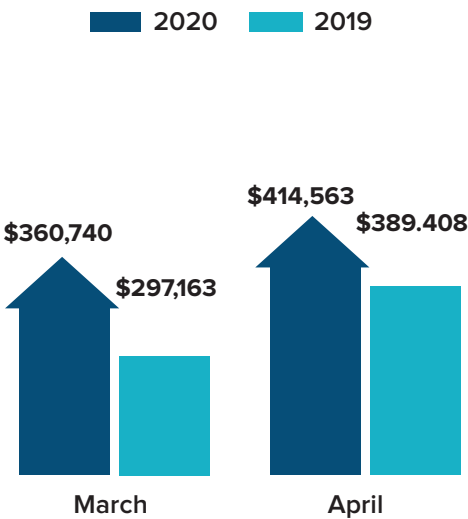


Restaurants

Despite a dip in March, the sales tax collections showed Maricopans were keeping local eateries busy both before COVID-19 hit Pinal County and during the pandemic, when more people were staying home, and restaurants had limited access.



Retail sales tax collections



Source: Arizona Department of Revenue

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Benita Polidore, Principal

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3

1. Maricopa Fire/Medical Department Fire Capt. Osheah Davis accepts custom art from Carl Hussey and Brian Hussey of Torched Flags at Station 574. *Kyle Norby*

2. Lifeguard Haleigh Edwards keeps watch at the newly re-opened lap pool at Copper Sky Aquatic Center. *Kyle Norby*

3. Maricopans lined up for free facemasks at InMaricopa during several distribution days. *Kyle Norby*

4. Ten Pin Bowling attendants wear cheesy grin on their first day back at work at UltraStar Multi-tainment Center. *Kyle Norby*

5. Jim Jordan (center) is sworn in by Judge Lyle Riggs as the newest member of Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board as his wife Sandra looks on. *Raquel Hendrickson*



4



5



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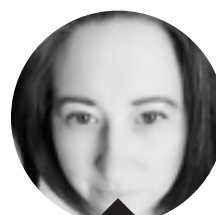
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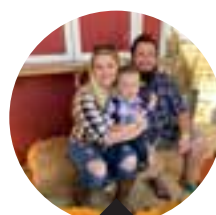
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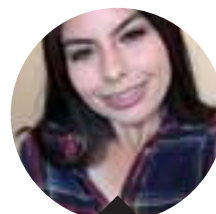
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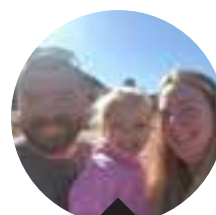
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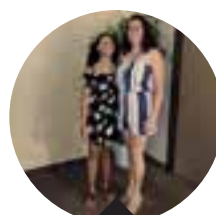
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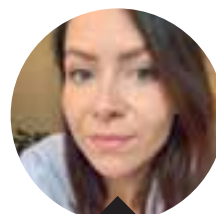
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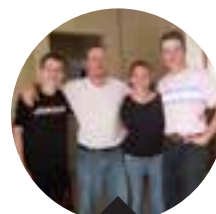
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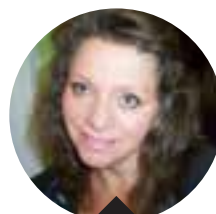
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F.O.R. Maricopa clients line up at the food bank to receive items through the window during COVID-19.

Kyle Norby

Beacons of Light

Food banks step up as COVID-19 increases community need

By Fran Lyons

Wendy Webb, executive director of F.O.R. Maricopa food bank, hoped to get a portion of the financial aid for food banks that came out of the CARES Act. But that didn't happen. In Arizona most federal funding went to the St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, Feeding America and United Food Bank for allocation. Applying to those food banks for distribution of the funds came with challenges that Webb said exposed its own vulnerabilities.

What F.O.R. did get was more volunteers. Mentored by senior volunteers, new helpers included retired military personnel, teachers "in limbo" or retired residents and kids out of school. Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts have been helping and eager to help.

"Kids are willing to do anything to help out," said F.O.R. volunteer Carol Webb, Wendy's mother. "What needs to be done, needs to be done. We just do it."

In the midst of crisis, beacons of light emerge. Among these are Maricopa's local food banks and the donors who contribute to them.

F.O.R. (Food, Opportunity, Resources) Maricopa and Maricopa Pantry have stepped up all aspects of their operations to make sure the community is being served by providing food and nourishment and necessary resources, with care and respect, to

individuals, families and senior citizens.

The community need quickly became evident at both food banks. Long lines of cars beyond the usual turned up for distribution days. The increase in April was estimated at 30%-40% and it has continued to grow.

At the same time, physical distancing due to COVID-19 made hosting an event for a food drive impossible.

A special program called Copa Cares was launched in March to help facilitate emergency services for seniors and individuals requiring special assistance during coronavirus.

"We have all endured a wound, and we're here to help heal it," said Wendy Webb. "While nothing will be solved overnight, we're looking at the big picture, constantly revising and evolving our programs yet remaining present and taking one day at a time."

Along with local donations of nonperishables, food banks receive food items from larger alliances like St. Mary's, which supplies organizations in nine counties. Most of that food is in cans or boxes, so when Webb wanted to provide more fresh fruits and vegetables at F.O.R. Maricopa, she ended up shopping in local grocery aisles.

"People have been hit hard with overwhelm and fear," Webb said. "We are here to help relieve suffering by looking toward meaningful things that focus on celebrating moments that bring us joy and reinforcement. What you do today makes a difference today."

Now located in the Blue Business Building, F.O.R. Maricopa has seen many changes since it began in 2007. Feeding and aiding just a few families has evolved into a full-fledged resource center. With its drive-up windows, the location now makes it easier to adhere to social-distancing guidelines. The staff also follows the guidelines as required as food handlers.

Like the volunteer group at F.O.R. Maricopa, the masked-and-gloved volunteers at Maricopa Pantry spell each other during those heady distribution days and have learned to work with amazing speed.

Maricopa Pantry, aka Mountain View Community Church, was established in Hidden Valley over 17 years ago and founded by Jim Shoaf. He is a man with a mission. Well known around town, he is fondly called "The food bank guy."

As a critical community resource, Maricopa Pantry provided more than 600,000

pounds of food and commodities in March and April during the COVID-19 crisis. Each distribution day, they are serving more than 700 families.

"We've been major busy," Shoaf said.

During these challenging times for many, people have lined up in cars instead of in person, which has changed the dynamics of how the pantry operates. "We need to talk, because they've got stories and they've got problems, and even a little prayer would help," Shoaf said. "That's what it's all about, the kindred spirit of the city."

The situation has taught his crew how to move faster and load boxes of food more quickly, skills that will outlast COVID-19.

"I don't think we'll have near the waits that we've had, because these guys are pros now," Shoaf said. "Even St. Mary's came down to give us the food the first week they were here. They looked at me and said, 'You guys are pros. Why are we even here trying to tell you how to do it?'"

For Shoaf and other volunteers with COPD, wearing a face mask has been one of the most difficult aspects of distribution day, because the mask makes it difficult to breathe. Shoaf's oxygen level went down to 82% on one distribution day, so he only wears the mask if he is on the frontline.

He said the pantry has never experienced an event that caused such need in the community as COVID-19. The Saturday distribution of food boxes usually starts at 8 a.m., but cars have lined up as early as 6 a.m.

He has a good crew and plenty of committed volunteers who are essential to getting the job done. Groups deliver food to Eloy and Tucson, and individuals deliver boxes to locals who cannot get out. Shoaf had to overcome strategic challenges this year such



Raquel Hendrickson

Volunteers at Maricopa Pantry in Hidden Valley put together food boxes as resident wait in their cars.

as AC/refrigeration going down, the theft of diesel gasoline, and the need to purchase two more trailers.

"We also lost over 1 million chicks this spring in six to eight farms, affecting meat from chickens and also eggs," he said.

Nonetheless, nothing stops Shoaf from "giving a hand up and not a handout."

Shoaf loves what he does. He is all about his church and his community with the intention to serve so all may thrive and grow. Even when stretched thin, resources always seem to come.

"Right now, we don't sweat the funds, because they just sort of happen," he said.

The food banks depend on the generous donors who are integral to feeding and

supporting the community. They will tell you businesses, groups and individuals that donate money, food or their time are the "hand up" for all those in need. It is with gratitude and respect that all donations are received.

To qualify to receive services from F.O.R. an individual or family is required to register. The form is available along with a full list of resources.

To qualify to receive services from Maricopa Pantry food bank, one needs only to come and take what they need. They have simply been taking names and addresses. Donations are always welcome. 🗨

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Raquel Hendrickson

Pantry customers were in line nearly two hours before distribution of boxes was scheduled to begin.



Kyle Norby



Raquel Hendrickson



Raquel Hendrickson

COVID-19: Past, present and future fallout of pandemic in Maricopa

By Raquel Hendrickson and Bob McGovern

Unprecedented.

It was a word tossed around a lot as COVID-19 crept into town. And it was a fitting word. Maricopans had not seen such a halt in daily routines in this community for such a length of time and with repercussions still not heard.

Between March 6 and May 17, Pinal County's confirmed COVID-19 cases grew from 1 to 693. At the same time Maricopa picked up more than 50 cases of the highly contagious and potentially deadly virus.

But it wasn't numbers so much as executive orders from the Governor's Office, guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and basic human caution that caused upheaval in normal life.

All public schools were closed. "Nonessential" stores closed while "essential" services followed safety protocols to meet the demands of the executive orders. Most restaurants had to close or convert to curbside and delivery service.

Grocery stores or stores with grocery aisles were able to continue business, and so were hardware stores.

Maricopans scrambled for bathroom tissue, canned goods, meats and, eventually, face masks.

THAT WAS THEN

The City's last big public gathering was Salsa Festival March 7. Maricopans were

starting to talk about coronavirus, but only a handful wore face masks that day. That was one day after Pinal County Public Health Department confirmed its first presumptive positive case of COVID-19.

Four days later, Gov. Doug Ducey declared a state of emergency. The City of Maricopa's emergency declaration came March 20. By then it had begun rolling up services. The City scaled back Copper Sky classes and programming, canceling any event that would have more than 10 people congregating. The library, City Hall and other public buildings closed.

"The air has been sucked out of the room by COVID," Mayor Christian Price said. "We need to make sure we're still doing the business of the city."

Even before Ducey issued executive orders that limited restaurants and closed some retail and nonessential services, Maricopa

businesses were adjusting. Doctor's offices and healthcare-related businesses limited who could have access. Hair and nail salons, at first getting a reprieve, soon had to shut their doors.

Grocery stores shortened hours to give staff time to give a deep cleaning before reopening with various social-distancing protocols in place, though not always followed by customers.

"People scare me because I work in the deli and they come up to me in masks and stuff," said Jonathan Aguilar, a Maricopa resident employed by Sprouts in Chandler. "You don't know if they actually have it or not."

Maurquasha Tuggle adapted her behavior. "I won't touch anything in the store anymore... You usually want to shake somebody's hand or give somebody a hug; you don't want to these days."

City leaders caught heat from some residents for not locking down the City earlier and more tightly, but the mayor said it was a balancing act.

"We don't want to go too far and find ourselves in legal trouble for doing something that wasn't intended," Price said.

With Copper Sky's multigenerational building and pool closed and Harrah's Ak-



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Raquel Hendrickson

Above: A sign at Brooklyn Boys Pizzeria & Restaurant promotes takeout and delivery while the restaurant was closed to diners.

Right: A sign indicates the fitness court at Pacana Park was closed in March.



Raquel Hendrickson

Chin and UltraStar Multi-tainment Center shutting their doors, the biggest parking lots in the area became ghost towns. The same could not be said for residential streets, where Maricopans had curbs and driveways filled with vehicles as they worked from home or simply waited to be called back into work.

Most schools in Maricopa were coming back from or going into spring break, so the March 22 announcement from the governor and State Superintendent Kathy Hoffman that schools would be closed two weeks didn't cause much of a stir among families.

But that quickly was extended into more weeks. Soon, April was gone and then the rest of the year was turned into a homeschooling experiment. When it became apparent school doors would not reopen, the magnitude of the decision settled in.

While graduating seniors tried to be philosophical, many were mourning the loss of typical rites of passage.

"It was a difficult spring break, and I was on the verge of resolving to stop caring about any of the work I had done in high school because it hurt to care," Maricopa High School Salutatorian Haley Lemon said. "I decided to ask myself why I did any of it. I certainly didn't expect to achieve this much in high school, and if I hadn't gotten the opportunities I had, would the work I did still be valuable to me?"

THIS IS NOW

"This is an unprecedented moment in our era," Price said. "We also see an unprecedented package come from Congress in the trillions in the stimulus. They're really trying to alleviate and give people something to float through some of these hardest-hit times. But it's tough

when you've had so many in the hospitality sector, some of our temporary workers that are simply out of work. Whole industries that have been shut down. It's a real challenge."

The federal stimulus package known as the CARES Act included \$1,200 checks for many Americans. Also trying to help pocketbooks in the face of an unknown economic future, utilities stopped late fees, loan companies delayed payment requirements, landlords were asked to suspend rent collections.

But Maricopa Councilmember Henry Wade, who specializes in housing, cautioned homeowners not to treat it as free money.

"If you can make the payment, make the payment," he said. "They're suspending it, but it doesn't go away and it will come back on you."

Starting in mid-May and continuing into June, reopening began a slow rollout in various facets.

The long-closed casino and UltraStar partially reopened, as did non-grocery retailers like Ross. The City reopened park amenities and returned to curbside service at the library. Restaurant dining rooms reopened on a limited basis.

The use of face masks that had peaked in early May began to ease off as businesses got back to business.

"Some people I know are more strict about it, but I think Maricopa as a whole is doing a great job of social distancing and keeping each other safe," resident Marinda Roller said.

Meanwhile, thousands of Arizonans were using unemployment insurance. The national unemployment rate rose from 4.4% in March to 14.7% in April.

"I think some people are taking advantage

of it, not doing what they're supposed to do," Tuggle said. "People not going to work and saying, 'Oh, I'm not going to work because of coronavirus and I'm going to wait for the money from the government.' I've seen that so much."

It has been a time of trying to evaluate the current and future economy. Maricopa City Hall refinanced its bonds, which are paying off Copper Sky, to decrease the secondary tax on property owners.

"It's not money that will be realized by the City of Maricopa incorporated, but by the taxpayers," City Manager Rick Horst said. "Particularly at this time in our current situation, any savings we can pass on to our constituency I'm sure would be much appreciated."

During March and April, the price of food in central Arizona increased 2.1%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but overall prices decreased 1.4%.

Sales tax collections from restaurants and retail centers increased during the governor's "Stay at Home" order in March and April (see page 14). But the immediate data might not be an indicator of the long-term economic fallout.

Business owners and residents alike have been cautious.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Is another recession around the corner? Will the deep dive of most economic factors during this spring have a delayed effect in Maricopa and pack a wallop?

It is something the City has been planning for since before COVID-19, which is why it has been building a healthy contingency fund since last year.

Technologically, coronavirus has caused many to face the future earlier than expected, particularly government agencies.

The shutdown caused by COVID-19 has "forced" municipal governments and residents to get more tech savvy. It has also sparked innovations.

In a virtual meeting of Pinal Partnership, Pinal County's city managers described how they have approached the pandemic and their plans for the future. Around 225 people "attended" the meeting via Zoom.

Larry Rains, city manager of Casa Grande, and Brent Billingsley of Florence said the necessity of staying ahead of misinformation made both of their staffs become more social-media savvy. Jennifer Brown, assistant city manager for the City of Maricopa, said they have also become adept at Zoom and other virtual-meeting platforms.

Public schools, which are in a constant push to stay up with technology, warily tested their ability to connect with and educate their students from afar. While the experiment exposed its weaknesses, it also required many educators to start up those distance-learning programs they had been thinking about but had not yet engaged.

That is expected to lead to stronger distance-learning programs as early as next school year, which starts in July but may still have aspects of remote education involved.

Many became more adept at creating video content and connecting live. And that's not just educators and government workers but also business owners.

The day Ducey announced all gyms and public pools could reopen, Lee Feiles of ATA Martial Arts was in the middle of a remote class. That kept some of his students connected with his business, but certainly not all, and that is a concern for the future.

Feiles said about half of his clientele continued to participate through his online program on a temporary basis. However, some have been without jobs, and he's uncertain when they will be able to take classes again. Others, he said, "fell off the face of the earth."

So, he does not know how much of his clientele he will have to rebuild.

Not everyone is convinced the measures taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 were worth the fuss.

"I think they're taking it too seriously," Maricopan Gary Birdsell said. "If you check the line to see how many people get sick and how many people passed away, it wasn't that big."

Joycelyn Cabrera and Kyle Norby contributed to this story.

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‘Best Mom’ contest spotlighted a remarkable crew of Maricopa mothers

By Raquel Hendrickson

Out of a remarkable array of Maricopa mothers, Nicole Perkins was chosen Best Mom in Maricopa for 2020 in the annual contest hosted by InMaricopa.

Nominated by her youngest child, Perkins said her reaction to winning was a feeling of awkwardness.

“I just don’t like any competition especially when it involves other moms,” she said. “I just don’t think one is better than the other. I know some of the other moms personally and I think they are such good women, such good women.”

Just a teenager when she first became a mother, Nicole and her family moved to Maricopa from Virginia about six years ago when her then-husband received a promotion that sent him to Chandler. However, he passed away about a year later, leaving Nicole to raise three young children.

Recently, in October, to be exact, she married again to Tristan Perkins.

Delilah Dunn, 12 (almost 13), heard her mother mention the contest and decided to nominate her.

“It made me cry because I didn’t know. She has her own email,” Nicole said. “She was sitting on the stairs doing it.”

Then Delilah let her proofread the nomination before she sent it.

“It’s a very ‘happy Mom’ moment,” Nicole said.

In the nomination, Delilah said she was impressed her mother could deal with three teenagers, a dog, three cats and 13 rats without losing her mind.

“I love living with my mom and couldn’t ask for a better one,” Delilah wrote. “She makes my life fun and shows positivity but will tell you the truth. She’s the mom everyone wants to have.”

In person, Delilah cheekily added, “She’s an independent woman who also has a slight bit of psychopath, as any woman does.”

Her older daughter, Selena, 16, called her mom compassionate. “She’s really independent and really strong,” she said.



Nicole Perkins with children Aiden, Delilah and Selena.

Raquel Hendrickson

“She’s a great mom,” agreed son Aiden, 14. Perkins received online voting support from a large circle of family and friends. That included a large online group of widows.

Nicole’s former mother-in-law chimed in for her, too. “She deserves this. She is a phenomenal mom who has been through so much,” Lorraine Hernaez wrote.

Perkins received about \$1,500 in prizes from local businesses.

“She makes my life fun and shows positivity but will tell you the truth. She’s the mom everyone wants to have.”

—Delilah Perkins



Zulema Avis with sons Hayden and Kyle.

Raquel Hendrickson

In second place was another mother facing great challenges, Zulema Avis. Nominated by Kristina Petrides, she is the mother of three, homeschooling two boys during the pandemic. Since January she has been battling cancer and has a dozen more rounds of chemotherapy ahead of her. For all that, she remains upbeat.

“She’s an incredible mother who has always put her children first even in the hardest times,” Petrides wrote. “She is a huge advocate for her boys and she has helped them thrive. She is kind, compassionate and an overall wonderful person who more than deserves this honor.”



Kristi Marcus

Raquel Hendrickson

In third place was Kristi Marcus, nominated by husband Kevin and daughter Khloe. Balancing family, church and school, she received big support from all three.

“Kristi works so hard for our family, and when she doesn’t have any left to give, she still outshines anyone I know,” Kevin Marcus wrote. “Kristi is loving, caring, kind, compassionate, supportive, loyal, giving and goes above and beyond in everything she does. Words cannot express the love that overflows from Kristi’s life.”

OUR OTHER GREAT NOMINATIONS (ALPHABETICALLY)



My wife, Wendy Buchberger, spent over four months in the hospital with infection where she endured countless surgeries, kidney failure, blood and plasma transfusions and still came out a champ, only to have complications and ended up needing another surgery that put her in the hospital over Christmas and had to participate by FaceTime. She continues to work, home school three kids, works on her charity, and tries to find ways in the community to lift spirits during this time. She’s, again, suffering complications and this would be the best gift for a lady who continues to fight without complaint.



My mom Lorraine Comer is a single mom of 5 children. She is the best mom that myself and my siblings could ask for. She is always there when we need here even if she is having a

hard day. She always puts herself aside to help anyone who need a helping hand or even an ear to listen to. So please vote for our mom she so deserves this.

Not only is Dee Estrada an amazing mom, grandmother, and person, but she is the most selfless and kind person I have met. She has opened her home to children to provide them with a safe place to live when their home life was not the most ideal.



She always offers a helping hand in any way she can. You would never know she has her own struggles from time to time because she always greets you with a warm hug and huge smile. The example she sets for her family and athletes she

coaches both for local schools and club leagues. She deserves some recognition for all she does, the time she spends with members of the community, the aid she gives to those in need and the all-around amazing person she is.



Cortney Fröm: This amazing woman manages to be a stay at home mom with 5 of the most energetic kids I have ever met. Yet somehow she keeps the household together, the kids healthy and happy, and most of all she makes it look easy. I don't know how I got so lucky to have the world's best mom as a mother to my children but she deserves every ounce of admiration for her hard work! Without further ado me and my five kids would like to nominate Cortney Fröm for Maricopa's best Mom!

Amanda Hadenfeldt always goes above and beyond for others. She is the best mom I know and a great neighbor. Her children



are all very kind and respectful. She teaches her children respect, morals and beliefs. Amanda's son Michael helped us with our two dogs. Amanda and her kids pulled all the weeds in my front yard. Gracie made me a beautiful artwork that I have hanging on my fridge. Amanda set up a giveaway box of books, etc., for neighbors during this quarantine. Amanda posts once a week a list of what others need. She deserves to be pampered.

Terri Kirk: I am nominating my fantastic and selfless mother! When I mean selfless, I mean it. She will drop everything to help anyone and give anything even if she does not have it. She is always busy taking care of others and not herself. She is a full-time worker, caregiver to my Stepdad & takes care of 3 of her grandchildren. She donated a kidney to her mother several years ago and, before that, she tried to give one to her brother. Even if she does not win just having her nominated is going to be amazing to her.



My beautiful mother **Heather LaVallis** is the strongest person I know. Being a single mother of three and working 12 hour shifts

as a registered nurse at Valleywise Health Hospital takes a lot out of her. Somehow she still finds time to make sure that my siblings and I have the things we need to succeed in school. She's always putting her needs aside to help others, never complains about it. She is truly the most amazing Mom and it would be an honor to name her The Best Mom in Maricopa.

LeeLee Marsh is my best friend, most wonderful mother and loving wife. Despite battling for her daily, she gives to anyone in need, always putting herself last. She is an MS WARRIOR!! Her and her husband run their own business while juggling so many doctor's appointments and raising her Prince. Despite the pain, fatigue and everything else, she never gives up. MY TRUE HERO!!



Karen Redlin is the wife of a Vietnam Veteran, the grandmother of 4 grandchildren, 2 of which she watches every day during the week. During the pandemic she has sewn and donated around 300 masks to friends, family and residents in Maricopa. She is completely selfless and will always bend over backwards for anyone in need.



My wife **Meagan Robinson** is the best mom ever. For now 10 years she has been splitting her time up between going to school full time, working full time,

being a mom of three, and my wife. We moved from Columbus, Ohio, in 2017, knowing that I was going to stay home with the kids while she finished school and worked. Fulltime. Meagan graduated last year as an FNP. She is a dedicated woman! She started up a Daisy troop this year for my daughter as well as working full time as an FNP. Meagan has always made time for me as well as going on little vacations or having little adventures with me and the kids. There is no doubt that Meagan is the best Mom and Wife EVER.




Hillary Van Hofwegen, 28, is an outstanding Mother. She went through IVF and was blessed with twins. Levi and Paisley. She balances work as a saleswoman for an animal pharmaceutical

company and being a mother while her husband runs their farm. She is dedicated to raising her kids while also being the top saleswoman this year in AZ.

Celeste Wallace: My name is Noah Parry and I would like to say that my mom is the best mom in the world. She is always putting other people before herself and making sure that everyone in our family is taken care of. She always does her best to help. She is working two full-time jobs from home and maintaining a 4.0 GPA in law school, she is in the national collegiate society and is on the President's and Dean's list, while maintaining bills and seven kids. She is an all-around selfless person and is very supportive in any situation. I think she deserves the credit for what she does. Anytime she is told she can't do something, she persevered



and surpassed everybody's expectations. She helps all of us be successful at what we want to do. I just always wanted to show her how much I appreciate what she does for us seven dwarves.

Terri Yancey (Mrs. Howe) is the best mom in Maricopa since 1979. She raised three boys, all over 6'3", and a 6'2" husband she kept in line with her 5'4" stature. She drove buses for the district for over 20 years, and every kid knew her. Friends always came over to mooch a meal; they knew my mom cooked for an army and always had room for one more. She was a semiprofessional softball pitcher and taught me how to throw a football properly, which I used to play college football. I could always tell my mom anything and still can. She is a son's best friend. 



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Kyle Norby

Online, overtime

When the stay at home order kicked internet use into overdrive, families took action to meet the demand

By Bob McGovern

The coronavirus pandemic turned everyday routines upside down. Millions of U.S. families hunkered down together under stay at home orders in March, April and May.

Parents worked from home, using Zoom to dial into business meetings — and stay in touch with family and friends.

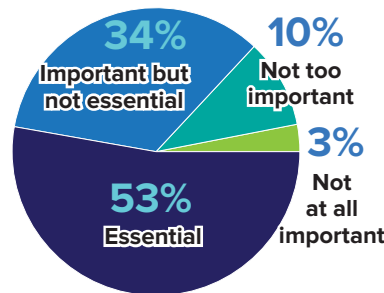
Children learned at home with Google Classroom instead of in a school classroom.

In cities and towns across America, including Maricopa, household internet usage climbed in a big way.

Preliminary estimates indicate internet traffic jumped from 50% to 70%, with streaming up by at least 12%, Forbes reported. TV watching and streaming by U.S. children skyrocketed, as much as 300% at mid-day, for 6-11 and 12-17 age groups, according to a Nielsen study.

Average in-home data usage was up 18% for the first 17 days of March from a year ago, according to Comscore, which measures cross-platform audiences. Most of that increase was on mobile phones, smart TVs and speakers, and streaming boxes and sticks, it said.

Internet Use Nationwide During Coronavirus



Source: Pew Research Center

A HOUSEHOLD GROWS TO 10

The internet is essential in her household, said Senita resident Danika Pulido.

Still, as the calendar flipped to 2020, home internet life was calm and efficient. A 25 megabits per second (mbps) line from CenturyLink delivered enough broadband speed to keep devices running smoothly.

But the onset of coronavirus triggered several developments, said Pulido, 44, who has lived in Maricopa since 2008 and operated an at-home daycare, Your Big and Small Childcare Need, until schools closed.

Her household suddenly grew to five adults and five children (and six phones, four tablets, three computers and seven smart TVs), and began to lean more heavily on the internet for work and play. The family was forced to police its online activity as computer games lagged and Netflix and HBO buffered, not to mention YouTube, a platform that plays a vital role at home.

Pulido said her second youngest son, who is autistic, spends hours watching fireworks videos on YouTube for daily stimulation — both on his phone and smart TV.

“The internet is really important,” she said. “I really need it for my son. He wants that internet 24-7 without buffering or freezing. It’s not easy for him to understand.”

Others needed it, too.

Her 25-year-old daughter, the only one who left the house during quarantine to work at an essential business, was on the home computer for Air Force Reserve duties. Her boyfriend, manager of a creative services firm in Tempe, moved in for the stay at home order and worked from the house.

Pulido’s oldest son, 27, who came out of the Marines in December and lost part-time jobs in California in the aftermath of the pandemic, moved into her home with his two children, one of them a kindergartener whose learning went online when schools closed. Her son competes in paid e-sports tournaments for League of Legends.

“He had to go to my mom’s house a couple blocks away to play in his tournaments and do job interviews,” said Pulido, who found herself jumping off wi-fi and using her cell plan to go online.

So, Pulido had a second 25 mbps line installed. It didn’t solve the problem completely, so she decided in late April to swap the second line for an 80 mbps fiber optic line from Orbitel. Peace ensued.

“The kids are saying ‘It’s not buffering anymore,’” she said.

She will likely remove the initial 25 mbps line at some point, confident smooth streaming will continue.

‘A BIG SPIKE’

We use the internet in nearly all aspects of our lives. Facebook, Hulu and Fortnite. Streaming, texting and Zooming. On cellphones, laptops and tablets. Smart TVs, Nest thermostats and cameras, and Ring doorbells. Even smart dishwashers, coffeemakers and refrigerators.

The proliferation of devices and more new

homes rising across the city means internet demand in Maricopa is always growing.

Before the virus, service providers across the nation generally described a “rush hour” of home internet traffic from 7 to 11 p.m., the time most people go online. And when your favorite show was most likely to buffer.

But the pandemic of 2020 has taken that growth to new heights, as families expand the way they use the internet and spend more time online.

“That has absolutely caused an increase in usage,” said John Schurz, president and general manager of Orbitel, the only internet service provider with an office in Maricopa.

Pre-pandemic, Orbitel would see a bump in usage at 3 p.m. when schoolchildren got home, then again at 5 p.m. as people who work in Maricopa got home, and then the largest bump as out-of-town workers returned an hour or two later, before holding steady until midnight or so.

“Now we’re seeing steady usage across the day, and a bump at night for streaming,” Schurz said.

Another factor: snowbirds, who represent about 30% of Orbitel’s business. Many stayed



Orbitel Communications

In order to limit internet congestion during the coronavirus stay-at-home order, network engineers at Orbitel performed real-time management of broadband traffic loads.

put in Maricopa instead of returning to their summer homes in March and April.

“Canada, for instance, gave their residents a (March 20) deadline to get home, but a lot of people stayed here,” Schurz said.

A QUARANTINE QUANDARY

It got so bad at Chayo Reed’s home during the quarantine, she had to make changes, too.

Every weekday morning, five desktop computers would flick on in her home in the gated community of Homestead. Her husband, who works for Chase Bank, worked from home and her three kids were online doing schoolwork. Her father entertained himself by researching family history on the internet.

In the evening, the family streamed Disney+ and Prime Video on their Roku devices and played games on the PS4, she said.

“We are all using the internet basically all day long,” she said.

Their original broadband connection, a 100 mbps line from Orbitel with a Netgear modem/router, “worked just fine with our simple setting,” handling the nighttime demand well, said Reed, 38, noting there was little daytime demand while she worked at

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Ross department store, her husband was at the office and the kids in school.

“Then the pandemic happened,” she said. “And we all had to stay at home all day long. With school and work, our internet needs increased. 100 mbps wasn’t enough.”

Their devices were falling off wi-fi, necessitating frequent router resets. Video calls were “awful.”

“Sometimes, we would just join the calls by phone so that at least we could hear everything,” she recalled.

The Reeds took action, upgrading to a 200 mbps line and a Nighthawk router to keep the wi-fi signal strong throughout the house, she said. Problem solved.

The additional cost is worth greater internet harmony at home, she said, adding she’d hesitate to downgrade in the future unless she was sure the current performance would continue.

FEELING CONNECTED

Aimee Marquez, a resident of Rancho Mirage, acknowledged the internet can dominate children’s time — both for good and not-so-good. Her son Samuel, 10, a student at Leading Edge Academy, is doing his homework online, but YouTube, FortNite and TikTok eventually became a distraction.

He would use the excuse of “homework” to be on the computer all day, she said. She put

down some house rules.

“Because everything is online — homework and projects, 8 to 3 — I can’t really take the internet away,” she said. “I had to make my son wake up, from 8 to 10 do some homework, then go outside and play, then come back from 1 to 3 to finish, and no more internet after that. During the weekends, it’s only one hour.”

Limiting internet time, as beneficial as it is, doesn’t work for all families. Some, like the Pulidos and Reeds, have moved to faster broadband speeds to avoid slowdowns and frustration. The higher the speed, the more devices you can connect at one time and more types of activities you can do online.

“People have been upgrading their bandwidth,” said Schurz at Orbitel, noting that for a couple at home, 50 mbps or less is sufficient, but a family of five that streams a lot of video and has multiple devices might want to consider upgrading to something faster.

For those not ready to upgrade, both Orbitel and CenturyLink said their network engineers work daily to alleviate traffic congestion.

“I’m really proud of our team,” Schurz said. “The chief engineer works with his team every single weeknight.”

The company has added equipment to increase capacity on a system with no data caps, Schurz said.

Likewise, CenturyLink is identifying changes in internet usage to help its team monitor congestion and hot spots, and address those issues by adding capacity, rerouting traffic in real-time and revising data limits, according to company spokesman Mark Molzen.

“This increased, minute-to-minute focus and flexibility from our engineering teams has proven key to the smooth network operation we’ve seen in these unprecedented times,” he said.

Even as the ISPs labored to keep their customers satisfied, the internet has played a more important role for families during the public health crisis, the ability to bring people together, Schurz said.

“People need to feel the connection even though they are not in the same place,” he said. “It’s important to stay connected and help others feel connected.”

For Danika Pulido, the pandemic — even with its temporary internet headaches — went one better. It brought her son and grandchildren back home. And when coronavirus eventually moves on, they will not. They plan to remain in Maricopa.

“I am truly happy that they are out here,” she said, with a big smile. “It is hard because it is hitting a lot people in a very negative way, but it has brought our family closer.”

Exponential growth is a matter of math

By Murray Siegel

Recently, I saw a relevant cartoon based on most Americans not having a mastery of mathematics. It was set in a high school algebra classroom, with the teacher delivering a lesson on exponential growth. One student asks another, “When will we ever use this?”

Today, we hear about the exponential growth of the COVID-19 virus.



Murray Siegel

What does exponential growth mean and why is it meaningful in dealing with the pandemic? An exponential growth model means the percentage change in the growth is constant, while a linear growth model has a constant change. This difference can be best understood by investigating a financial situation.

An amount of \$1,000 is invested at a 6% annual rate, and there are two options. One option provides a constant amount of interest each month of \$5 — the monthly interest is one-twelfth of the 6%, $0.005 \times \$1,000 = \5 . After 30 years, this investment is worth \$2,800, this is linear growth. In the other option, each month the interest is 0.005 times the balance in the account, which grows monthly. At the end of 30 years, this investment is worth \$6,022.58. This is the explosive power of exponential growth.

If the virus infections increase at a constant percentage, the number of new infections each day will be greater than the previous day, and our healthcare system will be overwhelmed. There is only one means to stop the exponential growth, and that is to limit the number of potential victims who are exposed. The lockdown rule accomplished that by limiting contact between infected and uninfected. Unfortunately, this method has serious negative emotional and financial consequences.

A second way to limit the exponential spread is a successful vaccine, yet it could take another year or more to approve one that is safe and effective. Dr. Anthony Fauci keeps talking about the need for a randomized controlled study of a potential vaccine with the use of a placebo. Most Americans do not understand what this means and why it will take so long to develop a vaccine. Randomized studies and the placebo will be discussed in this column next month.

The third way to stop the spread is to expose most of the population so there are very few uninfected people. If the consequence of COVID-19 was a bad cold and a few days of fatigue, this “crowd immunity” could be effective. Unfortunately, COVID-19 kills, and sacrificing a few million people so we can crank up the economy is unethical. So, understanding exponential growth and how to limit that growth is a lesson all Americans must understand.

No student in math class should ever ask when will this knowledge be useful.

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

Let’s celebrate Father’s Day!

Karsten’s Ace Hardware is again sponsoring the Best Dad in Maricopa Contest, giving everyone the chance to tell the town about their father.

Nominate your favorite father by emailing the nominee’s name, photo AND

- A written nomination of no more than 100 words OR
- A video of no more than 1 minute to News@InMaricopa.com

Dads must be Maricopa residents. Nominate your father, your husband, your brother, nephew, friend, grandfather — simply the best dad in town — and tell us why he is so great.

Readers will vote for their favorites June 12-18. Readers can vote once a day on as many devices as they own.

The top finalists will be juried by a panel of judges, who will decide the winners.

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6

1. Kian Carroll picked up his diploma on his motorcycle.
2. School board member Patti Coutre chats with a graduate.
3. Yvanira Kelly Barbosa collects her diploma.
4. Elias Brown Thunder shows off the result of his hard work.
5. Graduates and their families pose for photos at one of the backdrops.
6. Aidan Di Maria gets a memorable picture with his sister, Allyson, and his mother, Jeanette.
7. Cars line up for diploma day at Maricopa High School.
8. Graduates received a special 2020 USB tassel courtesy of Orbitel Communications.
9. A graduate's cap is festooned with flowers in a tribute to K-pop band.
10. Derek Blakely celebrates his graduation with a fistpump.

Photos by Kyle Norby



7



8



9



10



MHS graduate Savannah Shelabarger makes a point after picking up her diploma.
Victor Moreno





1



2



3



4

1. Maricopa High School students received yearbooks in a memorable way during COVID-19. *Kyle Norby*
2. Kielee Keys Carillo was one of the recipients during a Senior Awards event. *Kyle Norby*
3. Lisa Seavey (left), registrar, and Principal Markchele Kamson prepared for a unique parking lot graduation at Sequoia Pathway May 20. *Raquel Hendrickson*
4. A family takes a selfie on diploma distribution day. *Victor Moreno*



SEQUOIA PATHWAY ACADEMY





MHS Valedictorian Freya Abraham

Dear Class of 2020:

I didn't know that March 13 would be our last day together. I wish I had the chance to give you warm hugs and sincere goodbyes before we set off in different directions. Nonetheless, I am grateful to have the opportunity to share a few words with you now.

You all played a part in making MHS what it is today. From leadership in everything from sports and clubs to school spirit, we've shown over the past four years that we are a class full of talent, ideas, and laughter. From CCT Class to AP Calc, we've made memories that I treasure. Thank you for the honor of being your valedictorian.

Thank you to our amazing teachers, admin and MUSD20 staff who made our high school experiences possible. Thank you to our awesome security guards and wonderful cafeteria staff for their daily smiles and greetings. Thank you especially to all our families, by blood and by love, for shaping us into who we are today.

Thank you to my mom, dad, brother and Yvonne Murray for making my own journey possible. Thank you to the parishioners of Our Lady of Grace for your constant prayers and encouragement. Most importantly, I thank God, who has been my most trusted confidant and support along the way. Amidst my own loneliness and failures, His care always gave me the hope I needed to push forward. Every one of my achievements can be credited to His grace and the Blessed Virgin's intercession.

As I graduate, I would like to remember the person who I always thought would be here to see it. Andy Murray was a singer, guitarist, and my grandfather in everything but genetics. He was more assured of my success than I ever was and joked that my brother's valedictorian address would show me how to make mine all the better. I never expected that he would have a heart attack, that he would pass on without a goodbye.

Andy's presence at my graduation was something I never anticipated losing until all of a sudden it was no longer possible. More than almost any other class, we of 2020 have all experienced this ourselves in various degrees. From postponed family gatherings to ceremonies gone virtual, we have been handed loss when we expected celebration.

However, I hope these losses allow us to cherish the memories we made even more. When I remember Andy now, I am so thankful for moments I once took for granted, like our hugs on Sundays. When I remember my senior year, I'm grateful for all the opportunities I opted not to wait for, like our STEM Club's adventures. If we look back and find ourselves with regret, we can remember that we have our entire futures ahead of us. We will have our chance to experience joys similar to the ones we had planned.

Yet, when we are forced to set so many plans aside, we may lose our sense of completing the goals that we originally had in place. We may doubt their value, wondering why we worked so hard just to miss the peaks of our accomplishments. We must know that a crisis cannot shake the worth of our achievements. The skills and lessons we have learned may seem intangible, but they remain with us despite any ongoing circumstances. Trust that every effort we have made and will make, whether it goes recognized or unrecognized, takes us to our own next level. Regardless of how we feel at the moment, we are all brimming with potential.

The current situation, while unprecedented, is temporary. The foundation we have formed and continue to build is not. This is our moment to take a breather and really think about whether we're satisfied with who we are and how we are living. This is our time to hone our habits so that when we get back out there, we can make the best use of every

opportunity to explore, grow, and love those around us.

I would like to congratulate the entire Class of 2020 on their high school graduation. As we pass through this milestone in a way we never imagined, I hope our experiences make us that much more eager to bring our dreams to life. If we can keep one idea in mind, I wish it would be this: we have what it takes to make choices that leave us proud of what we're doing and who we're becoming. No setback can change the power that we hold.

We leave this part of our journey with a greater appreciation for the people and events that have led us here. We go forward with an even greater drive to brave new challenges and create precious memories that'll last us a lifetime. We've been through a lot together, Maricopa. It is my honor to be your valedictorian.

Thank you.



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See our directory on page 56 and at InMaricopa.com/Directory.



Worry, fear can cause post-traumatic stress

By Harriet Phelps



We hear a lot about post-traumatic stress.

It is natural to feel afraid during and after a traumatic event. Generally, post-traumatic stress is a developed response to an event outside our normal experience usually shocking, scary, or dangerous. The event may be experienced or witnessed, and symptoms may begin immediately or over time. The brain does not differentiate between experienced or witnessed. Producers of movies bank on the human reaction to what we see.

Historically, social events such as the Great Depression caused fear from loss of income and food and created reactions like hoarding food. Sexual abuse victims may develop reactive behavior in certain situations. Military service in a war can have behavioral results. The first terms used in the military were battle fatigue and shell shock.

Fear triggers reactive changes in the body in response to fight or flight to defend against it or avoid it for physical and mental survival. The brain sends the message and the body gets ready to defend. The body may engage all five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste.

These senses are heightened during the event. Readying includes the body reacting with heart racing, pumping the blood around the heart leaving the extremities cold, blue, or sweaty, shallow breathing, and concentration becomes razor focused and ready to survive. It is difficult to unplug from the reactive memories from trauma.

A new event or emotion may trigger a

memory from that time and bring about a flashback, fearful thoughts or bad dreams.

The smell of gun powder or certain food, loud popping sounds, or physical arousal without explanation may resurrect reactive memories that do not go away. My friend would take cover under his kitchen table when fireworks exploded.

Symptoms start from a person's own thoughts and feelings. Words, objects, or situations that are reminders can trigger re-experiencing symptoms. Here are tips and resources if you or someone you know is struggling with PTSD.

You can:

- Re label what is happening I AM SAFE
- Reality check your thought at the moment. THIS IS A MEMORY.

Where's the threat.

- Focus on Breathe. Breathe in and out. Slowly Count 1-2-3-4- out 1-2-3-4-5.
- Follow the 3-3-3 rule. Name three things you see, three you hear and three parts of your body to refocus to now.

If the feelings become overwhelming and feel too difficult to manage then reach out. First responders and 24/7 Healthcare Crisis Hotline 800-327-7451.

Helpline:


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Teens 602-248-TEENS

Veterans 800-273-8255 (press 1).

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As always, be awesome. 



Harriet Phelps

Harriet Phelps, PsyD. Retired Volunteer
Be Awesome Coalition

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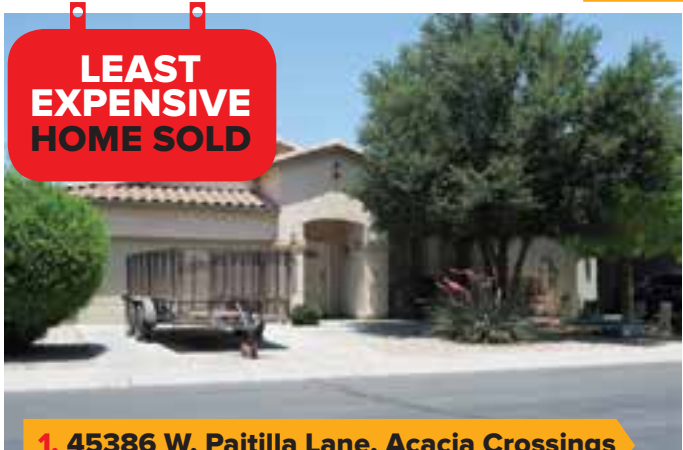
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Raquel Hendrickson

1. 40636 W. Parkhill Drive, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado



Kyle Norby

1. 45386 W. Paitilla Lane, Acacia Crossings

The least expensive home sold in Maricopa April 16-May 15 had a renovated bathroom and lots of square footage. It sold for 9% lower than its 2004 selling price and 12% below its listing. Described as a bit of a fixer-upper, its open floor plan has a lot of potential.

- Sold:** May 15
Purchase Price: \$175,000
Square Footage: 2,076
Price per square foot: \$84.30
Days on Market: 27
Builder: Shea Homes
Year Built: 2004
Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 2
Community: Acacia Crossing
Features: Single-story with split bedroom layout, master suite includes sitting room/office, security door in front, needs some TLC.
- 2. 43783 W. Baker Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$180,000**
3. 20671 N. Herbert Ave., Homestead North.....\$181,000
4. 46115 W. Holly Drive, Maricopa Meadows.....\$185,000
5. 37421 W. Amalfi Ave., Sorrento.....\$185,000

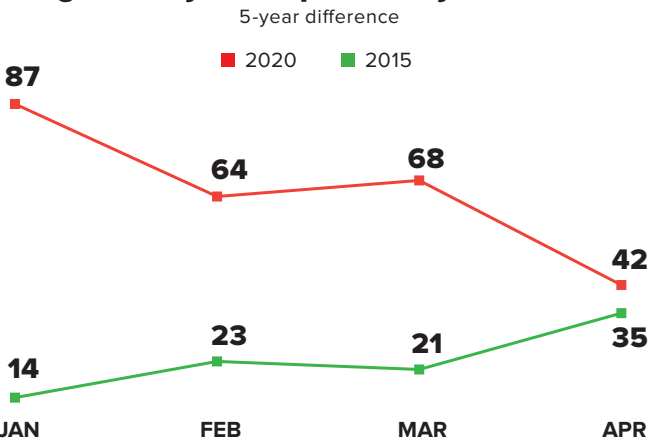
The most expensive home sold in Maricopa April 16-May 15 was a lakefront property in The Lakes that went for half-a-million dollars. Its tax assessment rose 50% in one year. It sold for 6.5% under its list price. Luxurious inside and out, it is two stories, with a loft and a three-car garage. The master bath has a waterfall shower and six-jet bath spa, and the backyard has a heated pool and gorgeous landscaping.

- Sold:** April 30
Purchase Price: \$500,000
Square Footage: 3,305
Price per square foot: \$151.28
Days on Market: 68
Builder: Meritage Homes
Year Built: 2012
Bedrooms: 5
Bathrooms: 3

Community: The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado
Features: Upgraded kitchen with GE Monogram gas range, granite counter tops, formal dining room, custom walk-in closet in master bedroom, bedroom and full bath downstairs, custom cabinets.

- 2. 41160 W. Almira Drive, Tortosa.....\$433,312**
3. 18606 N. Smith Drive, Maricopa Meadows.....\$369,500
4. 44207 W. Palo Abeto Drive, Palo Brea.....\$359,900
5. 22451 N. Celtic Ave., Cobblestone Farms.....\$359,000

Single-family home permits by subdivision



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

Tight competition for homes makes Maricopa a seller's market

By Dayv Morgan

This spring, Maricopa home sellers have been happy and home buyers have been frustrated as the marketplace has become very competitive.

Even though the stock market has seen significant decreases in recent months, home prices are headed in the opposite direction. The supply of homes for sale has been at its lowest point in many years. In response, prices have climbed to levels they were at during the peak of 2006.



Dayv Morgan

Currently, the lowest-priced four-bedroom on the market is listed at \$224,900. Last spring, you could get a four-bedroom home for as low as \$178,000. Bidding wars have resulted in offers above the asking price. Appraisals aren't keeping up, and many buyers still end up having to pay more than the bank is willing to lend.

Days-on-market also shrank as buyers quickly snatched up inventory. Homes are selling about 30 days faster than they did a year ago. Some properties are even getting offers before they are listed for sale.

For now, the main competition with resale homes is new builds, with at least 10 subdivisions currently seeing ongoing construction. If short sales and foreclosures begin to enter the market it will create downward pressure on prices.

How all that shapes up in the future remains to be seen. Currently all foreclosures and trustees sales have been suspended. And because the foreclosure process typically takes at least six months from the first missed payment, we will probably not see distressed properties affect the market until 2021, if it happens at all.

For now, if you are a buyer who sees a

	SPRING 2020	SPRING 2019
Inventory	300	460
Days on Market	40	70
Avg. sale price	\$245,000	\$230,000

newly listed home for sale that you like, you should submit a strong offer as soon as you can. Odds are that someone else already submitted one while you were making up your mind.

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

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Four scapes of gardening

By Harriet Phelps

Designing your outdoor space goes beyond making it look and feel nice. There are actually four 'scapes in gardening.

Landscaping. We know what landscape means: the tools needed to design an attractive outdoor space. Think of it as arranging your living room. Think about how you will use the space. Do I need a play area, seating area, garden area, barbeque area, or a just-to-enjoy area?



Harriet Phelps

Divide the area into quadrants and determine what is needed to achieve what you want. Landscaping is taken in steps and budget. There is always a plan. We want landscape to express our interests and creativity. There are eight basics of design:

- Unity
- Balance
- Contrast and harmony
- Color
- Transition (gradual change)
- Line (depth and distance)
- Proportion
- Repetition (three to five elements)

Xeriscaping. Xeri is a Greek word for dry. It is landscaping that uses the minimum of supplemental water and is colorful and enjoyable. It does not mean dry, barren, or

no maintenance. We live in a xeriscape — the desert. The concept was developed in Denver, Colorado, in response to water shortage and susceptibility to drought. There are seven principles:

- Sound planning and design
- Limitation of turf
- Use of water efficient plants
- Efficient irrigation
- Soil amendments
- Use of mulches
- Appropriate landscape maintenance

Beautiful landscapes are created by using native and desert adapted plants. Native plants are better adapted to the climate area and results in success without excessive watering, fertilizers or pesticides. These plants provide beneficial habitat for wildlife of the area. Another consideration is to know the expectation of your HOA.

Agriscaping means creatively and elegantly integrating elements of productive agriculture by means of growing edible foods or useful plants to reduce useless consumption, landfill, waste, and water usage. The concept was developed here in Arizona to understand and utilize planting of edible crops amongst the ornamental plants in your yard. Here in



Zone 9 we have two growing seasons, spring and fall.

Es-scaping means going into your yard and enjoying the fruits of your labor. During the hot months that we are entering now, we enjoy our gardens early in the morning or after sunset. We marvel at the plantings and how much has changed with our efforts. We are excited to bring in our garden produce for a meal and the wonderful flavor that fresh brings. We do not have irrigation in our yard, which adds the additional benefit of meditative watering and just enjoying the task. Escape to your yard and enjoy!

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MAC-Pinal-MasterGardener.org

Harriet Phelps is a Maricopa master gardener for Pinal County.

COVID-19 impact on valuations may take years to appear

By Raquel Hendrickson

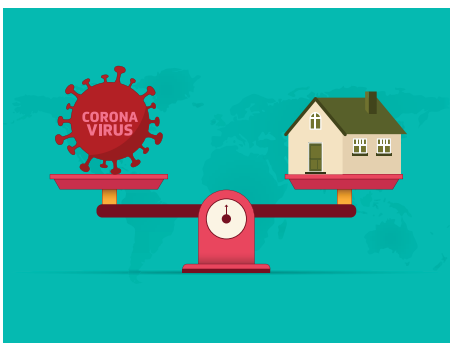
COVID-19 has left a lot of economic markers in its wake, but one of the last pockets of the economy where it may appear is in property assessments.

Assessments are done in a two-year cycle. The Pinal County Assessor's Office finished its assessments for 2021 in March. Next March, staff will begin working on 2022.

While some areas of the economy, such as unemployment, are shaky in the short term, "it is stable revenue for the county," said Assessor Douglas Wolf.

The CARES Act suspended foreclosures during the pandemic, but they could begin showing up in six months to a year if, in fact, Pinal County property owners suffered serious economic meltdown.

"If we have a lot of foreclosures, and I don't think that's going to happen, it could have an impact," Wolfe said.



"Impact," he said, means negatively affecting assessments by 3%-4%.

The last time assessments took that kind of hit was in 2008. There is no direct comparison with the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, because even when foreclosures finally begin appearing, the banks still pay the taxes.

In the case of the 2008 recession, "There

were so many even the banks couldn't keep up," Wolfe said.

And there was a lot of speculation in the market in those days, whereas now most buyers are just looking for a place to live, he said.

What could also play into future assessments are unknowns such as the general market and decisions by the federal and state government that could affect the local economy. Wolf said that is why he supports the county's ongoing lawsuit against the U.S. Office of the Treasury to force Gov. Doug Ducey to distribute federal COVID-19 funds to Pinal and other counties.

The local market could also be affected by the collection of the transaction privilege tax. But TPT, also known as a sales tax, has remained strong in Pinal County through the pandemic.

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Pets bring seniors unconditional love

By Joan Koczor

According to the National Pet Owners Survey, more than 84 million homes in the United States have a pet. During COVID-19, pet adoption from shelters has soared nationwide.

Dog and cats have a calming effect on their owners and can reduce stress. Anxiety is reduced by just having a pet to take care of. They can reduce the anxiety of going out alone because they can go out with you — at the same time encouraging us to get extra exercise.

Pets love their routines, and if we don't stick to their routines they will feel out of sorts. So, we get up at a specific time, take our dog for a walk, feed him at his regular time and so on. Your pet's routine gives structure to your day, especially important to those who live alone.

While self-isolating during COVID-19, older adults have relied on pets for companionship. Having a pet provides an opportunity to stay connected and more

active. Pets encourage them to move more, laugh at their antics and, most important, get more exercise. Simply put, having a pet means a better lifestyle for older adults.

Having a pet helps older adults keep their minds active by making them remember specific things and times. Keeping the brain active is a good thing.

Pet-friendly senior housing units are seeing the benefits of allowing cats, small dogs and other small animals, such as goldfish or birds. For many, the transition from

independent living to assisted living is a huge adjustment. The thought of leaving a beloved pet can be unbearable. Having a pet provides emotional security.

Allowing pets in a senior living community has many benefits. It allows a smooth transition for seniors leaving a home they may have lived in for years. In addition, the benefits for



seniors are reduced depression, feeling better about oneself and being emotionally happier, which can only add to their well-being.

Nothing compares to the joy of being greeted by your family pet. The unconditional love they provide does more than keep you company. Pets of any kind — dog, cat, goldfish or any other animal — can have a positive effect on your mood and overall health.

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



Joan Koczor

Make your kitchen senior-friendly

By Ron Smith

Let's make our living spaces easier on ourselves. Our older selves will thank us. We are going to start our room-by-room review in your kitchen.

A kitchen can be one of the more challenging rooms in your home as you age. You have to move and store food, dishes, glasses, small appliances, pots and pans. You are working with potentially heavy, awkward objects and sharp knives. As your eyesight, dexterity, balance and strength diminish, tasks that were once done without a thought can become challenging.

The trick is to analyze your kitchen space to find ways to make it easier to use and move around. Those 42-inch cabinets that

were once very desirable can now be a hazard if you have to use a stool to access them. Everyday cookware, plates and tools should be conveniently stored in pullout drawers, Lazy Susans and racks for easy access. The cabinets and drawers should have easy-to-access D-shaped pulls and handles rather than knobs to assist your grip.

In addition to the overall space being well lit, there should be task lighting for the sink, stove and other work areas. The sink should be fitted with a lever-, touch- or sensor style faucet rather than one with turn-style handles or knobs. The faucet should also be a pressure-balanced,

temperature-regulated faucet that is kept at 120 degrees or less to avoid scalds. The stove or cooktop should have easy-to-read, front-mounted controls so the cook doesn't have to reach over hot pots or open flames. Those controls should have a lockout for the safety of small children who may visit.

A side-by-side refrigerator can usually provide the easiest access to both refrigerated and frozen food.

At some point, you might find yourself

using a walker or a wheelchair. At that time, you might want to consider modifying work surface access by providing roll under or dropped height counters for food preparation from a seated position.

If you are modifying cabinetry, you might want to install an under-counter microwave or drawer style dishwasher. They are much more convenient and safer to use. Upper cabinets can be fitted with adjustable, pull-down shelving. If you don't already have a pot filler, you may want to investigate the installation of one.

Flooring should be slip-resistant and should be a different color than the countertops to provide more contrast for better depth perception.

All kitchens should have an easy-to-use ABC-rated fire extinguisher stored in a convenient location, and the entire family should be trained on how to properly use it.

(Source: AARP HomeFit Guide at aarp.org/homefit.)

Ron Smith is a Maricopa resident and 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.



Ron Smith









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Movies Under the Stars: Hook
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June 8

Movies Under the Stars: Shrek
7 p.m., UltraStar Multi-
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16000 N. Maricopa Road

June 12

AI-Anon
7 p.m., Community of Hope
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

June 15

**Movies Under the
Stars: Spaceballs**
7 p.m., UltraStar Multi-
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16000 N. Maricopa Road

June 20

Dive-In Movie Night
7 p.m., Copper Sky
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June 22

Movies Under the Stars:
The Adventures of Tintin
7 p.m., UltraStar Multi-
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16000 N. Maricopa Road

June 26

Multi-Generational Game Night
6:30 p.m., Copper Sky
44345 Martin Luther King Blvd.

June 29

Movies Under the Stars:
Ferris Bueller's Day Off
7 p.m., UltraStar Multi-
tainment Center
16000 N. Maricopa Road

CONTINUING

Sundays

Narcotics Anonymous
7 p.m., 45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

Mondays

Virtual Storytime
9 a.m., Maricopa Public Library
facebook.com/MaricopaLibrary

Tuesdays

Narcotics Anonymous
7 p.m., 16540 N. Porter Road

Celebrate Recovery
Small Group Meeting
7 p.m., Maricopa
Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

Thursdays

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

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