

# Maricopa

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August 2020

## FAMILY

Schools lean on tech to launch new year

## BUSINESS

Water is fundamental for westside companies



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## Effects of change still ripple in Maricopa

This month's edition of InMaricopa show the impact COVID-19 has had on the community. Our cover subject, Kristina Donnay, a family nurse practitioner and co-owner of Maricopa Wellness Center, shares her story of being the first site in town to offer coronavirus tests.

The start of the school year was also a sign of the times, as most schools in town opted to start classes online to lessen the impact of COVID-19. There were many platforms to choose from, with an aim to making the educational experience better than the chaos that ended last school year. For Maricopa Unified School District's tech manager, Christine Dickinson, "synchronous" has been the keyword.

Meanwhile, companies are still coming to Maricopa, and consumers continued to shop. Check out our Business Briefs to see the progress. On the other hand, progress has been slow in the effort to get commercial water to businesses on the west side of town, and reasons are complex, but big plans hang in the balance.



In this issue, we talk with a Rancho El Dorado father who claims he used a gun to defend his family when an angry man came to his home intending to do harm, and had his children taken by the state. And we check in with a former city manager just down the tracks in Texas.

Catch up with the housing market, learn the benefits of volunteering, the concerns about distance learning and the appeal of senior house-sharing (as long as the home is age-friendly).

All that and more in this issue of InMaricopa. Happy reading.

*Raquel Hendrickson*

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**ROGER LAWRENCE**  
The corporate retiree came to Maricopa from the Pacific Northwest and quickly learned about local horticulture.



**HARRIET PHELPS**  
Also knowledgeable about gardening, she is a retired psychologist who specialized in social work.



**DAYV MORGAN**  
Owner of HomeSmart Success, the Realtor says he's had his hands full with a hot seller's market.

**ON THE COVER:** Kristina Donnay, FPN-C, medical director at Maricopa Wellness Center, and her team at last month's COVID-19 testing blitz at Copper Sky. Photo by Victor Moreno

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## History

### Never out of style

A former barracks from Williams Field Air Force Base has stood the test of time and continues to change purposes as needs arise. In 1988, the building was placed on land donated by John and Mary Lou Smith as a permanent home for the community library, which had been in several spaces around town. Upon incorporation, it was clear Maricopa needed a larger library for its booming population. When that building was constructed on Smith-Enke Road, the old barracks became the Maricopa Veterans Center in 2009. Imminently, when the new public library is completed off White and Parker Road, the veterans will move into the Smith-Enke building, and the barracks may welcome new residents — the Maricopa Historical Society.



Raquel Hendrickson

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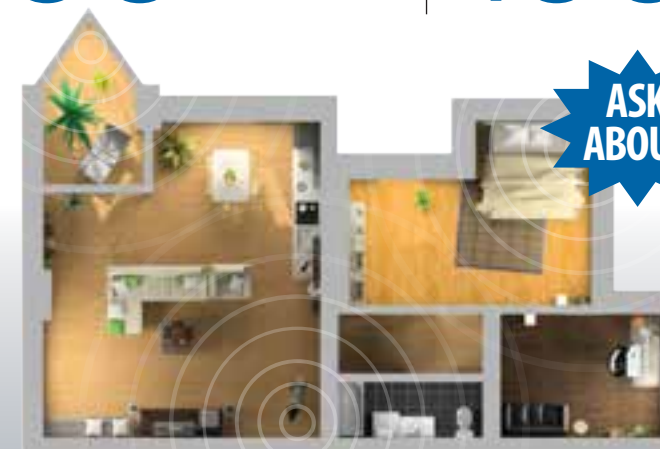


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**Tom Buessing, owner of Highway 238 Industrial Park, has big plans for the property he has owned since 1985, but also has big decisions about water and septic service. He says his current well is sufficient for his current tenants but limits his potential to grow.**

## Waiting on water

Business plans on SR 238 slowed by federal paperwork

By Raquel Hendrickson

Maricopa businesses on State Route 238, miles from John Wayne Parkway, have wonderful views of the Estrella Mountains and lots of room to spread out.

But they don't have much water.

For two entities with particularly extensive plans, water is fundamental.

Tom Buessing, owner of Highway 238 Industrial Park, has a well that's sufficient for his current needs. But to meet city requirements for fire protection for the development he has planned on 87 acres, he would need a 180,000-gallon tank.

He would rather have a hookup to Global Water.

Farther west down SR 238 is the real driving force to get commercial water into west Maricopa — APEX Motor Club. APEX is developing its grand plans, having constructed a track for high-end sports cars and a temporary clubhouse, but with much, much bigger plans that have been public for years.

"We currently have no water or sewer, and it's the remaining piece of the puzzle we need to continue investing in the development, which we are eager to do," said Matt Williams, vice president and managing partner.

The property came with a well, but it was not feasible to reactivate it.

APEX, too, wants a connection to Global Water and is, in fact, the impetus for the idea of extending a 16-inch water main into west Maricopa. The company is approved for certificates of convenience and necessity (CCN) for water and sewer.

### THE HOLDUP

The most difficult delay is caused by right of way.

Global Water has a water main extended down SR 238 as far as Loma Road. The next step is to extend down SR 238 to APEX.

That project brings multiple entities into play, not the least being the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A water main would have to cross Ak-

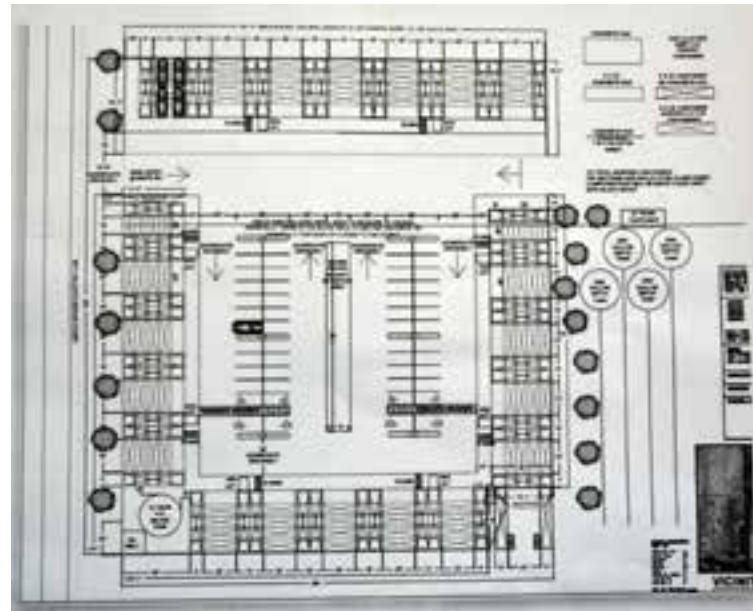
Chin land to reach the westside businesses. That requires approval of easements and permits from the Ak-Chin community and lot and lots of paperwork at the federal level.

"They need right of way from the federal government," said attorney Katosha Nakai of Strickland & Strickland PC, general counsel for Ak-Chin Indian Community.

"There is a whole checklist of items. They are in the process of collecting those needs for the feds. From us, they've done only one of many steps."

According to Department of the Interior code, applicants for right of way must have organizational documents, certifications, filing records and resolutions to prove they are in good standing to do business in the jurisdiction.

Then they need "environmental and archaeological reports, surveys and site assessments, as needed to facilitate compliance with applicable federal and tribal environmental and land use requirements and



**Tom Buessing has plans (left) for container offices with a great view of the mountains. APEX Motor Club (above) is still in the middle of development.**

a statement from the appropriate tribal authority that the proposed use is in conformance with applicable tribal law. There is no standard application form," the code states.

Meanwhile, Global Water and APEX are doing what they can do, besides wait.

Jon Corwin, general manager of Global Water, said typically a developer puts in the infrastructure, designing it to Global Water's standards, and then conveys the infrastructure to the utility. That is happening as APEX is working on its side to extend lines toward Maricopa.

"The water line is progressing with the help of our partners at Ak-Chin as well as the City of Maricopa and Global Water," Williams said. "The first mile is currently in the ground, and we're working diligently with Ak-Chin's planning department to secure the necessary permits to continue the line past Ak-Chin Southern Dunes."

Global Water and APEX are coordinating with several layers of government because they are dealing with federal, state, trust, BIA, tribal and local officials. When the federal checklist is fulfilled, federal officials will talk to the Ak-Chin Community for its input.

"The timeline is unknown at this time," Corwin said.

According to Global Water, as soon as approvals come, the construction can happen pretty quickly.

Williams said APEX wants to start construction this fall. Buessing would like to break ground in a year.

The federal government will decide whether to issue the right of way on which those plans rely, Nakai said.

### THE PLANS

Because the thrust of the development is on the shoulders of APEX and Global Water, business owners like Buessing are a bit on the sidelines.

He has other issues.

He has cleared much of his land and put in block walls as partitions in anticipation of a container-based business park. He plans to

have the area chip-sealed. He wants to place 66 units to be commercial offices.

While APEX is approved for CCN, Buessing has been more standoffish because it is not clear he'll have sewer service in the deal. His sweeping plans for a full industrial park would require at least four septic tanks, taking up an acre, a loss equal to \$1,500 rent a month.

The necessary 180,000-gallon water tank

## For Maricopa, Ak-Chin contributions deeper than money

By Raquel Hendrickson

When a rattling, old building was demolished near the corner of John Wayne Parkway and Honeycutt Road several years ago, the emotional response from members of the Ak-Chin Indian Community surprised Maricopa City Council.

"We wanted to let them know some of the things that stood back then, what it meant to the community of Ak-Chin because we supported Maricopa in generating their own economic development. Our people would go support the mercantile

and the bar right across from it," Chairman Robert Miguel said.

Then-chairman Louis Manuel explained to city leaders the sentimental ties the Ak-Chin had to Maricopa businesses, some that had been standing more than 80 years.

"They were so hurt," Mayor Christian Price said, surprise still in his voice. "Me being a newcomer, I had to ask, 'Why did that bother you?' It was because nobody told them. Nobody expressed the courtesy with a call,

text or email so they would know what's going on."

Now it is Maricopans frequenting and finding employment at Ak-Chin entities like Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino and UltraStar Multi-tainment Center. Miguel said he wants newcomers to understand Ak-Chin is much more than those two entities.

So, when questions arise about whether Ak-Chin contributes or invests enough in Maricopa, the mayor has to shake his head.

"Our relationship is so much deeper than



would cost about \$90,000 by itself, and Buessing estimates about \$40,000 for septic.

“The kicker is, Global could bring water out, but they couldn’t provide septic,” he said. “Well, without septic, I don’t want their stinkin’ water. It’s that simple. It would be a big boon to get the septic and the water from Global. To lose an acre doesn’t make me excited.”

Whether he ultimately hooks to the utility as it passes by on its way to APEX or does the project without Global Water could hinge on investors.

“I’m not taking this on,” Buessing said. “I’m just trying to find an investor.”

He first envisioned the container-based spaces about a year ago.

“I’m picturing the people nobody else wants — the electricians, the plumbers, the people that require industrial-type property. There’s just nothing available,” he said. “I’m gonna lease this out pretty cheap just to get the ball rolling, but we need an investor to get it all going.”

He’s estimating it will cost \$4 million. “Can I get the money, yeah. Do I want to put the land up? No. It’s just too big. At this age, I don’t want to take on that kind of responsibility. You’re talking a 30-year loan.”

He already has about a dozen businesses in the current traditional spaces, from automotive to landscaping, air-conditioning repair, towing, construction and real estate.

According to his container plans, a 45-by-45-foot space would accommodate two 8-by-40-foot containers with space for walkway, stairs and decking. Three containers on top would provide 1,289 square feet of space with a view of the mountains.

For that space, he sees combined law offices, combined insurance offices, even call centers. He also thinks Maricopa is in desperate need of a trade school.

APEX’s future plans include a permanent clubhouse with restaurant and pool, and garage condominiums for those sports cars. The company hauls in water and has portable toilets.

“We will be able to put septic in if we need to, however, we’re confident that Global and the City are on the right path with this project,” Williams said.

money. Money is great, but it’s so much more than that,” Price said.

Between 2016 and 2018, Ak-Chin Indian Community directly contributed \$4.44 million for the operation of the struggling Copper Sky complex.

The Ak-Chin Community often uses the City of Maricopa as a pass-through agency for its required disbursement of grant funds from Prop 202, the law that allows gaming contracts while requiring 12% of revenue to be donated to area programs like education and public safety.

In the past five years, projects for the Prop 202 funds have included a homebound delivery program, Thunderbird Fire District, Keeping Teachers Teaching and the food

bank. In 2017, Ak-Chin gave \$279,000 to the Family Advocacy Center.

A major local project to which Ak-Chin has not contributed monetarily is the overpass across the Union Pacific tracks. While the Ak-Chin benefits from the bridge, Price said there should be no game theory of expectations.

“I think it’s dangerous for us to go tit for tat. I don’t think that’s legit,” Price said.

Miguel said the overpass was very much needed and a benefit to the area. Ak-Chin’s role in landing the federal funding was keeping the discussion in front of Arizona’s congressional delegation.

“They were absolutely key,” Price said. “They went back to D.C. with us to meet

with federal highway administration, to meet with people back there who were instrumental in breaking things free.”

When he can travel to Washington, Miguel said he tries to keep exerting that influence.

“Every time I would go to D.C., even now, I would get ahold of Mayor Price and ask him, ‘What do you need?’” Miguel said.

The mayor and the chairman chat at least twice a month.

“This is what friends do,” Price said. “This is what people do who want to build a strong relationship moving forward together for the next 150 years, or 200 or 1,000 years. That’s what they do. They do this because it’s the right thing to do.”

2015-2020 Ak-Chin contributions and fees to City of Maricopa

**\$4,446,218**

2015-2020 Ak-Chin Contributions to community projects (Prop 202)

**\$998,997**

**“I’m picturing the people nobody else wants – the electricians, the plumbers, the people that require industrial-type property. There’s just nothing available.”** *Tom Buessing*

# IMPLICATIONS

The financial impact of waiting for the federal process could be deep.

APEX had a much slower start than its investors anticipated because of lawsuits apparently sourced by a competitor. With millions on the line, that legal wrangling did nothing to speed up applications and permits.

Buessing, who has been in Maricopa since 1985, has completed work he calls

“phenomenal” in the past year but also considers it slow progress. He cannot tussle with Global Water over its services until its services get through Ak-Chin. He has a long-range view of the situation.

“What I’ve found in the city is if you do something right, they flock to it. If you do it half-a\*\*ed, that’s just the response you get,” he said. “It’s a game. It’s all going to come to fruition, it’s just a matter of when.”

**The City receives upgrades from all three bond rating agencies**



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During the sale, the bonds received over \$19 million in orders for the \$9.9 million in bonds - resulting in a higher than expected NVP (Net Present Value) savings. “To get bond upgrades, a bidding war on our bonds, a quick sale with higher than anticipated returns, all during the COVID-19 crisis speaks tremendously to the fact that something special is happening here in Maricopa and the rest of the country is starting to see that,” stated City Manager Rick Horst.

S&P Global raised the City’s bond rating to ‘AA’ from ‘AA-’. “The raised rating reflects our view of the city’s improved budgetary performance and maintenance of very strong available reserves,” said S&P Global Ratings credit analyst David Mares.

Moody’s Investors Service upgraded the City of Maricopa general obligation bonds to Aa2 from Aa3, the second upgrade in less than 10 months. “The upgrade to Aa2 reflects continued material improvement in the city’s tax base, fostered by rapid development and population growth. The city is well positioned to weather the impacts of coronavirus and impending recession, having demonstrated its management strength and financial flexibility through the last recession when reserve levels remained above 70%,” according to the news release published by Moody’s.

Fitch Ratings assigned a ‘AAA’ rating to the City of Maricopa, their highest score. The rating “reflects the city’s sound fiscal performance and conservative budget practices, which have maintained a strong degree of financial flexibility,” Fitch shared in their news release regarding the rating.



# 8.5 billion gallons of water saved and counting

By Jon Corwin, Global Water Resources


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Additionally, Global Water has a robust water recycling program wherein we collect and treat all wastewater generated in the City of Maricopa to a very high quality and return it for irrigation use throughout the community. This year Global Water projects the Maricopa community will surpass NINE BILLION GALLONS of groundwater saved through the use of Global Water's innovative recycled water program, and we now recycle nearly one billion gallons of water annually! Together we've saved enough water to fill the Rose Bowl almost 52 times.

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# How much water does a leaky faucet waste?

By Terry Leamon, My Maricopa Plumber

A leaky faucet is a problem for more than one reason. It's an issue that will probably only grow worse, and it can cost you more money on your water bill. Beyond that, it wastes a lot of water. But how much water does a leaky faucet actually waste? It may not seem like much, but over a period of time the gallons add up.

A single drip every couple of seconds may not seem like a lot of water. But think about it this way. If you let your faucet drip every day, 24 hours a day, it is going to add up. Imagine what would happen if every faucet in your home was dripping or every faucet in your neighborhood. It would not seem like such a small amount of water anymore.

In terms of how much water is actually wasted by a leaky faucet, every drop of water is a different size and falls at a different rate. For the most part, however, every drop of

water coming from a faucet (according to the U.S. Geological Survey) is between one-fifth and one-third of a milliliter. Using those calculations and 1/4 of a milliliter as an average, the USGS estimates that about 15,140 drips from a faucet equals one gallon of water.

It may not seem like much, but 15,000 drops are a LOT of drops. If your faucet dripped once every second every day, all day, it would only take four-and-a-half hours to waste one gallon of water. Every day you would waste 5 gallons of water, or 2,082 gallons per year. That is 10% of the average water used by a standard 3.5 gallon per flush toilet on a daily basis. Now, imagine what happens if you have more than one drippy faucet, or the leak is larger than average, or the leak is at the bathtub, which will likely drip more than a faucet.

In short, the cost of a leaky faucet may not seem like much, but as time passes, it



will add up and, if it is not taken care of, the cost will only grow as the leak gets bigger and potentially new leaks start in other faucets inside or outside your home. Do not let it drip forever — take action now and reduce the impact to the environment and your wallet.

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## Stores mandate face masks

Bashas', Walmart and Fry's began requiring customers to wear face coverings to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

"While we're certainly not the first business to require face coverings, we know this is a simple step everyone can take for their safety and the safety of others in our facilities," stated the announcement from Walmart Chief Operating Officer Dacona Smith and Sam's Club COO Lance da la Rosa. "According to the

CDC, face coverings help decrease the spread of COVID-19, and because the virus can be spread by people who don't have symptoms and don't know they are infected, it's critically important for everyone to wear a face covering in public and social distance."

In a tweet, Fry's parent company Kroger said it is "committed to doing our part to help reduce the spread of the virus." It noted that its employees will continue to wear masks.

## Development around town

**Oasis at the Wells**, an apartment complex being constructed at 41535 W. Shea Way, received commercial permits for each of its six buildings. That includes two 36-unit buildings, a 24-unit building, two 12-unit buildings and a clubhouse. It is being constructed by Mountain Trace Development. Builders also received a noise variance to pour concrete at 3 a.m.

**Meritage Homes** has steady work going on in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado and received its administrative design review. Commercial shade structures and commercial electrical work are part of the development along with subdivision improvement.

A **La Quinta Hotel** is rising at John Wayne Parkway/Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard next to Copper Sky. The four-story building will have 89 rooms and occupy 56,000 square feet.



The store occupied by **Big 5 Sporting Goods** at Maricopa Power Center the Wells changed hands June 15. ZG Holdings 7 LLC of Phoenix purchased the building at 41800 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy. from V Moore Enterprises of Texas for \$2.136 million. Big 5 net-leases the building.

**Sunrise Café**, which closed its doors early in the COVID-19 pandemic, was put up for sale for \$90,000. The restaurant, in the Fry's

Marketplace Shopping Center, 20917 N. John Wayne Parkway, opened in 2007 as a family-owned breakfast-and-lunch place and started serving dinner late last year. It has a Series 12 liquor license.

**Molly's House of Little Feet** received its permit for commercial tenant improvement at 16540 N. Porter Road, valued at \$168,000.

**Walgreens** opened its second location June 29. The store at 41840 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy. was built before the Great Recession as a future Walgreens, but the company never opened as it waited for the right time, financially. Store Manager Baron Bedgood said it relieves the pressure on the Walgreens on John Wayne Parkway.

**Sequoia Pathway Academy** broke ground July 10 on a 7,000-square-foot classroom building for its secondary school. The new space will include three science labs, a computer lab, art room and a music room as well as traditional classrooms for the secondary school. The academy has had classes in mobiles for several years.



## Grocers get clean bill of health

Pinal County health inspectors check out Maricopa's main grocery stores June 16-July 15 and found no violations.

### EXCELLENT [No violations found]

- Bashas'
- Bashas' — AFC Sushi
- Bashas' — Bakery
- Bashas' — Deli
- Bashas' — Starbucks
- Denny's
- Fry's Marketplace
- Fry's Marketplace — Bakery
- Fry's Marketplace — Deli
- Fry's Marketplace — Starbucks
- IHOP
- Pizza Hut
- Walmart
- Walmart — Bakery
- Walmart — Deli

### SATISFACTORY [Violations corrected during inspection]

None

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

None

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

None

## Planned housing development in review process

The public review started in July on a 64-acre site planned for a single-family housing community with a small, mixed-use area. The review process for the requested major General Plan amendment lasts through Sept. 14.

McDavid Estates would consist of more than 200 homes at medium density in a community north of McDavid Road. The land, which is north of Maricopa High School and

Maricopa Meadows, apparently has never been developed or used before.

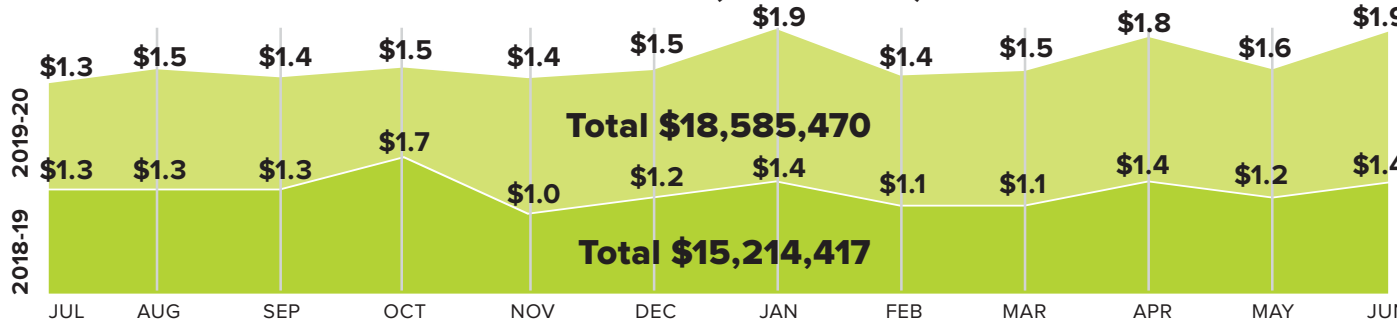
The north side of the development parallels the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, separated by a drainage area. The developers, Maricopa 64 Partners LLC, plan to install a buffer to decrease train noise.

The small, mixed-use parcel may include single-family and multi-family housing "with the potential for townhomes, cluster



housing and live-work type units or office/neighborhood commercial uses which will be determined by the end user," according to the narrative report by Coe & Van Loo Consultants.

## Fiscal Year Sales Tax Collection (in millions)



## Addition to the dining scene

Roots Eatery, a new fast-casual restaurant, opened July 22 at 20046 N. John Wayne Parkway, Suite 104, the former home of Domino's Pizza. The chef-driven concept features comfort food with a culinary twist.

The menu includes pan seared salmon, half roasted garlic chicken and beef filet, plus several keto-friendly entrees. Brunch is offered on the weekends. Chef-owner Christopher Spear, a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America and veteran of four restaurant openings, is transforming his home-based catering business to a laid-back environment for diners.



Beef filet is on the menu at the Roots Eatery.



# COOLING TIPS

1. Program thermostat to comfortable temp, and raise set point before sleeping or leaving home
2. Routinely clean/replace air conditioner filters once a month or as recommended
3. Turn on exhaust fans during cooking or bathing and leave them on for about 20 minutes afterward.
4. Turn off ceiling fans when you leave a room
5. Set fan switch on thermostat to "Auto" unless system operates continuously for health reasons
6. Close window coverings during the day to block sun's heat

Source: Energy.gov



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1. A specimen is collected from a man during the July 18 COVID-19 drive-thru testing blitz at Copper Sky, the first in the city. The event was staffed by the Maricopa Wellness Center and the Pinal County Health Department. *Victor Moreno*
2. The National Guard provided essential logistical support for the event. *Victor Moreno*
3. A National Guardsman helps control traffic at the testing blitz. *Victor Moreno*
4. A Maricopa Wellness Center staff member prepares a specimen collection bag during the event. More than 375 tests were administered. *Victor Moreno*

5. A crew places rock on large posts set to become the foundation of a wall being constructed around the Maricopa Station area of the Heritage District. It will create a buffer for properties along Plainview Street. *Raquel Hendrickson*
6. Veterans of Foreign Wars hosted a flag-raising event with a short ceremony at Maricopa Veterans Center on the Fourth of July. *Raquel Hendrickson*
7. The six candidates for Maricopa City Council took questions from voters during a Facebook Live Town Hall hosted by InMaricopa.com on July 9. Participating in the forum at Copper Sky were, clockwise from top left: challenger Linette Caroselli, incumbent Julia Gusse, challenger Andre LaFond, incumbent Nancy Smith, challenger Bob Marsh and challenger Amber Liermann. The event was facilitated by Jim Chaston of Chaston Taxes & Accounting and Scott Bartle, publisher of InMaricopa. *Merenzi Young / Eye of Odin Studios*



5



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WHERE ARE THEY NOW:

Former city manager soars with big names in small town

By Bob McGovern

Kevin Evans left Maricopa nearly a decade ago to return to his home state of Texas.

The Maricopa city manager from 2008 to 2011, he moved to take the same position in McGregor, a city of 5,200 about 15 miles southwest of Waco. He's in his 10th year on the job and loving it.

"It's been the best time of my 44-year career," said Evans, the grandfather of seven grandsons and one granddaughter. "I don't plan on leaving."

Job One for Evans is finding tenants to complete an 8,000-plus-acre industrial park in the city. SpaceX, the aerospace manufacturer and space transport services company founded by Elon Musk, leases half of the industrial park for a rocket recycling facility.

"They are exceptionally amazing partners in business and the community," Evans said.

He said he works with many fantastic employers in town — Ferguson Enterprises plumbing supply, Derksen Portable Buildings and the Texas Forest Service, among them — but more people will know another company with an international reputation.

Magnolia, the home design and décor company founded by Chip and Joanna Gaines, operates a vacation rental home (sleeps eight, \$795 or more a night) in McGregor, about midway on Evans' two-block walk from home to office.

"We've got a lot of really neat stuff here," he said.

And while he won't be coming back to his former Arizona city, he enjoyed hearing about the opening of the overpass and lots of development plans.

"I think Maricopa's got a great future," he said.



Kevin Evans

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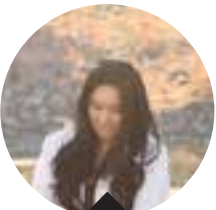
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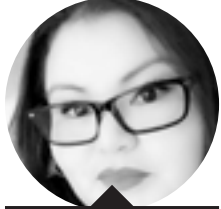
Albelo Yarisbell



Dam Range



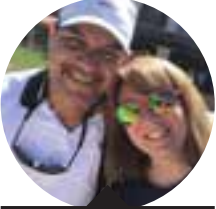
Katie Clark



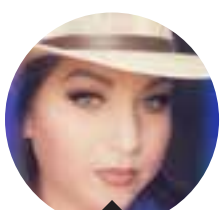
Liz Trujillo



Mary Huhn Romero



Nicole Fath-Rincon



Rafaela Almaguer



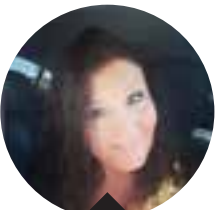
Randy Elits



Regina Blecher



Rogelio M. Lopez



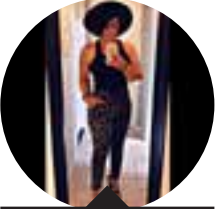
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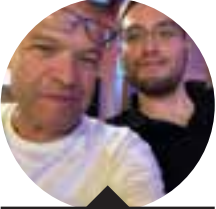
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# Kristina Donnay, the nurse who stepped up to offer COVID-19 testing

By Bob McGovern

When Kristina Donnay took it upon herself in April to provide coronavirus testing in Maricopa, she didn't anticipate working weeks on end in the office without a day off.

Nor did she expect the public backlash visited upon her practice, the Maricopa Wellness Center, for conducting tests at a time several health providers and national drug store chains in the city were taking a pass.



"I needed to step up to the plate. I was shocked other facilities in Maricopa did not," Donnay said. "We need more testing in the city. We need to see we are a hotspot in the city."

Her practice, which opened in April 2019, was perhaps a less-than-obvious choice to jump into the COVID-19 testing fray.

The Maricopa Wellness Center is not a primary care provider, but a med spa, a hybrid of an aesthetic medical center and day spa that provides nonsurgical aesthetic medical services — Botox injections, chemical peels, hormone injections and the like — under the supervision of a licensed medical practitioner. Donnay is medical director and co-owner of the practice.

But she saw a need and assumed the "huge undertaking" to set up as a testing facility.

"We are truly trying to do our best to help the community," she said. "I didn't feel like I had a choice not to offer it."

"She really has so much compassion and concern for the community of Maricopa," said Tascha Spears, Pinal County's new health director.

The center started testing after Gov. Doug Ducey's stay at home order expired and the practice reopened for medically necessary services.

In April and May, Donnay and her staff of four were conducting 1-3 tests weekly.

That number grew to 4-5 tests a week during the first three weeks of June.

And then the lid blew off the pot on June 24.

## ON THE FRONTLINES

Donnay ended up on the frontlines of the pandemic after a rare illness took her down in March. Suspicious it could be coronavirus, she looked around to get a test. As sick as she was, she spent a good part of three days on the phone. Pinal County didn't have enough tests and Maricopa County wouldn't test her because she is not a resident. She was told to go to the ER, but she knew that wasn't the proper way.



"It was a terrible situation and I thought, oh man, I hope nobody else has to go through this, too," she recalled. "I thought, I have the access to LabCorp and Sonora Quest and I'll just make sure that I have some type of testing available."

She figured her practice would be a "back-up," that another entity in the city, perhaps more equipped for the task, would offer testing, but none did.

Maricopa Wellness Center closed 10 days before the state mandate because Donnay could see what was happening. During the shutdown, she worked diligently to procure testing kits, hearing "no" many times because her practice was not a primary care provider and did not accept insurance. She persisted.

"I just continued to say I need this," she said. "I just refused to take no for an answer."

Eventually, working through her contacts, she was successful. Today, she works with Lab Corp, which turns around the results a bit more quickly.

That single-mindedness to do what is best for the patient was at the heart of creating the practice.

**"We need more testing in the city. We need to see we are a hotspot ..."**

*Kristina Donnay*

Donnay grew up in Scottsdale but had strong ties to Maricopa before moving here five years ago.

In 2000, her father, Bill Day, came to set up trash service for a sparkling new development called Rancho El Dorado about to start building houses, he recalled. Day, who said his wife and son moved from Scottsdale three years later, talked fondly of his memories from that time.

"I was a senior in high school, and I was like 'You guys are crazy,'" Donnay interjected.

A mother of two, she is a certified family nurse practitioner. She earned her master's degree from Grand Canyon University a decade ago and has worked in women's health and forensics.

**Kristina Donnay, right, and her father, Bill Day, survey the north parking lot at Copper Sky before the start of the COVID-19 testing blitz on July 18. They opened the Maricopa Wellness Center in partnership.**

She was working with sexual assault victims in early 2018 when she approached her father to ask if he wanted to go into business.

Day knew something about business start-ups. He has been an entrepreneur since buying his first business — a dog-grooming pet store in Glendale — in the late 1970s. His wife also started and managed businesses as well.

He had recently invested in another business when his daughter posed a partnership. "I look at her and go 'no,' but what is it? She threw out the idea of a practice here in Maricopa."

Donnay had begun thinking about a venture after a family member had a stem-cell injection in the knee at a "terrible practice."

"They were being sold the world and it just looked like bad medicine," she said.

With her forensic background and research-based approach to medicine, she thought she could do better. With her father's help.



“It concerned me,” she said, “so we thought we would do that here in Maricopa, provide that service but on an ethical level.”

‘WE’RE TEACHING ONE ANOTHER’

Daughter and father started with an initial focus on aesthetic treatments, but the practice has evolved into a full-service med spa. Once committed, Donnay took about a year to train full-time with a focus on treating patients safely. Her father attended all the training as well, though he is not certified to perform treatments. It opened in April 2019.

Day serves as office manager for the practice when he’s not working his day job overseeing landfill and transfer station sales in the Phoenix market for Waste Management.

“We’re teaching one another” the other side of the business, said Donnay who, with her husband, Chris, co-owns the practice with her parents. It recently received the “Small Business of the Year” award from the Maricopa Chamber of Commerce.

Her father was an early arrival in the city, but today it is also home to Donnay, her brother, her in-laws as well as an uncle and cousin.

“That was one of the reasons why we wanted to start the business here in Maricopa,” Day said of family. “I love the town. I’ve seen it grow. I’ve always wanted to be part of the community, be able to help people. This has worked out great for us.”

Perhaps it was only natural that Donnay and her family would end up here, with many fond memories collected over the years.

“I mean even before I lived here, I was coming here with my parents for the Fourth of July at Pacana Park,” she said. “Oh my gosh, those were amazing. We thought that was wonderful, like what a great new addition to the city. And then the salsa festivals.

“So even though I haven’t lived here as long, we’ve been enjoying the small-town feel since they’ve moved here.”

THE CORONAVIRUS CRUSH

In mid-July, in her office, Donnay flicked week-by-week through her online calendar to show the COVID-19 testing appointments. Through the first three weeks of June, they barely registered, barely less than five a week.

And then she reached the week of June 21. Monday and Tuesday were normal, but on Wednesday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, the calendar grew thick with testing appointments.

By the time, Donnay and her team left the



The Maricopa Wellness Center on Smith Enke Road is a full-service medi-spa.

their aesthetic treatments and in the afternoon for their COVID-19 tests. In between, the office undergoes an extensive disinfecting protocol.

“I’m separating the healthy and the sick,” she said.

To this day, Donnay said she is unsure what triggered the local rush to get tested on June 24.

But the news was not good that day in Arizona, which was emerging as a coronavirus hotspot along with several other states, including Florida and Texas. The Arizona Department of Health Services reported a then-record number of COVID-19 deaths in a single day — 79 — even though they didn’t all happen on the same day.

A day earlier, hospitalizations had started to climb in the South and West. In Arizona, hospital beds were reportedly filling up with virus patients. Health officials reported that 88% of adult intensive care units and nearly as many inpatient beds were being used. They were the highest percentages in nearly three months.

The country’s top epidemiologist had just testified before a House panel on Capitol Hill and delivered a sobering assessment.

“The next couple of weeks are going to be critical in our ability to address those surges we are seeing in Florida, Texas, Arizona and other states,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.



‘We’re teaching one another’ the other side of the business, Kristina Donnay says of her father, Bill Day. She is the medical director, while he serves as office manager of the practice.

office that day, three hours after the normal 5 p.m. closing time, they had performed 42 tests. “We were hit hard. We weren’t prepared,” she said. “It was chaos. My staff was so amazing. It has not let up since.”

Through the better part of July, the office performed from 30-45 tests daily. (On July 13, the office had 150 COVID-related inquiries.)

“I feel like I’ve gotten my sea legs a little bit better in the past couple of weeks,” she said. “When we were hit that first day we weren’t as organized as we are right now. We didn’t have our groove on it. We felt like we were kind of pushed into the deep end.”

Now, patients come in the morning for

“The virus is not going to disappear,” he warned.

All of which added up, at least, to more public awareness that cases were multiplying in Arizona, weeks after the state began to reopen.

Donnay has been working overtime and gone without a day off since that crazy Wednesday. She has been in the office every day, including July 4<sup>th</sup> as she contacted patients to give them their test results. She has called to give results, only to find out the patient had already died.

Meeting the demand for tests has been demanding on Donnay and her family, including a daughter, 5, and a son, 2.

She wanted to work for herself to have more time with her family. But the past two months she and her staff have worked many hours, “more hours than I did even as a floor nurse,” she said.

“It’s definitely been difficult on my kids.”

AN UNEXPECTED BACKLASH

Maricopa Wellness Center charges a \$100 office visit fee for the testing, which includes a molecular test to diagnose a SARS-CoV-2 infection and a rapid serology (blood) test to detect antibodies that indicate previous exposure to the virus. Those two tests are conducted via a nasalpharyngeal swab and fingerstick, respectively.

The antibody test results are ready in about 15 minutes, while the nasal specimen is sent off to the lab with results typically available in 3-9 days.

The cost includes the testing kits and lab processing.

She said the practice has been transparent about the fee as a provider that does not accept insurance, though patients can submit to their insurance for possible reimbursement.

But that didn’t prevent an onslaught of negative comments from people stopping in the office, calling to rant or posting on social media. Donnay and staff were told they were “terrible

people” with a “special place in hell” awaiting them. She was called a “drug lord” and accused of “profiting off the pandemic.”

Donnay doesn’t take the criticism personally but admits there were days when she and other staffers were in tears as they turned out the lights.

In a Facebook post on July 24, she mentioned the “nasty comments made about us for charging an office visit fee for the rapid antibodies test. I have some serious issues with this.” She noted that to provide testing she has to buy the antibody tests, pay staff, purchase PPE, pay rent and utilities.

“Every day my staff is putting themselves at risk to be the only place in town to offer testing.”

Kristina Donnay

“Every day my staff is putting themselves at risk to be the only place in town to offer testing,” she added.

Early in her career, as a triage nurse at the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Jail in Phoenix, she learned people do not like to have their autonomy taken from them. She sees the anger expressed by some as “people trying to get control back (in their lives) during the pandemic.”

“It’s not directed at us,” she said.

Spears was on the job at the Pinal County Public Health Department for less than a week in early July when she reached out to Donnay, a former forensic colleague. The county wanted to offer a testing blitz in Maricopa, and she knew Donnay was the only provider in the city.

“I had no doubts about her,” Spears said. “We’re just grateful as a health provider here that she recognizes the need for testing. Pinal County Public Health just applauds her efforts.”

‘THE STATE IS AT A CRITICAL POINT’

On July 18, Donnay’s team, with help from Spears, health department staffers and the National Guard, swabbed more than 375 people at three drive-thru stations at Copper Sky. The vehicles lined up early, some three hours before for the 8 a.m. event, but the wait dissipated within a couple hours on a day when temperatures reached 108 degrees. The event was ended several hours early after one staffer suffered heat stroke and three others had heat exhaustion.

Donnay said she was hoping to conduct about 500 tests but surmised that people thought the wait would be worse.

“I think people were very hesitant, thinking the lines would be through the roof,” Donnay said at the event, in her surgical gown, mask and gloves.

She was hoping to schedule at least one additional testing blitz in August.

And while testing is vitally important in gaining the upper hand on the virus, she said people need to do their part.

Acknowledging face masks have become political, she said their role in preventing the spread of the virus has not been emphasized enough.

“You wear one to protect others,” a concept ingrained in healthcare workers during their education and training, she said. “From a medical standpoint, the masks have always been important.”

She sees face masks as similar to smoking being prohibited in public buildings. Such bans are not in place for the health of the smoker’s lungs, but for others subjected to secondhand smoke.

“It’s the same with face masks.”

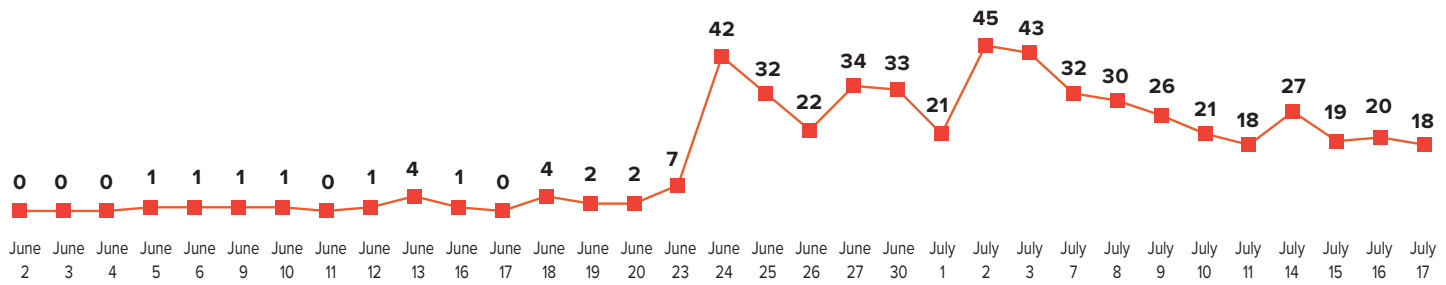
“The state is at a critical point,” she said. “We are taking it day by day.”

Her message: Wash hands. Stay home. Wear a mask. Get tested.

And don’t take chances by not doing those simple things.

“It’s not worth it.”

COVID-19 tests conducted daily at Maricopa Wellness Center







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1. Edkey and Sequoia Pathway Academy officials turn soil in a July 10 groundbreaking ceremony for a 7,000-square-foot classroom addition. The new space will include three science labs, computer lab, art room and music room as well as traditional classrooms for the secondary school. *Raquel Hendrickson*
2. Wyatt Hunter, a freshman at Maricopa High School, waits to pick up his district-issued laptop on July 20. He was accompanied by his father, Elvis Hunter. *Raquel Hendrickson*
3. Xylia Kraay, 13, was honored on the Fourth of July by the Veterans of Foreign Wars during a flag-raising ceremony. Xylia took second place in the organization's District 10 Patriots Pen youth essay contest and was recognized as "an outstanding young spokesperson of the future." *Raquel Hendrickson*

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Submitted

# Charged in Rancho El Dorado shooting, father says he was protecting his family

By Bob McGovern

When Don Gadson woke up July 5, the father of five had no idea his life would change so dramatically in just a few minutes that day.

A self-employed tattoo artist with a loyal following, Gadson and his fiancée, Ashley Coleman, were still in the afterglow of the May 15 birth of his fifth child, a baby girl named Zariah.

A one-and-a-half-year resident of Maricopa, Gadson has four other children: LaNiya, 10, Elijah, 9, Isaiah, 7, and Miyah, 5. The family lives on West Hall Court in Rancho El Dorado.

“I’m a father before anything,” he said in an interview at Jane Askew Memorial Park in the community, his voice emotional as blood

still pooled in his left eye. Nearby, several poster boards were full of family photos, the children smiling.

“I take pride in making my kids happy.”

Now his five children are in state custody, taken from the home by state officials and being cared for by strangers, he said.

“They came to my home and snatched them,” said Gadson, 33, a Chicago native.

His two older daughters are together and his two sons are together in separate foster homes. Baby Zariah is by herself at a foster home.

He says he remains concerned for his children, being in strange homes during the coronavirus pandemic. His fiancée, he said, is unable to nurse Zariah.

Gadson said his arrest made it impossible

**Don Gadson, in a photo with his son Isaiah. The day after the shooting, the State took custody of his five children.**

for him to attend memorial service for his mother in Chicago, who died just days after the baby was born.

“My family has been destroyed,” he said. “I am not a monster.”

## SLAMMED ON THE GARAGE FLOOR

Gadson said he was acting in self-defense and protecting the family he loves so much when, just after noon on July 5, a vehicle stopped on West Hall Court at his home.

Gunfire erupted minutes later.

Inside the home, Gadson had received a Facebook message from another man stating: “CAP im outside,” he would tell police later.

Gadson went outside and found the man, who was the boyfriend of an acquaintance of

Coleman, in a “fighting stance” in his driveway, according to a police report. The police report identified the man as Kalib Kimbrough.

Waiting behind the wheel of the vehicle was Kalib’s girlfriend, identified in the statement of probable cause as Desiree Balentine.

Gadson told police he recalled Kimbrough calling him out of the garage, but he said no. Kimbrough then allegedly approached Gadson in the garage, “picked him up and slammed him on the garage floor,” the police report said.

Kimbrough then grabbed Gadson by his dreadlocks and punched him on the left side of his face, then grabbed a license plate in the garage and began hitting him in the head, Gadson told police.

With that, Kimbrough headed for the vehicle.

Gadson, who told police he was fearful that the man who had just assaulted him was going to the vehicle to retrieve a gun, allegedly told police that he went to a dresser in the garage, took out a firearm and began shooting, according to the probable cause statement.

Telling police that he recalled firing his weapon about “mid-driveway,” Gadson said he thought he struck the rear window and rear door of the vehicle, the report said.

## SHOTS FIRED AND AN ARREST

Police received three calls about the incident, nearly all in real-time, including one from Coleman, who reported two men were in a physical altercation at the residence, according to the probable cause statement. Another report was phoned in by a Hall Court resident who stated she saw a neighbor with what she believed to be a gun in his hand and heard two pops. Another resident on the street reported that she “observed her neighbor being physically assaulted, retrieved a firearm and started shooting at a vehicle as it left the area.”

Officers responding to the scene said they found three shell casings in the front yard and cleared the home, observing a gun on a pool table near the front door, according to the report.

“Donald was interviewed and officers visibly could see injuries to the left side of his face,” the report said.

By 4 p.m., Gadson was under arrest, in handcuffs and on his way to Pinal County Jail. He is charged with aggravated assault, endangerment, disorderly conduct, criminal damage and weapons misconduct, police said.

Kimbrough, who suffered a gunshot wound, was airlifted to a Chandler hospital after officers with the Casa Grande Police Department



Bob McGovern

**Don Gadson, left, wearing face mask, is surrounded by friends supporting him through his family ordeal. “His family comes first,” said one friend.**



Bob McGovern

**A supporter holds a photo of Don Gadson’s five children, clockwise from top left: LaNiyah, 10, Isaiah, 7, Elijah, 9, Miyah, 5, and baby Zariah.**

located the vehicle on Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway near the Frito Lay plant, according to Maricopa police. He was treated and released.

Representatives of the Arizona Department of Child Safety showed up the next day to remove the children from the home because his fiancée had bonded him out of jail, Gadson said.

“I think DCS jumped the gun,” he said. “They should have done an investigation first.”

## SURROUNDED BY FRIENDS

Nine days after his arrest, Gadson was surrounded by more than a dozen friends and former customers hours after he was formally charged with felony aggravated assault in Pinal County Superior Court. He became emotional.

“I need my family back,” he said, mentioning that his fiancée has left him to try and get the children back.

He did not want to identify his attacker and the driver, nor did he want to talk about allegedly firing the gun. He claimed he has surveillance footage of the assault but that police have not asked to review it. He didn’t want to discuss the injuries he sustained in the incident.

Many of his gathered friends, who looked at the family photos, wanted to talk about Gadson.

Melissa Sitts of Maricopa got to know Gadson as a tattoo customer and became a friend.

“He’s a family man,” she said. “I’ve been in his house and those kids are so happy.”

“It just breaks my heart.”

Carland Clinkscales, 45, of Maricopa agreed.

“He’s a very good man. He will do what’s necessary to protect his family,” he said. “I think he handled it the way anyone else would have done.”

“His family comes first,” said Neosha Ealy, who has known Gadson for years.

Stephan Nelson has only known Gadson a little over a year.

But the linebackers and running backs coach for Maricopa High School said his friend was “nothing but positive.”



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**Ashley Coleman holds their new baby, Zariah.**

“He’s an all-around good person,” Nelson said. “It’s all love. It’s a shame.”

“He is devastated.”

Gadson said he appreciated the support.

“I feel loved that I have the support of the community,” he said.

“I gained a reputation for my kindness and how I treat people,” he added. “Nobody in Maricopa has a bad thing to say about me.”

**STARTED ON FACEBOOK?**

The ugly incident apparently began on Facebook, and it has since festered on the social media platform.

Gadson claimed his alleged attacker told him that Gadson disrespected him on Facebook “so I beat his ass.”

Neither Kimbrough nor Balentine have been charged in the incident, according to police.

In the days since the incident, Gadson has been active on Facebook, telling his story, expressing his concern for his children, trying to rally community support. Several of his posts have been shared hundreds of times and people have left dozens of sympathetic comments.

He has called out Balentine for taunting him on social media.

In a 28-minute, live video on a Facebook account bearing the name Dez Balentine and reposted by Gadson on his own page, a woman wears a t-shirt with his mugshot on it and responds to comments being made by her viewers.

Laughing, she says, “He was mad as hell taking this picture,” pointing to the mugshot. “Why am I going to jail? Why am I the one going to jail? Because you f\*\*\*ed up.”

“Right, you’ve all seen that post of him crying ‘he attacked me,’” she says a bit later, still

laughing. “Not with a weapon, though. Not with a weapon.”

Asked why Kimbrough is not facing assault charges, Maricopa police did not answer, instead pointing to Chief Steve Stahl’s comments on the case in a Coffee with the Chief video posted July 11 on the department’s Facebook page.

Near the end of his 49-minute video, Stahl is asked by a viewer to speak about the shooting in Rancho El Dorado because it “appears like the other party instigated. Why did the other party not receive charges?”

Stahl discussed the case, briefly, leaving open the possibility of more charges to be filed in the case.

**‘A NEED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES’**

“The investigation is still ongoing so just because the other person hasn’t been charged yet, doesn’t mean they won’t be charged,” he said. “This investigation is far from being over. Not only are we investigating it, the Pinal County Attorney’s Office was involved in this from the get-go. We were in conversations with them from the moment we arrived on scene. So, this investigation is far from over.”

Stahl took the occasion to point out the case is yet another to highlight the dangers of social media.

“People are utilizing social media in a very divisive manner, causing arguments and fights over social media that escalate to the point then where somebody thinks they need to take matters into their hands. It’s sad,” he said. “But this is a learning moment.”

“This is what could happen if you are talking bad about somebody (on) a social media platform that is a public platform,” he continued. “And then they have a need to defend themselves on that same social media platform.”

“I will be quite frank with all of you, the person who received the gunshot wound is very, very fortunate to be alive. By a fluke, by a deflection of a bullet, they were not killed. This is not a tool that you should be using to air your grievances.”

There is talk of setting up a GoFundMe to help raise money to cover legal fees, said Gadson, who is due back in court on Aug. 31.

It’s hard to believe, given all Gadson, his fiancée and the children have been through, that he doesn’t regret the actions that led to his charges.

Time and time again, he returned to the irony of his situation.

“They came with the intent to harm me,” he said. “Meanwhile, I’m fighting for my family.”

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**Left: Stacks of devices waited to be picked up by high schoolers as Maricopa Unified School District distributed thousands of laptops ahead of the start of school. Top: Christine Dickinson is managing the district's virtual education until campuses reopen.**

could see what did and didn't work well for the district's goals.

On top of that, exquisite timing made it possible for the district to supply the devices necessary to make virtual learning a reality, so to speak. That was because voters chose to increase their own tax bill to get the students more technology. The district now has five technology integration specialists, as well.

"We're actually in a good spot. We're very, very thankful that we've had a few years to build up," Dickinson said. "It would be a different scenario without our override."

Ram Academy, a credit-recovery option for high schoolers, has already been using the platform Odysseyware and will continue to do so. Odysseyware was recently purchased by Edgenuity. MUSD liked what it saw in Edgenuity and chose it for the new Maricopa Virtual Academy, which was created before the COVID-19 pandemic.

They opted to continue that license down through sixth grade.

"[Curriculum Director] Mr. Wade Watson and I, this past winter, went through the Maricopa Virtual Academy application process with the state to become an online academy," Dickinson said. "At that point in time, we knew we would be moving forward with Edgenuity anyway, so that did put us in a really good spot to expand down as far as we could to sixth grade with that license. We were very fortunate that we were very proactive because of the needs of our community anyway going online."

For kindergarten through fifth grade, MUSD is using the Florida Virtual School platform.

"We felt like Florida Virtual best aligned with our scope and sequence in our district," Dickinson said.

Mostly remotely, MUSD teachers went through robust training on the platforms. For it to work, classes must stick to the scope and sequence so there will be a flow from online into the classroom when the time comes.

Teachers have the option of teaching from their classrooms. Also, "for the first time in MUSD history," Dickinson said, teachers can take their devices home.

At Sequoia Pathway Academy, a charter school, the administration feels fortunate its mother company Edkey LLC already has long experience in remote learning through its Sequoia Choice Arizona Distance Learning.

In a letter to parents, President and CEO Mark Plitzuweit said the program now "can be used as support for an educational 'stop-gap' to get the school year started and to provide additional training to our campuses as we start our year off in a distance learning mode."

**I want to make sure our teachers feel supported and not overwhelmed in this. It's all new, we're all navigating these waters together."**

*MUSD technology coordinator*

*Christine Dickinson*

Lesson plans are meant to be engaging and teacher-led.

Pathway starts Aug. 4. Secondary Principal Markchele Kamson said teachers are concentrating on that gap to have all students on the same page as the school slowly rolls out its plan to get back in the classroom.

"Virtual learning, we still have supports for all student groups, special education, ELL, all of them. And basically, we are doing professional development training for teachers when they come back," Kamson said. "We're actually targeting so we can deal with this gap that we have, but we're very intentional with our approach."

Legacy Traditional Academy, a charter school, will be 100% online through Schoology. Classes start Aug. 5. When in-person teaching is allowed, students can choose whether they

## Going the distance

New school year starts online for most

Story and photos by Raquel Hendrickson

It won't be like fourth quarter.

That is the word from Maricopa schools launching a most peculiar year amid coronavirus. Most are starting classes online until the state allows in-person instruction, as early as Aug. 17 for charters. New levels of accountability are part of the expectations.

And the schools are trying to set up teachers to succeed so the students may succeed.

"I want to make sure our teachers feel supported and not overwhelmed in this. It's all new, we're all navigating these waters together," said Christine Dickinson, technology

coordinator for Maricopa Unified School District. "We expect they will need support, and that's why we're here."

### PLATFORMS

At MUSD, "synchronous" is the word of the year. Students and their teacher are online at the same time and communicating in real time. School started July 30.

Over the years, programs have been established that engage students in distance learning, from blended-learning programs at the middle schools to Ram Academy at Maricopa High School. The tech department

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wish to continue online, go to class or use a hybrid model.

Attendance is tracked by monitoring students’ daily login. After the date to get back to brick-and-mortar teaching, students will have a week to decide what model they want for the rest of the semester.

Through Schoology, students will have instruction on core courses like math, phonograms, spelling, reading, writing, grammar, social studies and science, Superintendent Nicole Kirkley told Legacy parents.

Assignments will be delivered online rather than in physical packets.

“We have a full platform, very different from fourth quarter, where all of our curriculum is built out with videos, the textbook, activities, discussion posts, quizzes, tests, much like you might see in a college learning environment. However, very interactive and catered toward our young students,” Kirkley said.

Using Google Classroom, Heritage Academy, also a charter, has started its second year by adding a senior class. Students were allowed to opt for online for the rest of the semester even after the state allows campuses to open.

Jared Taylor, chairman of the HA board, told parents their feedback after fourth quarter informed their decisions for the new school year.

“We will be keeping the good and improving in areas we were not as strong,” he wrote in a companywide letter.

Debuting this year, A+ Charter Schools

## Staying In Touch

The relationship between teachers and their students will look different from the fourth quarter, according to MUSD’s distance-learning plans.

“There are going to be regular communication expectations, whether that be daily synchronous instruction, frequent emails home, frequent phone calls, blackboard messages,” said Dickinson, MUSD technology coordinator.

The district has a Blocks tool that can monitor what’s happening on students’ screens to provide support.

“Synchronous teaching will change — we did not have that feature available in April and May to our families,” Dickinson said. “There will be daily synchronous instruction happening, so a live teacher will be meeting with their classes. Additionally, we are asking that those lessons be recorded, because we do have families that are working families, and we know that we need to have these lessons available for our students at any time of the day.”

Dickinson, a former kindergarten teacher, emphasized the value of having a live teacher instead of just a software program for classes.

“There are just a lot of personal touches that teachers bring to the classroom that we’re trying to embed along with the outline from providers,” she said. “We can build upon that internally with personal touches from every classroom teacher building in enrichment opportunities.”

Teachers are expected to stay connected with each other, too, through regular virtual meetings. The success of the distance-learning program leans on teachers being on the same page with administration, staff and their students, and sticking to the scope and sequence.

“We’ve got a great plan, but that communication is key, though,” she said.

## REACHING ALL STUDENTS

The youngest learners were a focus of concern last year. Keeping kindergarteners and first graders tuned in, engaged and learning was labor-intensive for parents. As the parent of an incoming first-grader, Dickinson said that was one of the first things she looked at.

Florida Virtual was chosen by MUSD because of its ability to accommodate those children. And the only physical supplies required are available in a typical home.

“They are able to listen through that platform; they are able to watch through that platform. But there’s also the principles that go along with it, the pencil and paper practice with virtual classes and collaborative lessons within the classroom with their peers,” Dickinson said. “Obviously, there’s no physical touching, but ... it was just more specialized for them. Almost gamified with some of their activities.”

She said Florida Virtual and Edgenuity accommodate special education, allowing it to continue to be a “push-in” model. New Exceptional Student Services Director Teri Louer and the district’s program specialists have talked through the process with resource teachers to maintain the connection.



Alejandra Rosales hands out devices to Maricopa High School students.



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### The Secondary Student Experience (Grades 6-12)

- Routine synchronous instruction
  - Attending virtual class time with MUSD teachers
  - Collaborating with classmates
- All courses offered at schools traditionally will be offered online
  - English Language Arts
  - Math
  - Science
  - Social Studies
  - Elective courses
  - Additional coursework available through Maricopa Virtual Academy for students who want to get ahead!
- Listening to audio clips
- Watching videos
- Specialized instruction for students with special needs



Meanwhile, the Career and Technical Education Department at MHS, which ranges from computer repair to welding, has different virtual models. New Director Marlene Armstrong was on Google Classroom building out those courses. “They have different laptops with specialized software for their courses,” she said.

MUSD is well aware of the danger of learning gaps. There was investment in more interventionists. IT has also been open to more programs brought to them, especially for specialized teaching. When a speech pathologist suggested software she saw at work in another district, Dickinson said, “Absolutely.”

“We know that we will need small-group instruction to meet the needs of all of our students.”

**“I would like to thank the voters of Maricopa for the 2016 override being passed. Had it not been for that override, we would not be in the position that we’re in right now.”**

*MUSD technology coordinator*

*Christine Dickinson*

## SECURITY

MUSD upgraded to Google Enterprise knowing that student information would be going home with the devices. In some cases, that laptop might be the only device in the household, opening up the possibility that someone else in the home might use it for their own business, which is not encouraged.

“That is one of the reasons that we did upgrade,” Dickinson said.

MUSD also invested in CrowdStrike to limit security breaches. There have been four reports since April. A breach shuts down the computer and automatically sends a security report to the IT team, letting them rectify the issue.

Blocksi also notifies the team of inappropriate searches, which may go to the counseling department or administration if deemed necessary.

## Platforms in use at Maricopa schools for distance learning



### Edgenuity

**Founded:** 1998  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Core curriculum, credit recovery, exceptional learners, intervention, personalized learning, summer school, test readiness, virtual learning  
**CEO:** Sari Factor  
**Headquarters:** Scottsdale

### Florida Virtual School

**Founded:** 1997  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Core curriculum, specials, credit recovery, collaborative, weekly videoconferences, extracurricular activities, NCAA-approved  
**Board Chairman:** Andy Tuck  
**Headquarters:** Orlando, Florida

### Google Classroom

**Founded:** 2014  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Class-organization platform, accessibility, simplifying collaboration, teacher communication, Hangouts, Quiz Locks  
**CEO:** Sundar Pichai  
**Headquarters:** Mountain View, California

### Odysseyware (now part of Edgenuity)

**Founded:** 1977  
**Grades:** 3-12  
**Solutions:** Competency learning, credit recovery, blended learning, social emotional learning, summer school, college and career readiness, AdvancED  
**CEO:** Matthew Given  
**Headquarters:** Chandler

### PBLWorks

**Founded:** 1987  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Project-based learning, collaboration, critical thinking, sustained inquiry  
**CEO:** Bob Lenz  
**Headquarters:** Novato, California

### Schoology

**Founded:** 2009  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Virtual learning, class-organization platform, integration, simplifying collaboration, teacher communication  
**CEO:** Jeremy Friedman  
**Headquarters:** New York City, New York

### Sequoia Choice Arizona Distance Learning

**Founded:** 1998  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Solutions:** Home-based distance learning, early college credit, competency credit, benchmark testing, AdvancED, NCAA-accepted  
**President and CEO:** Mark Plitzuweit  
**Headquarters:** Mesa

## HOWDY, PARTNER

To make virtual classrooms work, no matter how much synchronicity is involved, MUSD is leaning on two pillars — teachers and parents. Parents are offered training on the platforms to better understand what is happening so they can help their kids.

“We know that their world has been flipped upside down,” Dickinson said. “I mean, my living room became a classroom. And as a former teacher, I was still trying to figure out how that looks. And now with me back at work full-time, my husband is figuring out how that looks.”

Promoted on the district website, the parent training will be uploaded to YouTube in English and Spanish.

“We’re hopeful that parents are feeling

supported with the amount of interaction between home and school, even though school is on a computer screen.”

The additional tech specialists are expected to be a boon to the process, especially for teachers. Dickinson said she wants the faculty to have full faith in the team that is on the ground every day.

“They are former classroom teachers in MUSD,” she said. “They know our curriculum, they know our devices, they know our kids, they know our families. They’re going to be a wealth of a resources.”

“We are here to support at all times. They know our hours of support are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. That is when our office is typically staffed. However, I will tell you right now, 90% of these teachers have my cell phone number.” ☎

# Distance learning: Assessing the fallout

By Murray Siegel

The need for social distancing to quell COVID-19 has changed how schools deliver learning. Distance learning has replaced the face-to-face classroom, and educators are evaluating how effective the virtual classroom has been.



Murray Siegel

Distance learning is not a new tool. Decades ago, federal grants were issued to rural school districts to allow their high schools to download curriculum via satellite which was not available at the school. This allowed college-bound students to take classes such as calculus, Latin and physics.

Advances in video tape technology allowed coursework to be available to anyone with a VHS player. Companies, such as The Teaching Company, produced video series teaching algebra, geometry and history. These tapes were used by homeschoolers to improve their at-home curriculum.

Community colleges provided courses at remote locations utilizing interactive television. Soon, universities followed, constructing studio classrooms which allowed students at various locations to attend a class. This led to universities, such as ASU, offering online classes via the Internet. Students who had variable work hours could take a class at home when they were available. Entire degree programs are offered online as schools enhance their revenues.

The current pandemic has caused elementary schools to be included in the distance learning process. Initial assessments and predictions of virtual learning at the elementary grades have begun to be available, such as:

- The pandemic will result in a 30% loss in their reading ability and a loss of as much as one year in math achievement.
- Administrators must adjust the 2020-21 curricular plans to compensate for educational losses this past school year. Adjustments will be needed throughout the upcoming school year.
- Elementary teachers who have recently experienced the use of videoconferencing tools have become positive about their use with English/language arts and math.
- The increasing use of Zoom and other technologies has raised concerns about security and privacy.

Schools continue to develop strategies to deal with students who do not have access to the internet at home.

Teachers have been required to learn to teach with distance learning on the fly. Successes and failures have been experienced. A method must be found for educators to share their experiences to the benefit of all students.

The ultimate assessment will be years from now when current elementary students are completing high school. Educators’ ongoing experiences will lead to changes in how we deliver knowledge to our adults of the future. Large group, small group, distance learning and hybrid methods will all be examined. The analysis should lead to better teacher retention and students more prepared for life in the ever-changing world. ☎

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



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# The real effects of marijuana use on youths

By Harriet Phelps

Be Awesome is a team of people with the boldness to believe that we can impact our world by developing confident, connected, and successful youth by offering community focused programs and services.

Be Awesome Youth Coalition partnered with Chief Steve Stahl and Maricopa Police Command with a Zoom presentation targeting youth marijuana use and its effects. If you missed it, it is available online at the Be Awesome Youth Coalition site.

The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol in day-to-day living is on the rise.

Marijuana intoxication can cause:

- Reduced inhibition
- Distorted perceptions
- impaired coordinaton and compromised reaction times
- Difficulty with thinking and problem solving



Harriet Phelps

- Interferes with learning and memory
- Driving dangerously
- Increased heart rate

After the euphoria, marijuana use may produce:

- Sleepiness
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Distrust
- Panic

Effects on body/health after long term use:

- Ability to do complex tasks could be compromised
- Negative impact on pursuit of life goals
- Can contribute to lung damage and future health problems

THC cannabinoid tetrahydrocannabinol, the marijuana chemical, is stored in fat cells long after use. After smoking or consumption, the effects may be gone but the metabolites remain. They can be detected in saliva, hair,



fingerails, blood and urine. Drug tests are usually done with urine samples because THC remains detectable for a longer period of time in the urine.

Depending on the use, a person may have flashbacks due to the release of THC into the bloodstream long after use. The higher the use the more is stored the more is released as fat is utilized. THC is a strong factor in workplace drug testing and drug use policies. Your job may depend on being drug-free.

Compared to other drugs marijuana has the longest detection time, up to months, because the detectable chemicals stay in the body's fat cells. The more you use the higher the detection. Chief Stahl warned that the marijuana product on the street is 80% stronger than what was distributed 40 years ago. You may not know what the marijuana purchased is laced or mixed with.

There is no medical grade marijuana. It is the same sold at the dispensary with a medical card as is sold on the streets. It is recommended not prescribed.

Adolescence is a critical period brain and social development. Research indicates that teens are at a 17% rate for addiction, higher for daily users. Drugs are not a good strategy for stress reduction or problem solving.

Be Awesome Youth Coalition is in place to provide support and resources to Maricopa Youth. Go to the website for upcoming events and presentations. Thank you, Chief Stahl and Maricopa Police Command, for participating and protecting our youth.

As Always, be awesome.

Harriet Phelps, PsyD, is a retired psychologist and a volunteer for Be Awesome Youth Coalition.

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# WELCOME TO A NEW AND IMPROVED inMaricopa.com

Since launching in 2004, the mission of InMaricopa.com has been to cover Maricopa like nobody else.

We continue to provide the same intensive hyperlocal coverage residents have enjoyed for all those years, including breaking news, government coverage, community profiles and crime news. Simply stated, Maricopa is our sole focus.

But the site has evolved over time with better technology and a desire to make it easier for our readers to get their news quickly — and provide even better results for our advertisers.

This month, that evolution continues as we roll out a redesign of the site.

We think you'll find lots to like when you look around, but our priority is to enhance reader experience:

## A better, faster mobile site.

With most readers on their phones and others on tablets, we have optimized and organized content for smaller screens and users on the go — and the pages load quicker. And we have more changes in the pipeline to enhance the mobile experience.

## Fully responsive design.

The site knows which device you are using and serves up an optimized experience. In short, it looks great no matter what device you're using.

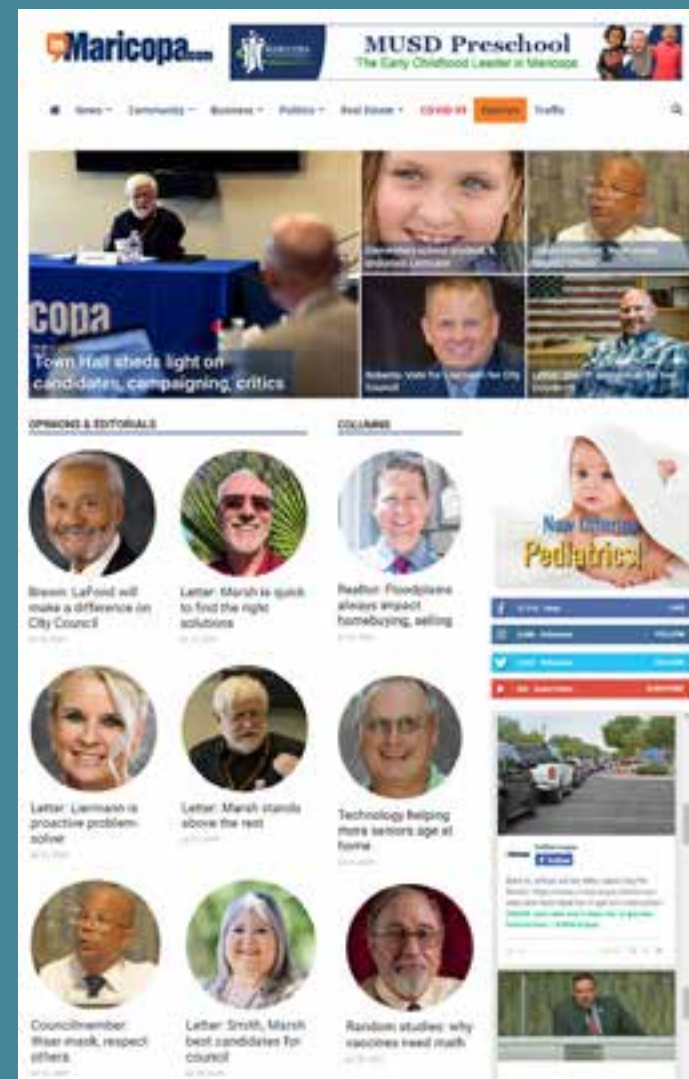
**More visuals.** You'll see more photos on the site, optimized for faster loading. They will help provide readers with access to more information in less space. In addition, navigation has been reorganized to be simple and efficient.

## A redesigned homepage.

Now there is a greater range of information at your fingertips, without the need to dive deep for it.

**Social media.** We know your digital life is interconnected, so we've improved our integration with your social media accounts. You can share articles of interest, connect with us easily on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube and add your comments about articles directly to Facebook, right from the site.

**Enhanced security.** To ensure a safe, secure site, we provide SSL encryption on every page, protect user data and lock down digital sessions — well ahead of industry standards.



From the beginning, we have considered the local business community our proud partners and sought ways to maximize their results online. Improvements include:

**Business directory:** The new site has a revamped business directory that is easier to search whether you are looking for a restaurant to dine out or need a trusted professional to help with a project at home.

**Advertising:** Most of the banner ads in support of our local businesses are designed to inform, not dominate, and deliver subtly but effectively on the perimeters of the site.

We are excited to roll out these changes as part of our mission to serve our readers and advertisers. We hope you'll poke around and see all the changes. And be sure to let us know what you think at Facebook.com/InMaricopa or via email at News@InMaricopa.com..

In addition, we have added some functionality to the site and made other content-related improvements, including:

- An expanded **opinion** section to encourage a civil exchange of views at a time people are more polarized than ever.
- A new **ticker**, which will expedite breaking news to the site and make sure you see it.
- **Live video** capability on the home page.
- An enhanced **traffic** page that continues to feature the popular SR 347 traffic cams, but now includes the latest traffic and transportation coverage, including news of crashes, roadwork and detours.
- An enhanced **obituaries** page.
- Better on the backend. The technology behind the scenes makes updates easier and enhances our response to emerging trends in **technology** as well as reader feedback.





**MOST  
EXPENSIVE  
HOME SOLD**



Raquel Hendrickson

**1. 41070 W. Hopper Drive, Homestead**

The most expensive home in Maricopa June 16-July 15 was a gorgeous two-story, four-bedroom D.R. Horton home with a pool, sweeping staircase and three-car garage. It nearly doubled its price since it last sold in 2012 for just \$220,000 and went for just \$500 under the list price.

**Sold:** July 1  
**Purchase Price:** \$421,500  
**Square footage:** 4,170  
**Price per square foot:** \$101.07  
**Days on market:** 65  
**Builder:** D.R. Horton  
**Year built:** 2007  
**Bedrooms:** 4  
**Bathrooms:** 4  
**Community:** Homestead North  
**Features:** Fireplace, formal dining room, den, loft, luxurious kitchen, high-end appliances, granite countertops, breakfast bar, covered patio, built-in BBQ.



Raquel Hendrickson

**1. 46122 W. Long Way, Maricopa Meadows**

The least expensive home sold in Maricopa June 16-July 15 was a 15-year-old house on one level with all the basics and freshly painted. It sold for 171% above its last sale price in 2008. It was on the market just over a month.

**Sold:** July 6  
**Purchase Price:** \$190,000  
**Square footage:** 1,220  
**Price per square foot:** \$155.73  
**Days on market:** 39  
**Builder:** Unknown  
**Year built:** 2005  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Bathrooms:** 2  
**Community:** Maricopa Meadows  
**Features:** Low maintenance landscaping with artificial grass area in backyard and raised planters, neutral paint, laminated floor in common areas and carpeted bedrooms.

- 2. 43501 W. Bedford Drive, Rancho El Dorado .....\$190,500
- 3. 43872 W. Cahill Drive, Rancho El Dorado .....\$190,500
- 4. 19722 N. Locke Court, The Villages .....\$193,000
- 5. 41326 W. Little Drive, The Lakes .....\$196,000

For a full list of last month's Maricopa home sales, visit [InMaricopa.com/Real-Estate](https://InMaricopa.com/Real-Estate).

# Strategies for buyers in a seller's market

By Dayv Morgan

The shortage of homes for sale has created fierce competition among buyers, often creating bidding wars. In mid-July I listed a home on Friday evening, and by Monday evening I had 22 offers, as high as 10% over the asking price. While the current state of the market is wonderful news for sellers, it can be a frustrating experience for buyers, as their offers get rejected over and over.

If you are like most buyers, you are not in a position to make a cash offer. However there are some things that you can do to help increase the chances of a seller choosing your offer.

**No Concessions.** The term "seller concessions" refers to expenses that the seller pays on behalf of a buyer, such as fees charged by the lender for issuing the loan. In a competitive market you will need to raise the offer price to offset the request for concessions, but offering too high will cause concerns that the home will not appraise. When I was

reviewing the 22 offers with my client, the first contracts we eliminated were the ones asking the seller to pay the buyer's closing costs.

**Reduced Contingencies.** The contract has several included contingencies to protect the buyer's earnest money. While it is never recommended to waive a home inspection, you could reduce the due diligence period from 10 days to seven days, or even five days if a home inspector is readily available. Offering to waive the appraisal contingency, or to pay a certain amount above the appraised amount if it comes in low, will also make your offer stronger.

**Include a Personal Letter.** Sellers generally like to pick the highest and strongest offer, but sometimes adding a little emotion to the negotiations can help. Write a personal letter to the sellers explaining why you love the home and decided to write an offer on their house instead of another. When touring the property take notice of anything in the decor that indicates you have something in common with the seller and mention that as well. Sellers

love to hear that the future buyer for their home is similar to them and will love the home as much as they do.

**Search "Coming Soon" listings.** The MLS now has the ability to list homes as "coming soon" for up to 30 days before they are active. You will NOT find these listings on Zillow, Realtor.com, or other third-party real estate websites. Work with a Realtor who can set you up on a search that includes both active and "coming soon" listings and gives you notifications as soon as something is listed. You might even be able to schedule an appointment to view the home and write an offer before it hits the market, eliminating any competition.



Dayv Morgan

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

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Submitted

# Master Gardener Orchard Project shows what can be done

By Roger Lawrence

The Maricopa Master Gardeners broke ground Sept. 18, 2018, on a new demonstration and teaching orchard to be planted in front of the administration office at the University of Arizona Maricopa Agriculture Center at the end of Smith-Enke Road.

Installation of the irrigation system began Oct. 27 of that year and was completed about 10 days later with pipe, irrigation box, valves, timer and miscellaneous supplies.



Roger Lawrence

artistic minds. And a grape arbor and picnic tables are in the planning stages.

We have had many Master Gardeners who volunteered for this project, including Ron Bernier, Wende Gehrt, Julie Olson, Scott Oliver, Trudy Fuller, Jean Sacramento, Barb Christianson and Rita Bricker. A big thanks to all of you who pitched in to make the orchard a success.

All these trees take about 3-5 years for production, and we are all looking forward to harvesting some beautiful fruits.

Roger Lawrence is a master gardener and Maricopa resident.

Contact a Master Gardener  
520-374-6263  
macmastergardener@gmail.com

- The gardeners planted:
- Lisbon lemon
  - Cara Cara orange
  - key lime
  - finger lime
  - tangerine
  - kumquat
- In March 2019, additional trees were planted, including:
- Apple
  - Peach
  - Plum
  - Nectarine
  - Fig

Several more — another fig, a peach and a grapevine — were added in spring of 2020. For the past two years we have enjoyed seeing those trees grow.

Several pallets of bark mulch were spread to help with weed control. A split rail fence now surrounds the citrus trees and provides an entrance to the orchard. A recent donation of pavers is awaiting the creative touch of some



Submitted

Maricopa Master Gardeners transformed a plot of land at MAG to plant fruit trees that have grown into an orchard the past two years.

# The James Sanson Team



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# Senior house-sharing: Is it right for you?

By Joan Koczor

It may have started with “The Golden Girls,” the 1980s sitcom featuring the lives and interactions of four older women with diverse backgrounds who have become roommates.

Many seniors who are living on Social Security or retirement benefits may find it difficult to maintain the living situation they had during their working years. In an increasingly expensive world, living on a fixed income comes with challenges — in particular, the expense and maintenance of maintaining their current living arrangement.

In recent years, senior house-sharing has been gaining popularity as an affordable arrangement. Finding senior roommates to share the cost of housing in a traditional home can avoid the costs of nursing homes or other care facilities.

## Cost savings

Saving money on shared expenses is a major upside to senior home-sharing. Older adults opting to live together can save on rent, groceries, utilities, transportation and everyday expenses.



Joan Koczor

## Companionship

The loss of a spouse or a decreasing social network can leave a senior socially isolated. Having another person at home provides help when needed, as in the case of falling or needing medical care or assisting with household responsibilities,

which makes independent living possible by eliminating a few of the hazards of being alone.

A recent government study reports the increasing social isolation among seniors has several risk factors, depression and failing health among them. A roommate can reduce

the feelings of social isolation and possibly provide a meaningful friendship.

As independent living becomes more challenging, the roommate option can be increasingly attractive, enabling people to stay in their homes and find interesting companions.

Keep in mind not all roommates are good ones. A contractual arrangement should be required with an escape clause in the event things do not work out. Every potential roommate should be thoroughly evaluated with background checks.

The more information you have about that person can save you time and money in the future should the living arrangement not work out.

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

# Adjusting living rooms, bedrooms to be age-friendly

By Ron Smith

An age-friendly home is primarily about seeing the home as a place for safe, easy passage from one room to another.

In this article we are focusing on living room and bedroom spaces.



Ron Smith

## Furniture

- Arrange furniture for clear, wide passages.
- Consider eliminating excessive pieces.
- Is that a chair or a trash can? If it's not fulfilling its real purpose, move it.
- Place bed to allow easy access to the bathroom.

## Getting where you need to go

- Install night lights or motion-sensitive switches to light your way to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

- Make sure that large area rugs are safely secured to the floors with non-slip pads or double-sided tape.
- Eliminate scatter or throw rugs.
- Place all cords out of the way.

## Lighting

- In daytime, use natural light as much as possible.
- Make sure drapes, blinds, shades and curtains are easy to open and adjust.
- Some window coverings may benefit from remote controls.
- Install rocker-style light switches, which should be 35 to 44 inches from the floor.
- Electrical outlets should be placed 18 to 24 inches from the floor.
- Consider touch-control lamps or “clapper” devices for lights or other electronics.

## Closets

- Closets should have interior lights, and motion-sensor switches are great for walk-ins.
- Use adjustable rods and shelves adapted to the resident's reach and strength.
- Consider pull-down rods and pull-out shelves.

## Emergencies

- If you're hearing-impaired, consider specialized equipment like strobe lights, bed-shakers or specially pitched sound alarms to alert you to smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Keep a phone and a flashlight with fresh batteries on your nightstand for emergencies.
- Consider a subscription alert or monitor system with a personal alert if you fall.

(Source: AARP HomeFit Guide at [aarp.org/homefit](http://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.*

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# Volunteering keeps seniors on their toes

By Al Brandenburg

You've all heard it. "Oh, you're too old, you'll hurt yourself, you can't do that anymore, etc." Baloney! Aging doesn't have to be looked down upon, but instead a time that you've worked toward your entire life.

Seniors are spending their golden years working, volunteering and giving back to the community more now than in the last 55 years. Many people who have the opportunity to retire, don't, or end up returning to work, and it's not for the money.

Since most don't go back to work full-time, this gives them the opportunity to stay involved in their community. Volunteering has its social, mental and physical benefits for people of all ages. But these benefits truly reveal themselves for seniors, who often have more time on their hands.

**Socially beneficial** - Volunteering can pull elderly folks out of isolation, even if it's only for a handful of hours a week. Volunteering at events at local religious institutions, parks and

museums are a great way to interact with a wide range of people in the community.

**Good for mental cognition** - As we age, there's an increase in the likelihood of developing cognitive issues, memory loss and motor function diseases. Volunteering provides opportunities to keep conversation flowing, stimulate the brain and help overall cognitive functions stay active. One study discovered that 70% of elderly people experiencing five or more symptoms of depression saw a decrease in those symptoms after their first year of volunteering.

**Gives back to the community** - Just as it would feel good for any person, volunteering allows you to give back to the community. Something that may set an elderly person apart from any other individual is the wealth of knowledge they possess.

**Physically engaging** - Whether it's volunteering door-to-door for candidates in your local elections, helping build community



Al Brandenburg



gardens, or something in between, physical activity is vital for a senior. Inactivity as you age can promote the advancement of heart issues, bone loss, joint pain, fat and a slew of other health issues. Getting out and volunteering can help combat these issues.

Volunteering can help get you out of the house a couple times a week and keep your social engagements alive. But the best part? It can be done on your own schedule.

Al Brandenburg is director of Maricopa Senior Coalition (MCS).

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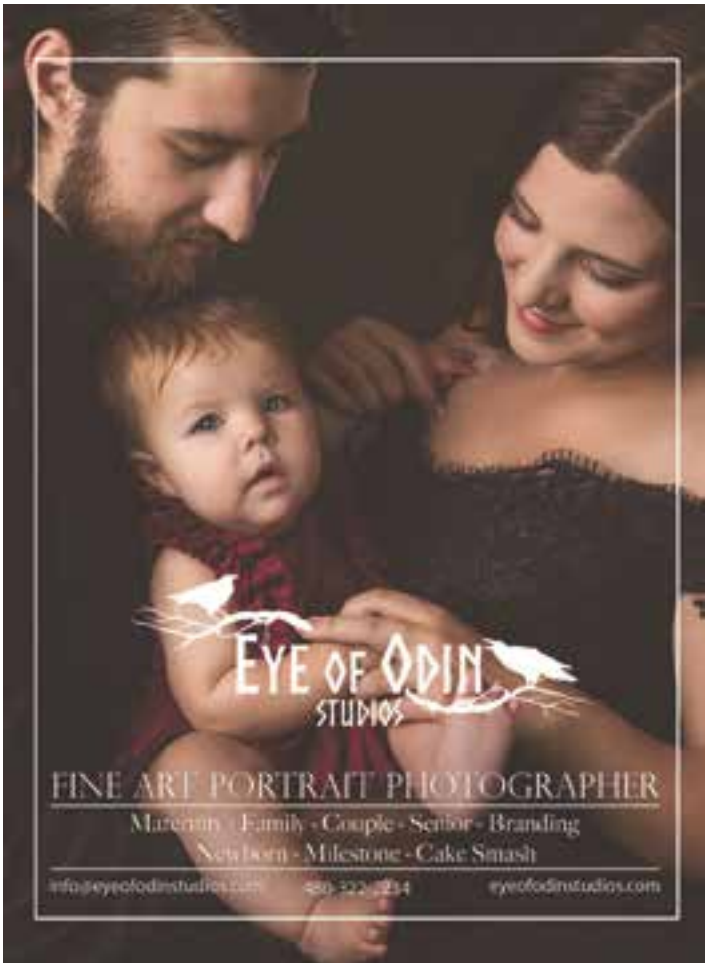
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**A+ Charter Schools  
First Day (online)**  
7:30 a.m., 41735 W. Alan  
Stephens Parkway

**4**

**Sequoia Pathway Academy  
Back to School (online)**  
7:30 a.m., 19265 N. Porter Road

**5**

**Legacy Traditional Back  
to School (online)**  
7:30 a.m., 17760 N. Regent Drive

**12**

**MUSD Governing Board Meets**  
6:30 p.m., Maricopa Unified  
School District Admin. Building  
44150 W. Maricopa-  
Casa Grande Hwy.

**26**

**MUSD Governing Board Meets**  
6:30 p.m., Maricopa Unified  
School District Admin. Building  
44150 W. Maricopa-  
Casa Grande Hwy.

**28**

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

### CONTINUING

#### Sundays

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

#### Mondays

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

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

#### Tuesdays

**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

#### Fridays

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

ALL EVENTS ARE TENTATIVE



**17**

**Leading Edge Academy  
Back to School**  
7:30 a.m., 18700 N. Porter Road

**18**

**Maricopa City Council Meets**  
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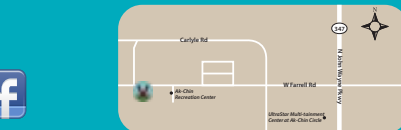


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