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New year, new opportunities

Every January, we welcome the new year with open arms.

This year, those arms are certainly wider as we usher in 2021 with hopes for a return to the good old, pre-pandemic days.

No doubt, 2020 was full of hardship, but Maricopans rose to the challenge. And the new year brings an opportunity to move ahead with promise.

Jim Hughes has an opportunity. The city's new police chief, a New Jersey native, takes over the department after some tough months. One who enjoys — even prefers — a challenge, his mission is to regain the public trust “one day at a time,” he says. He is excited about the city's growth and acknowledges the important role played by his men in black in fostering that growth.

Law enforcement officers are gearing up for the legalization of marijuana. Read how Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb and others are preparing for the fallout of Prop 207 which will go into effect later this year.

This month, we also talk with two new business owners in town. Matt Stewart recently opened Arizona Bike Garage, the first bike shop in the city. A former motocross star, he shares the same

philosophy for racing and business. “When you race for a living, you have to perform every day, or you don't pay your bills,” he says.

In our new Restaurant Guide, Native Grill &

Wings owner Pat Kieny talks about the many crises he has faced since opening his first Native restaurant — five days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. His latest challenge, the pandemic, forced some changes, but the restaurant is now thriving. Plus, other restaurant owners in town chat about their own responses to COVID-19.



Also in this issue, we recap the 2020 residential real estate market and size up the developed and undeveloped properties owned by the Maricopa Unified School District.

Plus, we check in with now-retired Pinal Supervisor Anthony Smith, who is making vacation plans, and paraplegic hot-air balloonist Michael Glen.

Enjoy the magazine.

BOB MCGOVERN | Editorial Director

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DAYV MORGAN
Owner of HomeSmart Success, the Realtor has been busy in a sizzling seller's market.

ON THE COVER: New Maricopa police Chief James Hughes, a native of New Jersey, has been in law enforcement 34 years. Photo by Merenzi Young / Eye of Odin Studios

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Building a bridge

The construction of the Honeycutt Road bridge across the Santa Cruz Wash in 2007 improved access to Tortosa and Rancho Mirage, a new development starting construction just east of the bridge. A sign indicates Tortosa homes for sale a half mile ahead. Any flooding of the wash forced homeowners in Tortosa to drive several miles around to get to State Route 347. Workers had a temporary one-lane road during construction that was later dismantled.

2007

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Elly Lundberg/Cronkite News

With voter approval of Proposition 207, adults 21 and older will be able to possess and use marijuana under state law, although it would remain illegal under federal law.



Gage Skidmore

Courts, cops gear up for legalized pot

By Raquel Hendrickson

The legalization of recreational marijuana came as a surprise to Pinal County Kent Volkmer.

Opinion polls were showing a tight race and very vocal opposition to Proposition 207, but the initiative passed overwhelmingly Nov. 3. A day later, after it became clear it would be the law in Arizona, Volkmer contacted the state's Department of Corrections to check how many of its inmates were Pinal County residents confined on marijuana convictions.

Volkmer said he was relieved to learn the number was zero.

"There was not one person in solely for that," he said.

Then he set about drafting a letter to all the attorneys in his office and contacting the Pinal County Sheriff's Office, Public Defender's Office and Superior Court.

While Prop 207 places the duty of establishing rules for regulating marijuana on the shoulders of the Arizona Department of Health Services, the impact on law enforcement and the courts is immediate.

In Pinal County, possession of marijuana and marijuana paraphernalia cases are now being wiped from the record. Tracking that is a little easier because of a policy change four years ago when Volkmer's office gave

more discretion to the sheriff's deputies on whether to charge marijuana cases as felonies or misdemeanors.

Sheriff Mark Lamb confirmed that.

"There has been a slight, I would say gentle, direction change over the last few years from the County Attorney's Office," he said. "We could issue a citation, which is not normal for a felony, but we were treating it like a misdemeanor already."

Volkmer said the number of felony marijuana cases dropped by more than 90%. He estimates the county sees 700-800 marijuana cases per year. Fewer than 50 are felonies. Now active cases are being dismissed, charges are being dropped, bench warrants are being cleared and conviction records will be expunged.

The new law allows adults to use, possess and grow marijuana, with limitations. It places a 16% tax on marijuana sales, with revenue divided among law enforcement, public safety departments, community college districts, Highway User Revenue Fund and a Justice Reinvestment Fund.

"Prop 207 allows for limited marijuana possession, use and cultivation for adults 21 and older, and amends current penalties for those under 21," Pinal County Public Defender Kate Milewski explained. "It bans

smoking marijuana in public. It also allows for the expungement of marijuana convictions. As such, our office is working with the Pinal County Attorney's Office to dismiss all pending marijuana cases in accordance with this law."

As a voter initiative rather than legislation, its details are much harder to alter.

"We expect there to be unintended consequences," Volkmer said.

SCALES AT THE SCENE

In November, then-Maricopa police Chief Steve Stahl said the department is seeing only minor changes to protocols being recommended by attorneys.

"COVID-19 has already changed how we handle possession cases where we are already long-forming subjects for county attorney and city attorney prosecutorial review," Stahl said. "This will continue as Prop 207 will not go into effect until sometime in 2021."

The long-form citation puts a suspect in the system without jailing them while the investigation determines whether a case involves an illegal amount of marijuana or other arrestable offenses that caused them to be detained by police.

"With this change, there will be some changes as to how we can obtain [probable cause]," Lamb said. "For example, the odor of marijuana is no longer going to be probable cause to search a vehicle or move forward on certain investigations."

MARICOPA



La Quinta is slated to open early 2021

City of Maricopa

Economic Development

La Quinta Maricopa is a projected \$10 million capital investment with 20 net new jobs added to the city.

Maricopa's first hotel opened in the late 1800s, serving passengers of the local railroad junction, and operated until it burned in a 1931 fire. A lot has changed since then, but soon Maricopa will once again offer a hotel to residents and visitors. Under construction adjacent to Copper Sky, the new Maricopa La Quinta will offer an elevated stay in a contemporary setting.

Maricopa's population is rapidly approaching 60,000, with more than 1,500 permits for homes issued in 2020 alone. In addition to what is under construction, there are many residential projects in the pipeline, including an assisted living facility, single-family-for-rent, new subdivisions, and more. If permanent and seasonal residents were not enough, Maricopa is fast becoming the preferred location for sports tournaments in the Southwest region. The City's Copper Sky Recreation Center holds near-weekly events and tournaments, regularly attracting thousands of visitors. The new La Quinta will be a welcomed addition to Maricopa.



Photo from Maricopa Historical Society



"Maricopa is the most populous, incorporated Arizona market without a hotel in their city limits, so we thought this would be a fantastic opportunity for an exceptional hotel like La Quinta to locate and serve the area," said Andy Bhakta, La Quinta Franchise Owner and Developer. "Even during these uncertain times, the Maricopa market remains strong, and the City has been extremely supportive of our project. The City of Maricopa continues to support our efforts as we finish building, and we look forward to opening early 2021."



For more information contact
Adam Shipley,
Economic Development
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Right: Pinal County Sheriff Mark Lamb is not a fan of the law. He expects the negative community impact to outweigh the revenue.
Bottom: Bales of marijuana sit in a vehicle stopped on State Route 347 by a Pinal County sheriff's deputy.



Pinal County Sheriff's Office

The law allows possession of up to 2.5 ounces. Pinal County Sheriff's Office is still looking at that determination.

"We'll have to make sure all our guys know that," Lamb said. "We might have to provide some scales where they can actually weigh it on scene before bringing somebody back to the station."

In December, for the first time in history, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to decriminalize marijuana at the federal level. The Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement Act is expected to die in the Senate, but its success in Congress (split mostly along party lines) may harbor an attitude change.

"I think there have been some societal changes toward marijuana over the past couple years, so it was kind of shifting somewhat in that direction," Lamb said.

Law officers are among the first to absorb that.

"We do respect that the Arizona voters have spoken, and we will work closely with our prosecuting attorneys to ensure citizens' rights are protected while keeping communities safe," Stahl said. "There will be some training enhancements coming forward in the near future as the attorneys speak with states who already have navigated the recreational marijuana laws."

In fact, that is one of the things that worries Lamb. He said he and his officers have talked it over with their colleagues in other states.

"We've spent a lot of time with Colorado law enforcement, Denver PD, a lot of sheriffs from Colorado, and we've learned some of the



things we can expect in our communities," Lamb said. "They've seen an increase in homelessness, they've seen an increase in mental health [needs], dramatic increases in these things."

MOTIONS TO EXPUNGE

As law enforcement is adjusting, so are the courts.

Stephen McCarville, presiding judge of Pinal County Superior Court, said the justice courts would see most of the motions to dismiss because that's where the cases of smaller amounts of marijuana were filed. The cases involving more than 2.5 ounces will continue in Superior Court if the County Attorney's Office wishes to prosecute them.

“As of this date, numerous cases have been dismissed. We will be advising our clients on the process for expungement of their criminal convictions for marijuana.”

*Pinal County Public Defender
 Kate Milewski*

"We do anticipate an increase in motions to expunge, but that will not start until July when that provision goes into effect," McCarville said.

His regular Friday meetings with the County Attorney's Office, the public defender, probation office, PCSO and the court clerk's office have been hitting on issues tied to Prop

207. He said the Arizona Supreme Court is also preparing seminars to further prepare.

"As of this date, numerous cases have been dismissed," Milewski, the county's public defender, said. "We will be advising our clients on the process for expungement of their criminal convictions for marijuana. We anticipate inquiries regarding the expungement process and will provide information where to find and file those forms as soon as we are able."

Milewski said the Public Defender's Office has been speaking with other public defender's offices and "court system stakeholders" in Arizona to "coordinate a uniform approach for our clients."

Volkmer said he is hoping for a "relatively smooth transition" to legalized marijuana but there are still complications. Marijuana charges are frequently only part of several charges against an individual, so attorneys are picking through their cases to see what should be dismissed.

Cannabis, as defined by the state Legislature, is itself a complication. It is the plant that both marijuana and hemp derive from. Volkmer said cannabis is treated as a narcotic like cocaine and has harsher penalties than "straight marijuana," that is the dried leaves, flowers, seeds and stems from cannabis. Marijuana is high in THC, the cannabinoid in the plant that causes a psychoactive response, or "high."

Juvenile charges are another complicating factor. Prop 207 does not allow minors under 21 to possess marijuana. How the county is handling past and pending juvenile cases is also part of the discussions between Volkmer's office and the public defender.

Volkmer said there is expectation of additional definitions in juvenile matters.



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"There's a big difference between a 20-year-old smoking a joint and a 10-year-old smoking a joint," he said.

MORE DRUG-RELATED DUIs AHEAD?

As officials look ahead to the full enactment of the new law in 2021, the sheriff has concerns based on his memory of medical marijuana being legalized. Primarily, those worries involve driving under the influence.

Before medical marijuana was allowed, he said, about 80% of DUI cases in Pinal County were related to alcohol. Now, according to the sheriff, 60% to 70% of DUIs are drug-related.

"I think it's important for people to understand that just because marijuana's legal does not make it OK to drive under the influence of marijuana," Lamb said. "We already see that where people will say, 'Well, I have a marijuana card.' Alcohol's legal, too, but it's not legal to drive under the influence of alcohol."


“We already see that where people will say, ‘Well, I have a marijuana card.’ Alcohol’s legal, too, but it’s not legal to drive under the influence of alcohol.”

Sheriff Mark Lamb

Lamb is not a fan of the law. Based on his conversations with Colorado officers, he is skeptical it will result in increased revenues for the programs it cites. He said it looks like the negative community impact will outweigh the revenues.

"It affects our streets; it affects probably accidents," he said. "On a personal level, I'm still waiting to see how this affects my family."

They are awaiting the clinical definition of impairment to better train officers. While some signs are similar to those induced by alcohol, there are some effects unique to marijuana.

"We're all just trying to process the law right now, process exactly what it contains, how it's going to affect our individual agencies, both the County Attorney's Office and our office, and how we'll proceed on what we'll charge and those types of things," Lamb said. "Really, right now, it's just understanding the law and trying to put a game plan together moving forward." 



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Exit interview: Pinal County Supervisor Anthony Smith

By Kathryn Gallo

For the first time in 12 years, Maricopa residents will be without the leadership of Anthony Smith.

After serving two two-year terms as Maricopa mayor, Smith was elected to the Pinal County Board of Supervisors in 2012, beginning an eight-year run that is now ending as chairman of the board. He chose not to run for reelection in November, confident he was leaving the county in a better place than where he found it.

“Our economy in Pinal County was where we lost about 50% overall of employees to go work in another county. We didn’t have the benefit of having a home-based economy,” Smith said. “In 2012, what I campaigned on was turning that around and adding local manufacturing and job growth. We have certainly seen the beginnings of that.”

The developments of sites like the Lucid Motors factory in Casa Grande and the Nikola electric semi-truck manufacturing facility in Coolidge will help bring more jobs to the county and make it a more service-based economy rather than one that relies on agriculture.

When Smith took office in 2012, Pinal County reported 84,876 jobs, according to the Arizona Regional Economic Analysis Project. On his exit from county leadership, the number of jobs had risen to 102,834, a 21% increase, through 2019.

In addition to creating more jobs, Smith also helped secure plans for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), which would create new roads and allow easier access to those jobs.

In November 2017, county residents voted in favor of Proposition 416 to approve the regional transportation plan and Proposition 417, a funding mechanism in the form of a half-cent sales tax.

“For the city of Maricopa, they were very well-positioned, and they still are very well-



Raquel Hendrickson

Anthony Smith has a bucket list full of things to do, including a trip through the Panama Canal and attending the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

positioned, to get two key roads improved in this area — widening (State Route) 347 and building the East-West corridor from Maricopa to Casa Grande as another way to get over to I-10 and to get to the jobs that are being created,” Smith said.

“In 2012, what I campaigned on was turning that around and adding local manufacturing and job growth. We have certainly seen the beginnings of that.”

Anthony Smith

But Prop 417 is being challenged in the Arizona Supreme Court by The Goldwater Institute, a conservative think tank, with a ruling expected in spring. Smith said the county’s future relies on access to better roads and believes that should be the top priority of his successor, Republican Jeff McClure, who defeated Marlene Pearce, an Independent and the District 4 administrator for Smith, in the November election.

Even if the court does not rule in favor

of the RTA, Smith said Pinal County’s focus should still be addressing transportation needs.

“It’s a lot of hard decisions about how you are going to go forward in the future,” Smith said. “You’ve got population that is coming, and will continue to come, and the jobs will continue to come. You don’t want to be doing that on old, torn-up and highly-deteriorated roads.”

He is confident in McClure’s ability to make smart decisions based on his prior leadership experience on the Oracle School Board and in the Republican party, Smith said.

Maricopa is the largest city in District 4 and after the results of the census come out, it could leapfrog Casa Grande as the largest in the county. Smith said McClure needs to be active in his work with the city council to address its continuing growth.

Smith will remain in Maricopa with his wife, Nancy, vice mayor of the city, but he doesn’t plan on sitting around at home often.

Along with enjoying more time with his family and continuing his work with nonprofits, he is excited about having more time to begin checking off a long list of places and events in his travel planner. That includes a trip through the Panama Canal, visiting some of the world’s national parks and attending the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

“I have got an incredible, fun and adventurous bucket list of things to do, so why not do it now?” Smith said. 📍

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Former motocross star opens city's first bike shop

By Jay Taylor

If real estate is all about location, location, location, then retail businesses are all about finding the right niche. And what could be better than finding a niche that is completely untapped?

That was the genesis of Matt Stewart launching his new business, Arizona Bike Garage, the first bike shop in Maricopa.

"It all came down to the fact that we saw a tremendous need for something for the cycling community here in Maricopa," Stewart said. "I had gotten my wife Katrina a bike for Christmas. Then we got bikes for our kids Kallie and Jack, and we realized that every time we needed parts for one of our four bikes there was nothing close by — I was constantly driving to Ahwatukee. So, it became pretty apparent there was a need here, and with some help, we decided to address that need."

That help came in the form of an idea from his father-in-law, who suggested starting a small shop out of Stewart's garage. That led to the name of the business he started in July amid the pandemic, but he already was looking at something larger.

"From the time we started the business in our garage I was already looking to move into a retail space," he said. "I started talking to bike manufacturers and looking for storefront space. I connected with an old business partner from my motorcycle racing days, and we decided to open a storefront. His involvement, along with another silent partner, helped me to get the retail location going. Those two provide me with valuable input that is really helping us provide the right parts, products and services to meet the needs of the cycling community here in Maricopa."

Stewart sells bikes and performs maintenance and repairs, everything from basic tune-ups and wheeltruing to drive-train cleaning and adjustments to bike assembly. He offers washing and pickup and delivery. Stewart also offers his expertise through consultations to help his customers get the right part or bike for their specific needs.

But the biggest benefit Stewart offers may be his proximity to Maricopa residents, according to one customer.



Merenzi Young / Eye of Odin Studios

"It all came down to the fact that we saw a tremendous need for something for the cycling community here in Maricopa," Matt Stewart said. "We decided to address that need."

"The biggest benefit to having Matt's shop here in town is that it's here, not up near South Mountain," said Carlos Chavez, an early customer of Arizona Bike Garage. "So far it's been a really good experience having him here in town. The convenience of having a shop here is huge and Matt is really fair with his pricing."

"And he's actually become a riding partner now," he added. "He started up a mountain bike riding club here in town and we've already ridden three times."

LOVING THE LEARNING CURVE

Stewart developed his expertise through a lifetime of racing anything with two — and sometimes four — wheels. He started racing BMX bikes at age 9, the beginning of a lifetime involved in racing. Katrina also was a professional motorcycle racer.

"I rode bikes as a kid like everyone else, but it became a family thing for us," he said. "When I raced bikes, my dad was racing cars. He stepped back from cars and bought



Merenzi Young / Eye of Odin Studios

Before opening his bicycle shop Matt Stewart raced motocross, super moto and sport bikes. "Basically, I raced anything I could get my hands on," he said.

motorcycles for my sister and me and it bloomed from there, and it turned into a career."

Stewart raced motocross, super moto and sport bikes.

"Basically, I raced anything I could get my hands on," he said.

After racing motorcycles for 15 years, from age 12 until he retired five years ago, he moved into sprint cars, which he still races today and hold a special place in his heart.

"Even though I went around the world racing motorcycles, sprint cars are my favorite form of racing because the track is constantly changing, and you have to adapt to those changes," he said. "I raced sprint cars for 12 years before I won my first race and there were a handful of 'light bulb' moments that got me to the point where I could win. There's still a learning curve today, but that's part of the joy I still get from open wheel racing."

'YOU HAVE TO PERFORM EVERY DAY'

That desire to learn has served him well as he transitions into his new position as a bike shop owner. He has continued to ride bikes recreationally throughout his life, and the relationships he built over a lifetime of riding have helped him immeasurably in launching Arizona Bike Garage.

"I have a lot of friends who've owned bike shops around the country, and a lot of them had ties to motorcycling, but opened bicycle shops," he said. "I have learned a ton from them, and also from our rep from Trek bikes,

who has been in this territory for years and helped me develop the layout of the store and also with ordering, inventory, and what to do and not to do. I've benefited from learning from the mistakes they made during their own learning curve without having to make those mistakes myself."

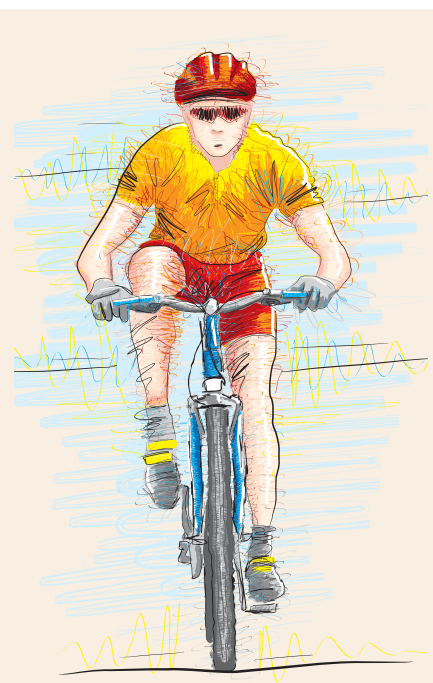
"I have learned a ton from them, and also from our rep from Trek bikes, who has been in this territory for years and helped me develop the layout of the store and also with ordering, inventory, and what to do and not to do."

Matt Stewart

In the end, his life on (and off) the road, racing bikes around the world, has taught him lessons he is applying to his new role as a small-business owner.

"Racing teaches you discipline. When you race for a living, you have to perform every day, or you don't pay your bills. And if you're not working 100 percent, there's someone else who is that would love to take your job."

 **ArizonaBikeGarage.com**
 **520-200-7584**



Bike-buying tips from the Garage

Matt Stewart, owner of Arizona Bike Garage, wants everyone to get the most out of their cycling experience, no matter where they buy their bike. Here he offers three tips for buying a new bicycle:

- 1. Make sure it properly fits the rider.** Riding a bike that is an improper size will cause aches and pains as well as require more effort. Have an expert get you on a bike that is the right size for you.
- 2. Purchase the proper bike for the type of riding you plan to do.** There are many different styles of bikes: some have a more upright seating position made for comfort while others have a more aggressive rider position built for speed. Others are made just for casual pedaling on the road or for racing down ski slopes in the summertime. Get the correct type.
- 3. Purchase your bike from a bicycle shop.** Even if you don't purchase a bike from Arizona Bike Garage it is best to go to a local store for a higher-quality product assembled properly by professionals. A bike shop can also provide knowledge to make your riding experience better, whatever type of bike you ride.

Focus on your health instead of weight in 2021

By Kristina Donnay, FNP-C

2020 has been a rough year for many, filled with stress and weight gain. When it comes to New Year's resolutions, weight loss is one of the most common. Why not stop focusing on the scale and instead focus on your overall health. Do you have brain fog, increased belly fat, poor sleep, anxiety, low libido, irritability or joint pain? You may be a candidate for bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT). Hormones coordinate everything from digestion, brain function, immune function, mood, libido and more. As men and women age, our hormones decline or become out of balance, having a big impact on our health and well-being. BHRT pellet therapy is the delivery of hormone replacement via pellet placed under

the skin. Data supports this as the safest and most effective method of BHRT. Pellets are compounded from organic plant materials and have the exact molecule structure of those hormones found naturally in the body. Pellets are about the size of a cooked grain of rice. Using a painless office procedure, the pellets are inserted under the skin. Medical literature has shown this delivers a consistent level of hormones into the bloodstream, avoiding the fluctuations that occur when using creams, pills, shots, patches or other methods. In women, pellets last 3-4 months; men 4-6 months. Call our office today for a free consultation to see if BHRT is the right treatment to regain your life. LIVE WELL BE WELL



Medical Director
Kristina Donnay



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Business, development around town

F.O.R. Maricopa, the city’s largest food bank, was granted a permit to add three shipping containers with electrical and plumbing to be used for food storage at its facility at 19428 N. Maricopa Road, Suite 107. The containers, valued at \$65,318, will be installed by Schiefferer Built.

City of Maricopa was granted a permit for a 20,000-gallon, above-ground fuel tank at its 45695 W. Edison Road facility. The tank will be constructed by Acton Contracting.

A permit for \$20,000 in commercial tenant improvements for an AT&T store in the **Shops at Maricopa Fiesta**, 20800 N. John Wayne Parkway, Suite 111, was issued to Aztec Ventures for work to be completed by Johansen Interiors.

Maricopa Care Home, 43713 W. Cowpath Road, was issued a permit to install a sprinkler system at the non-ambulatory behavioral home.

Temporary fireworks permits were issued to both **Fry’s Food & Drug** and **Walmart** to sell state approved fireworks.

Meritage Homes of Arizona was granted a permit to convert the garage of the home at 40629 W. Sunland Drive in Phase III of Ranch El Dorado into a sales office.

Permits for both on- and off-site improvements were issued to **Desert Cedars Equities East** for a property at 44900 W. Bowlin Road. The improvements for 192 units, valued at \$1.99 million, will be done by Alexander Building Co.

The property at 40521 W. Magnolia Road was re-zoned for operation of **Kooline Plumbing**. Owners Mohammad and Farzana Nazeem will act as contractors on the project.

Pulte Homes was issued a permit to install four poles for a monument sign of 7 feet or higher at Santa Rosa Crossing, 43737 W. Cypress Lane, to be installed by ALB Industries.

Approval was granted for a sign less than 7 feet tall for a sales center and model homes at Palo Brea, 44420 W. Palo Cedro Road. The property is owned by **DRH Energy**, a D.R. Horton subsidiary, and the work will be completed by Impact Sign & Graphics.

City of Maricopa was issued a permit to conduct a hydrant/flow test to determine design flow and water pressure in the vicinity of the new high school recently approved for the city.

CW-Tortosa was issued two permits in Tortosa South for a temporary sales gallery and parking lot at 18476 N. Los Gabrieles Way and a model home/sales office at 36327 W. San Clemente Ave.



Say Sushi tagged by inspectors

One restaurant was marked down during Pinal County health inspectors’ examination of Maricopa eateries Nov. 14-Dec. 10. Say Sushi received a “satisfactory” grade rather than “excellent.”

The inspector found internal temperatures of cut cabbage being held in a walk-in cooler were between 49-51 degrees. The manager voluntarily discarded cabbage. Cooling methods, time and temperature parameter were reviewed. The internal temperatures of baked fish in a metal pan on the counter at the sushi bar were between 73 and 90 degrees, instead of at or above 135 degrees. The manager voluntarily discarded fish. The internal temperature of spicy crab meat at the sushi bar was 50 degrees and temperature of cooked rice in plastic bags on the cook line prep table were between 65 and 67 degrees. Foods or cold-holding should be at 41 degrees or lower. Crab meat was placed in a working cooler and manager voluntarily discarded rice. A probe thermometer was not present at time of inspection. The manager stated they did not have a probe thermometer. The manager was asked to contact inspector within 10 days to verify correction.

EXCELLENT [No violations found]

- Wendy’s
- Culver’s
- Panda Express
- KFC/Long John Silver’s
- Denny’s
- Pizza Hut
- Aliberto’s
- True Grit Tavern
- Papa Murphy’s
- Domino’s
- Burger King
- Province Clubhouse
- Water and Ice
- Taco Bell
- Rosati’s Pizza

SATISFACTORY [Violations corrected during inspection]

- Say Sushi

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

Economist forecasts bright future for county

By Jay Taylor

Pinal County homeowners can expect the real estate boom to continue in 2021, according to a regional economist.

That was Elliott D. Pollack’s optimistic message to members of Pinal Partnership on Dec. 4. His 14th annual forecast on the greater Phoenix market was his first virtual presentation.

“The economy will normalize in the second quarter of 2021 due to having COVID-19 vaccines in wide distribution,” he said. “There is significant pent-up demand in the real estate market, and people are sitting on gobs of cash because they’ve had nowhere to spend it for the past nine months, so we will see explosive growth at first, then continue to grow at above normal trend lines through 2023.”

A continuation of low inventory, high demand and record-low interest rates means “there is no chance of a significant downturn in the housing market in 2021 or ’22,” he said.

About 90 percent of all job growth in Arizona is in Maricopa and Pinal counties, which make up metro Phoenix, the No. 1 performing market in the country in 2020 and a top-four market for each of the last four years, Pollack said.

“I expect the recovery to be even stronger in Pinal County than it will be in Maricopa County,” Pollack said.



Valley economist Elliott Pollack



Developer secures \$28M loan for construction of Bungalows

A \$28 million loan will fund construction of the Bungalows on Bowlin, a community of 196 housing units at John Wayne Parkway and Bowlin Road.

The development of the 16.9-acre property by Cavan Companies of Phoenix will feature a combination of detached homes and multifamily duplexes with 1, 2 and 3-bedroom units. One of the few single-story rental communities in the market, it will occupy little more than half of the empty acreage on the northwest corner of the intersection.

The community will feature high-end interior and exterior amenities, resort-style pool and spa, farmhouse-style clubhouse and 426 on-site parking spaces.

In announcing the loan for the project, the CEO of ACRES Capital Corp. of New York, Mark Fogel, cited the city as “an ideal area for new multifamily development due to a sustained influx of new residents.”

The project has been granted entitlement and design approval.

HEATING TIPS

1 Set your programmable thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter and lower the setpoint when you’re sleeping or away from home.

2 Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as recommended.

3 Turn off kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing; when replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.

4 During winter, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

DID YOU KNOW?

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SOURCE: www.energy.gov

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- Fry’s Marketplace & Walmart (fees apply)*
- Mailing Payment with attached Billing Stub*

- Payment by phone - (520) 424-9021
- District Office Drop Box
- 41630 W. Louis Johnson Dr.
- Maricopa, AZ 85138

*These methods of payments may not post same business day





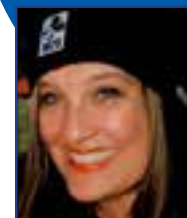
1. Judge Lyle Riggs swears in new City Councilmember Bob Marsh as his wife, Cynthia, looks on. *Victor Moreno*
2. Trinidad Ramirez, a Rancho El Dorado resident, shows two huge catfish he caught at Pacana Park. *Bob McGovern*
3. A player with the Maricopa Youth Football Juggernauts snags a catch in double coverage during a Nov. 30 home game. *Victor Moreno*
4. Copper Sky hosted the Arizona Showdown 2020 lacrosse tournament on Nov. 21. *Brian Petersheim Jr.*
5. The Sun Life Family Health Center on Bowlin Road offered free COVID-19 testing on Nov. 24. *Raquel Hendrickson*



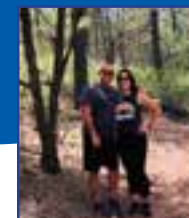
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Saddleback Elementary School



Boys & Girls Club
After School Support for Families
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Maricopa Elementary School



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Pima Butte Elementary School



Jane Tiffit
Academic Coach
Saddleback Elementary School



Melina Bautista
4th Grade Teacher
Santa Cruz Elementary School



Esmeralda Contreras
Lead Custodian
Santa Rosa Elementary School



Shannon Hilsinger
Technology Integration Specialist
Desert Wind Middle School



Irene Canela
Front Office Receptionist
Maricopa Wells Middle School



Rachel Connary
School Nurse
Maricopa High School



Lizabeth Stephens
School Nurse
Butterfield Elementary School

MUSD Spotlight Students

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Butterfield Elementary School



Benjamin Reitman
1st Grade
Maricopa Elementary School



Rory Strain
1st Grade
Pima Butte Elementary School



Talon Samascott
4th Grade
Saddleback Elementary School



Sebastian Rosales
5th Grade
Santa Cruz Elementary School



Maximus Pedder
1st Grade
Santa Rosa Elementary School



Angel Murrieta Puente
8th Grade
Desert Wind Middle School



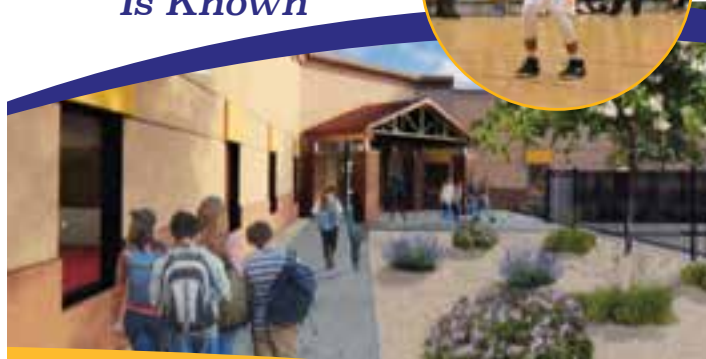
Ava Flood
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MPD begins era of Chief Hughes

By Raquel Hendrickson



Merenzi Young

“We’re in the business of public trust. If segments of our population step up and say, ‘We don’t trust you,’ we need to fix it.”
James Hughes, the new chief of Maricopa Police Department, has been in law enforcement 34 years. He is inheriting a department that, in his own experience, already has great community support.

He spent 25 years policing in New Jersey and can draw many comparisons between Maricopa and Mendham Township, where he first became a police officer at the age of 19. Like Maricopa, he said, the North Jersey community is suburban, upper-middle class and just 25 miles from a major metropolitan area.

In Maricopa, however, Hughes found a refreshing attitude toward law enforcement.

“When people see me out in uniform, I have been thanked more times in this city in a year than I have the previous 25 years,” he said. “The community really supports their police department and volunteer workers. It’s really a treat to go out to lunch in uniform and interact with the public and have them ask questions, talk to them, high-five little kids. It’s really a cool community to work in.”

It’s not all rosy, of course. MPD continues to feel the backlash of the June death of K-9 Ike from heat stroke. As a fix-it kind of guy, he has his eye out for breakdowns in communication and ways to regain trust.

His method of earning trust is succinct.

“One day at a time,” he said. “One person at a time. One call at a time. One contact at a time.”

That entails officers holding themselves accountable and teaching younger officers to look in the mirror, reflect and improve. “The secret to success is self-discipline and self-motivation,” Hughes said.

‘I LOVE THIS PROFESSION’

Hughes was born and raised in Bernardsville, New Jersey. His father was a police officer in the horse-country town for 26 years, retiring as a sergeant.

His first job was building bicycles at a bike shop about 100 yards from his home.

“I have a pretty strong mechanical aptitude,” Hughes said. “I enjoy woodworking, cars, hands-on type of stuff.”

After high school, he followed in his father’s footsteps, training to be a police officer and getting hired in a not-too-distant town. In Mendham Township, he worked his way up to

lieutenant under the mentorship of Chief Tom Costanza.

Hughes married and started a family. By the time Costanza retired in 2009, Hughes was looking for something different.

That came with a move to Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2010.

He accepted a position as director of the Honolulu Police Commission. He served as executive officer for 18 months but was unsatisfied with what was, in effect, a civilian position in a very large department. It did not provide the challenge he was seeking, he said.

By that time, Steve Stahl had been hired as police chief in Maricopa. He was building a leadership framework and looking for proficient commanding officers.

Hughes saw the posting and threw in his name. After doing well in the initial interviews he did a one-on-one with Stahl.

“He was among some of my first hires when I came here,” Stahl said. “He brings the qualifications that even larger cities require of their chief but, most importantly, he has a thirst for learning.”

Hughes said he felt quickly that he and Stahl share a similar law-enforcement philosophy.

His first impression of Stahl: Standup guy. Looks people in the eye. Shakes their hand. Shows respect, but doesn’t beat around the bush. In April 2012, Hughes became a commander over operations and support services. He said he has worked every role in the department, including acting chief when Stahl was out of town. He lived in Maricopa seven years and still owns property in town, though he has moved to Ahwatukee.

He coached city football teams and was involved with several community organizations.

Hughes met his current wife in Maricopa and they have a three-year-old child. More than eight years later, he is stepping up to lead a department with more than 70 officers, 20 civilian employees and nearly 80 volunteers.

‘TREATING PEOPLE WELL IS THE CORNERSTONE’

His advancement is weighed against the respect he has for Stahl and creates mixed feelings.

“It was a little bittersweet, but this is a goal of mine, what I’ve prepared my career for,” Hughes said. “I know it’s time for me to accept this opportunity and lead the great men and women of this department.”

The freshly minted chief does not like to talk about himself but instead promotes the strengths of the department. He calls it a very functional department with amazing people.

A police force with demographics resembling the city's helps to address the needs of the community. Maricopa officers are doing a tremendous job and behaving compassionately, he said, while going above and beyond their regular duty.

"We're getting that message out to the public, so that we're not lumped in with those cities that are not holding their officers accountable," Hughes said.

He wants his officers to transition smoothly, no matter what call they are answering. That means handling quality-of-life issues and criminal matters while being professional, approachable and compassionate.

"That's really the sweet spot in this profession," he said. "Getting the officers to be professional problem-solvers, whether that problem to solve is a dog barking or if it's the violent felon that needs to be addressed. Both of those are embracing our mission, which is to make every contact excellent. And I think it applies to all facets. We're the only branch of government that does house calls 24/7."

"Treating people well is the cornerstone of our profession," Hughes said



Raquel Hendrickson

'THE BUCK STOPS WITH ME'

He is cognizant of the fact that while serving the residents of the city, the officers are representing the city of Maricopa. Hired as chief by City Manager Rick Horst, he represents the department to the city leadership.

Horst noted the "critical partnership" of the police chief and city manager when the Hughes promotion was announced.

"Not only will he bridge from the old to the new but will take us to the next level of modern-day policing and community service," Horst said.

What will Hughes's leadership look like at MPD? He considers himself level-headed and unlikely to "fly off the handle and make

"I believe that the leader should be one of the hardest-working people in the building," Chief James Hughes said. "The buck stops with me."

MPD Chief James Hughes

Age: 54
Hometown: Bernardsville, New Jersey
Family: Wife Brandelyn; four children, ages 3 to 22
Education: Master's degree, public management
Years with MPD: 8
Previous: Mendham Township (NJ) police, 1984-2010; Honolulu Police Commission, 2010-2012
Law-enforcement philosophy: "Like any public service, work hard and care. Solve problems people can't solve on their own. We can't arrest our problems, but we also have to arrest the violent people because they put the community at risk. Really just taking a holistic look at our city."

rash decisions." He intends to continue Stahl's community-outreach programs like "Coffee with the Chief" and add his own touch to what's working.

"I share Chief Stahl's work ethic," he said. "I believe that the leader should be one of the hardest-working people in the building ... The buck stops with me."

"There's a lot of demands of busywork that's placed on a chief," Hughes added. "I make sure that I dedicate a portion of my day to the things that really, really matter, and that's the community and our employees here."

Stahl said MPD is fortunate to have someone with Hughes's experience to qualify to be the next chief.

"This will be an exciting and challenging adventure, one I am confident he and his chosen command team will meet head-on and work with the community to embrace," Stahl said.

Hughes, too, used the term "exciting" when talking about the rapid, ongoing growth of the city. He said MPD will play an important part in helping that growth.

"That's so exciting, the fact that the city is growing compared to back East, where it was sharing the services and merging and [having] the cutbacks and layoffs in some areas," Hughes said. "It's a great time to be a Maricopa police officer."

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**WHERE
ARE THEY
NOW?**
Michael Glen

The ‘Rolling Pilot’ still flying high in Arizona

By Kyle Norby

events, most recently the annual State of the City presentation, which had a theme from the movie “Up.”

Much like his balloons, Glen thinks the city has nowhere to go but up.

“It’s nice to see a lot more businesses coming to Maricopa,” he said. “I definitely look forward to the future.”

With the future being fairly uncertain, Glen still looks forward to exploring other forms of aviation, such as gliding. But he laughed, saying he believes in keeping to one expensive hobby at a time.

“There’s pretty much always something in the works, it’s just a matter of timing and everything else, especially with the coronavirus,” Glen said. “I do fully expect to get back to it and hopefully this next summer be back on the road traveling the world.”

Michael “The Rolling Pilot” Glen is as passionate as ever about hot-air ballooning.

Nearly a decade has passed since our last contact with Glen, who inspired many with his personal journey as a paraplegic hot-air balloonist. Losing the use of his legs in a car accident at 21, Glen rose above many challenges and competed in balloon festivals all over the country.

He still flies on his own and has had the opportunity to meet and take up other people with disabilities through many organizations, including the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

Unfortunately, the ballooning community has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly advising against large gatherings. So, balloon festivals have been grounded.

“I just recently bought another balloon because I don’t have enough,” he said, with a chuckle. “I still fly as much as possible, but of course with the world right now and COVID, it has kind of put a damper on balloon festivals and travel. The health and safety of everyone is more important than a festival.”

When asked if his love for the sport has withered at all during the pandemic, he responded, “Not at all!”

In his personal life, Glen has been through a divorce as well as a career change and a 2015 move to Mesa. His parents moved into his home in the Villages, fulfilling a long-term plan.

“I’m the manager of a team of accountants for a travel agency named Altour,” Glen said. “Not having to drive 45 minutes each way (to and from Phoenix) is a plus.”

He still visits Maricopa often to spend time with family and to show off his balloon at city



Michael Glen hopes to be back traveling the world this summer and attending hot-air balloon festivals. He appeared on the cover of InMaricopa magazine in 2011.

Michael Glen
Age: 45
Residence: Mesa
Occupation: Accounting department manager
Education: Some college
Family: Parents Bill and Susie Glen, live in Maricopa; brother Chris Glen and wife Jenn, and nephews Owen and Connor, live in Spokane, Washington
Favorite Maricopa memory: “Does it count to say not having to make the commute to work? lol..... But would say flying the balloon out there.”

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in Maricopa
RESTAURANT
GUIDE • 2021

Native Grill owner tastes success despite 9/11, housing crash, fires and COVID-19



Victor Moreno

BY JAY TAYLOR

All business owners encounter hurdles as they are getting things going; it's part of the process.

Pat Kieny, the owner of Native Grill & Wings, has experienced more than his share.

He opened his first Native Grill in Mesa just five days before the 9/11 attacks on the United States. (He sold that store in 2019 but still owns another location in Laveen.)

He weathered the housing crash that devastated Maricopa's economy for years beginning in 2008.

He rebounded after two early morning kitchen fires – the first in November 2013, and then another in January 2019, which closed the restaurant for five months. And now, like all local business owners, he is dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. But he knows it will pass, as the other crises have.

"The time in 2001 after 9/11 was very scary because we didn't know what was going to happen or how long it would last," he said. "People were just scared and were staying home. Thankfully, it just lasted a few months and it pretty much went away unless you went to the airport."

He was obviously not deterred because just four years later, on July 25, 2005, he opened the Native in Maricopa, at 21164 N. John Wayne Parkway, as one of the first sit-down restaurants in town. The way he chose Maricopa is interesting.

"We chose Maricopa because I was driving through in 2003 and I saw the Bashas' going up — there was nothing on the east side of John Wayne Parkway where Fry's is now – and I saw that, and all the other building going on,



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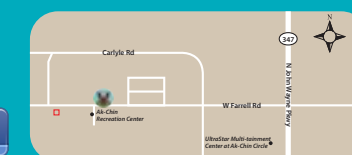


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and thought the city was going to take off,” he said. “The building we’re in was already under construction, it was basically just a roof and some air conditioning units, but it was originally designed as four suites. I just thought this would be a great place to have a restaurant. I called the landlord and he said he’d be happy to lease it to us as a restaurant, and we spent about 18 months doing the improvements and getting it open, and we were on our way.”

According to Rod Tichnor, who owns two Native Grill restaurants in Ahwatukee, Kieny’s choice of Maricopa was perfect.

“I think Maricopa is a perfect place for Pat to own a restaurant,” said Tichnor, who worked with Kieny at Wendy’s in Tempe when both were getting started in the industry. “It’s a very locally oriented community and that’s perfect for him. People associate him with Native Grill. He’s very eager to give back to the community, give to fundraisers, and has a reputation as just being a great guy.

“Pat wants to do the right thing,” Tichnor continued. “He cares a lot about his customers and employees, and he values friendship and relationships tremendously. He’s also a good man of faith and believes if he does the right thing for you, you’ll do the same for him.” **WE’RE BACK AGAIN AND DOING GREAT**

Kieny’s first few years were great, as he established himself in town and built a reputation for quality food and great service. But then the housing market collapsed in 2008. “Those few years after that weren’t fun, but now we’re back again and doing great,” he said.

But that experience steeled him for what has transpired since March 2020 with COVID-19. Surprisingly, he says the business isn’t tremendously different than before COVID. “We have always done a lot of takeout business because of big sporting events like the Super Bowl, and big events like graduation parties,” he said. “So, we were well positioned to deal with a change to an emphasis on a takeout.”

Kieny said the up-and-down nature of the economy has always been the hardest part of being in business. He said striking a balance between offering the best possible customer service against wasting money when things are really tight is the toughest thing he has to do.

Having to shut down in-person dining for eight weeks due to the state stay-at-home order was also rough, especially coming at what is traditionally Native’s busiest time of the year. But Kieny agreed with the decision at the time.

“I thought it was right thing to do when it happened,” he said. “We didn’t know exactly how



big this thing was going to be or how long it was going to last, so to be safe it was the right thing to do. We’ve learned a lot more now about how to be open to dining in and still be safe, so we’re getting a handle on it from our perspective.”

He said it took two to three weeks to get organized so he could provide the level of service expected by his customers and get out food out in a timely manner. But he quickly got the proper processes in place, and it turned out they were able to get back to in-person dining a little sooner than he thought — at 50% capacity.

“Both our staff and the customers were able to shift our business model pretty easily to adapt to the reality of the situation,” Kieny said. “In the beginning it was a little tough if we had a ton of people all coming in at once, but we’ve been able to adjust quickly if we need to. Customers are adjusting to scheduling and we’re getting better at getting food out on time. The first few weeks were definitely a learning experience, but we adjusted our staffing and the customers realized they couldn’t expect to get their food in 15 minutes at the busiest times of the week. Now everyone is used to the situation and we’re doing great.”

OLD-SCHOOL FIX: SUNS SHINING

Native, like all local restaurants, is still operating at 50% capacity. That’s mostly not a problem, Kieny said, but high peak times like Friday night and during Sunday NFL games, when people want to stay at their table for three hours or so, hurt a bit.

He said his business is pretty evenly divided now between in-person dining and takeout. “About 30% of our sales is liquor, and the rest is pretty evenly balanced, with about 30% takeout and 40% eat-in,” he said.

One thing Kieny does see as helping business, both during, and hopefully after COVID, is sports. And while he doesn’t position himself strictly as a “sports bar,” games definitely have an impact on the business.

“In our first year at the Mesa store, after

9/11, what helped us more than anything that year was the Diamondbacks winning World Series,” he said. “It really brought people in and brought them together. It did a lot for our business and really helped us rebound.”

And as we emerged from the initial lockdown earlier this year, Kieny said the return of sports was a big part of his business rebounding — the ability for people to gather and watch a game outside their home was huge after being stuck at home for several months. But he’s lost out on Friday night crowds that typically swelled by 30-70 people after high school football games — when fans could attend games.

But overall, sports have a huge impact on the bottom line at Native.

“The capacity limits have hurt our Sunday sales for sure,” Kieny said. “We can only get half full, and those were days we would be at capacity for six or seven hours straight. But it’s not anything we can control so we make the best of it. We’re making up for it on the other days.”

But he said the best thing for business might be an old-school fix.

“I’m really hoping the Suns can make the playoffs this year,” he said. “They are by far the biggest draw of all the major sports, bigger than football, baseball or hockey by a mile. If they could figure out a way to make the playoffs that would be great for business and for the mentality of the state.

“By then, hopefully, the vaccine will be in effect, so that would be great for us in May and June, especially if we’re back to 100% capacity.”

As concerned as he was about doing business during the pandemic, Kieny’s worry didn’t rise to 2008 levels, when the housing downturn devastated the economy and his circumstances were different.

“In 2008 I was in a much different position, I owed money to the banks, it was just a whole different situation,” he said. “This time I’m sure there were lots of people who may have thought about losing their businesses, but that wasn’t a worry for me this time around.”

When the lockdown was announced, although he wasn’t worried about losing the business, he obviously did have concerns, including his staff, which was reduced from 60 to 21 during the lockdown. It is now back to 60 employees.

“The first thing I thought about was our employees. I was worried about whether we would have enough money to pay our employees. That was the first thing I wanted to be sure we were able to do.”



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Restaurant owners pivot to survive – and thrive – in pandemic

BY BOB MCGOVERN

Talk about a cloud with a silver lining. For restaurants in Maricopa the pandemic was a huge challenge requiring significant changes to how they served their customers. But those adapting quickly and effectively have reaped the benefits, with meals flying out the doors at some places and driving healthier bottom lines.

In Maricopa talked to a few restaurant owners about how they transformed their businesses during the public health crisis. Two were bold enough to open their kitchens in the midst of it all. All said they are now well-positioned for success, no matter what the future holds.

Roots Eatery chef on pandemic launch: 'I figured I'd go to battle'

Christopher Spear opened Roots Eatery in July — in the middle of the public health crisis.

The fast-casual restaurant opened slow,

and that helped, said the chef-owner. They relied on curbside pickup, with as much as 90% of orders served that way on some days.

"It didn't mean much of a change for us," he said. "It heightened the alert for everybody. We were more thorough with our cleaning and sanitizing, wiping the door handle and other common touch points."

Before the opening, Spear said he and his wife talked about the wisdom of launching a restaurant during a pandemic. Roots is the seventh restaurant he has opened but the first he has owned.

"We thought about walking away from a \$20,000 investment," he said. "But I figured I'd go to battle."

It helped that his landlord was supportive. "I knew he had my back," he said.

Ultimately, he said, it came down to sustaining his vision.

"We were just looking at the end goal: feeding the people of Maricopa."



Bob McGovern

Christopher Spear, chef-owner at Roots Eatery, with his Pan Seared Salmon with Zucchini Pasta, Candied Bacon and Tomato-Bacon Cream Sauce.

At Barro's, a jump in sales continued

When COVID-19 hit, Barro's transitioned to an alternate form of meal delivery.

"We had a tent set up outside for curbside pickup," general manager Mike

Hull said, noting the restaurant was "crazy busy" and had to double kitchen and counter staff to keep up. "And the uptick in delivery was crazy, too."

With people stuck at home in the early days of the pandemic, the restaurant saw a significant increase in business and sales have yet to dip, Hull said.

"We exploded, to be honest," he said.

Indoor dining remains way off, so that has been a big change, according to Hull, adding “we used to pack this house on the weekends.”

Meanwhile, the restaurant is following CDC protocols. Every hour on the hour masked and gloved staff members are sanitizing the eatery, which is physical distancing as well, he said.

COVID-19 'didn't really hurt us,' new Sunrise owner says

Sunrise Café closed at the beginning of the pandemic, but it wasn't dark long. Billy Godwin bought and renovated the restaurant and re-opened in September. It has been renamed Sunrise Diner and he has no regrets.

"I didn't really hurt us," he said. "We had to keep the people coming in."

In some respects, it was a good time to open the doors and have the opportunity to wade in a bit more slowly.

"We kept the menu small, and we were trying to push out good, consistent quality food," he said.

The restaurant is following CDC guidelines – wiping down and sanitizing, face masks for staff and physical distancing. “We moved some tables to facilitate that.”

And outdoor tables for dining will be coming soon, he said.

Papa John's: Pizzas, prevention, jobs and community service

When the pandemic hit, Papa John's was one of the first pizza chains to offer no-touch delivery and quality seals to



Kyle Norby


Billy Godwin bought, remodeled, reopened and renamed Sunrise Diner during the pandemic.

ensure pizzas went from oven to box and remained unopened through delivery to the home, said Jesse Rutledge of Round Rock Restaurant Group, which owns 33 Papa John's stores including Maricopa's.

Mandatory masks, sanitizing and handwashing, and plexiglass at the front counter were other steps taken to keep customers and employees safe.

She expects the chain will offer curbside delivery in January. Round Rock hired 100 people who had lost their jobs or been furloughed, including an Applebee's staffer who lost her job and is now working as a manager at the Maricopa store, Rutledge said.

In addition, pizzas were delivered to food banks and shelters to feed the hungry, she said.

"It was so crazy and stressful. We were delivering smiles and the pizzas were extra." 





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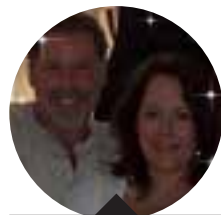
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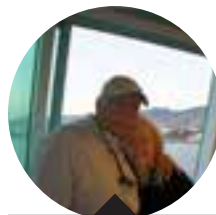
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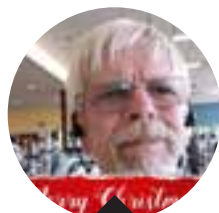
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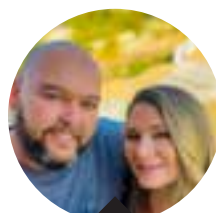
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Rafe Scoresby

"I'm so excited for the opportunity to tell you about this photo! The assignment was to create an atmosphere with a specific mood. I wanted to take a photo that shows someone looking toward their future and pondering on their past. This photo was taken in my backyard, and I'm very satisfied with the way it turned out. I enjoy photography because it captures memories in a beautiful manner. I love being able to freeze time, and highlight so many amazing places and interesting people, with just a click of a button."



Harmony Vargas

"The inspiration behind this photo was selective coloring. I wanted an image in which the subject would have a vibrant tone. I also enjoyed the irony of a butterfly, something we think of being so free, inside a home – almost as if it were trapped. This photo was taken near my window. The butterfly is actually one of those preserved ones. I enjoy photography because it allows me to be creative and productive. Editing the images can often be tedious, which I personally like. Photographs can speak in so many ways; I find it fascinating how a slight change in angle, lighting or tone can change the entire meaning or interpretation of images. Photography is by far my favorite creative outlet."



Kevin Vasquez

"This photo was taken on the weekend before the assignment was due when I had gone down to Tucson for a soccer game. I decided to stop by Downtown Tucson and take a few shots of the streets, but I really wasn't getting anything that I wanted or liked. I was heading back to my car when I turned around and took a few pictures of this building, but nothing was coming out the way I wanted it. Until I looked up for some reason and I saw this. I took the shot. I guess the real reason I enjoy photography is I love to capture images for people that will be captured as a memory for them. I just love being able to show people how much an image can hold within it, the way it's expressed or portrayed."



1



2

Heritage Academy Powder Puff Game

1. Students toss a classmate high into the air during a Powder Puff football game at Heritage Academy in November. The event was held in conjunction with a food drive.
2. A student runs the football during the game at Heroes Field.
3. Teammates make an arch for players to run through.
4. A student wears a pink tutu to show support for the event.

Photos by Victor Moreno



3



4



1



2



3



4

Maricopa High School Senior Night

1. The Maricopa Rams take the field for their game against Campo Verde High School.
2. MHS cheerleaders pose with their pompons and masks.
3. Olivia Byers and Victor Moreno Jr. were crowned Homecoming Queen and King.
4. Senior cornerback/running back Dylan Guaderrama and his family smile for a photo.

Photos by Victor Moreno

With Cortona purchase for new high school, MUSD now owns 15 properties

Story and photos by Raquel Hendrickson



This 10.86-acre property is at West Homestead Drive and North Continental Boulevard in the Homestead North community.

With the acquisition of a 65-acre parcel for its second high school, Maricopa Unified School District now owns 15 properties. Five are undeveloped.

In December, MUSD received \$3.54 million from Arizona's School Facilities Board to buy the Cortona property at the southwest corner of Murphy and Farrell roads near the far east edge of the district. The SFB is also supplying more than \$22 million approved by the state Legislature to help build the school.

MUSD closed escrow on the property Dec. 1, and hydrant flow tests began Dec. 3 to determine design flow and pressure on the site.

Cortona is the latest in a series of land purchases and donations still in district possession that date back to the 1950s. Here is a rundown of the properties currently owned by the district:

- 1. Maricopa High School**
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.
45.09 acres
MUSD's first school site is now strictly high school property pieced together over the years in the name of Pinal County School District #20. The first high school opened in 1955.

- 2. Santa Rosa Elementary School**
21400 N. Santa Rosa Drive
9.12 acres
Donated in 2003 by El Dorado Partners, El Dorado Pecan and Pecan Valley Investments, the site is across from The Duke at Rancho El Dorado. The school opened in 2005.
- 3. Pima Butte Elementary School**
42202 W. Rancho El Dorado Parkway
8.51 acres
The smallest school lot in the district was donated in 2003 by El Dorado Partners, El Dorado Pecan and Pecan Valley Investments. The school opened in 2005.



Pima Butte Elementary

- 4. Vacant Land in Homestead**
No assigned street address
10.86 acres
CHI Construction acquired this property

at Homestead and Continental Boulevard in 2004 from Homestead Village North LLC and dedicated it to MUSD while never transferring ownership.

- 5. Maricopa Wells Middle School**
45725 W. Honeycutt Ave.
23.39 acres
In 2004, MUSD acquired the property from Maricopa Meadows LLC in a special warranty deed. Originally on the high school campus, the school moved to the new site in 2006.



Maricopa Wells Middle School

- 6. Vacant land in Rancho El Dorado**
No assigned street address
12.07 acres
MUSD acquired this property south of Placone Lane between Rancho El Dorado and The Lakes in 2004, signed over by El Dorado Partners, El Dorado Pecan and Pecan Valley Investments.

- 7. Vacant land in Rancho El Dorado**
No assigned street address
12.08 acres
Also in 2004, MUSD acquired land north of Placone Lane next to Global Water Resources offices, signed over by El Dorado Partners, El Dorado Pecan and Pecan Valley Investments.

- 8. Maricopa Elementary School**
18150 N. Alterra Parkway
11.69 acres
The property was acquired in 2005 by quit-claim deed from Lennar Communities Development. The school opened in 2006.

- 9. Santa Cruz Elementary School**
19845 N. Costa del Sol Blvd.
12 acres
In 2005, Murphy Land Investors LLC granted MUSD the property in a \$10



Santa Cruz Elementary

special warranty deed. Originally on the high school campus, the elementary moved to the new site in 2007.

- 10. Maricopa Unified School District Office & Transportation**
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.
18.13 acres
In 2008, D.R. Horton and Pulte Home Corporation conveyed property to MUSD via special warranty deed for administration offices and the Transportation Department.

- 11. Desert Wind Middle School**
35565 W. Honeycutt Road
22.5 acres
MUSD acquired the Tortosa property in 2006 from Murphy Land Investors through a special warranty deed. The school opened in 2008.

- 12. Vacant land in Santa Rosa Springs**
No assigned street address
12.05 acres
In 2007, Elliott Homes gifted the parcel of land on Porter Road to MUSD in a special warranty deed, but Elliott continued ownership until 2014.

- 13. Saddleback Elementary School**
18600 N. Porter Road
13.31 acres
In 2007, Element H-HVS LLC gave MUSD land on Porter Road. The school opened in 2008.

- 14. Butterfield Elementary School**
43800 W. Honeycutt Road
15.91 acres
MUSD acquired two Honeycutt Road parcels in 2007 and forged them into one for the newest elementary. The school opened in 2008.

- 15. Vacant land on Cortona property**
No assigned street address
65 acres
MUSD purchased property In December 2020 from Maricopa 240 LLC on Murphy Road. It is planned for a second high school.

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Preparing for rapid technological development

By Murray Siegel



Murray Siegel

There are many difficult challenges facing the United States, yet one vital problem receives little coverage by politicians or the media — the growing acceleration in technological development.

Our nation must be able to deal with cyberterrorism, gene splicing, artificial intelligence, data mining, robotics and the destructive effects of climate change, among others. A barrier to meeting these daunting challenges is the lack of U.S. citizens motivated to seek a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) degree in college and their ability to successfully complete such an academic program.

Universities, researchers, corporations and foundations have spent decades seeking to improve the number of Americans receiving STEM degrees. One barrier to this objective is the inability of many U.S. high school graduates to successfully navigate four semesters of calculus, a necessary ingredient in obtaining a four-year STEM degree.

What has been tried to improve student success in calculus? College courses have been revamped and placement programs have been developed. Some researchers attempted to improve students' preparation by seeking a solution at the high school level. Some have provided speakers and field trips to middle school students to motivate them to consider a STEM career. To date, these efforts have not borne fruit. What is the problem?

The efforts to better prepare students for success in STEM were in the wrong grades. It is in elementary schools where many students learn they cannot “do math.” Others see math as a set of meaningless rules and give up on pursuing advanced courses.

Why is the root of the problem in our elementary schools? Elementary classes are constructed to include students of all ability levels. This is fine in many subjects, but mathematics is cumulative and students should be in a class commensurate with their abilities. A fifth-grade class might contain a few students who still cannot add or subtract whole numbers as well as students who can already operate with fractions and decimals. The remaining students are at various locations on the learning curve. The teacher complies with the required curriculum. Students at the low end give up, realizing they cannot do math. Students at the upper end get bored and find areas of interest that do not require mathematical knowledge. The origin of mixed ability classes is a desire to avoid labeling students.

To demonstrate the lack of logic in mixed-ability grouping in elementary school math classes, consider this scenario. Imagine all college freshmen had to take a Calculus 1 class as first semester freshmen. Students who had taken Advanced Placement Calculus in high school and who should be exempt from this course are required to be in the class — that is the rule. Students who barely passed math in high school and who should be in a remedial class are in the Calculus 1 class — this is the rule. This scenario is both unfair and irrational, yet that is exactly what occurs in most elementary school math classes.

What can be done? Next month's column will provide answers.

Murray Siegel, Ph.D., has more than 44 years of teaching experience and volunteers at Butterfield Elementary School. To learn more about Murray, visit InMaricopa.com/Columnists.

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Irvin Perez, middle, a new Acacia Crossing homeowner, and his brother Ray Flores move a fish tank on moving day. Perez's son, Aiden, 8, helps.

Brian Petersheim Jr.



New homes are going up quickly in Santa Rosa Crossing.

Bob McGovern

Frenzy in 2020 real estate market looks to continue

By Jay Taylor

If you thought 2020 was a wild ride in the local real estate market, hold onto your hats.

According to several local realty experts, more of the same is ahead in 2021. Real estate agents expect to sell homes quicker and others in the industry will see the same torrid pace to meet demand.

COVID-19, social unrest and a circus-like presidential election provided a perfect storm for booming real estate prices last year, say Realtors and lenders who specialize in the Maricopa market. The good news (at least for local homeowners and potential sellers) is that the ride looks to be a one-way ticket to higher prices in the new year.

Several factors — high demand, low inventory, record-low interest rates — fell into place for the boom. The pandemic,

in its own strange way, also contributed to the surge in demand and rising home values in the city. “Typically, we see an increase in home sales after the holidays until May, then the market slows down going into the summer,” said Sheila Harris, leader of the Harris Team at HomeSmart Success Maricopa.

“People want to buy and be in their new home before summer comes and be settled before school starts in August. This year, numbers went up during summer, and even through COVID.”

She said buyers were looking for larger homes, with home gyms, home offices, space for schooling at home and bigger yards.

Ty Green heads the Green Group at Coldwell Banker Realty and saw similar trends.



Sheila Harris

“Here in Maricopa, we were a little behind the curve getting to the boom time relative to the rest of the Valley, especially the Ahwatukee/Chandler/Gilbert/San Tan area,” he said. “But once we caught up, there were a lot of factors in Maricopa’s favor. It’s a lower price-point, and the attraction here is that you can get a larger home that’s newer, and so has less maintenance costs, for a lot less money.”

A 3,000-square-foot, two-story home with a pool in the city might list for about \$300,000, he said. In those other areas, a similar home would list for more than \$450,000.



Brian Petersheim

MORE RENTERS BECOME HOMEOWNERS

One of the other great drivers of rising prices was extremely low inventory.

“This was a true shortage of homes that caused this, not something artificial,” said Brian Petersheim of HomeSmart Success. “Generally, in Maricopa over last 10 years there are usually about 300 homes for sale and actively showing — not those under contract.

Much of this year, we only had 50-70 homes on the market, especially at the lower end of price spectrum. It got to the point where homes would get listed and there would be 6-7 offers, many of them coming from people who had not even seen the house yet.”

Bidding wars and offers above asking price became common. Sellers no longer have to assist buyers with closing costs.

Record-low interest rates are another huge factor in the booming market. A couple of years ago, no one foresaw mortgage rates in the low 2% range, including Corrina Davis, a loan officer on the Furman Team at Sunstreet Mortgage.

“When I bought my home two years ago the rate was 5.25%,” Davis said in December. in December***. “At the beginning of 2020, rates were in the mid- to high-4% range. But right now, for anyone with a good credit score, the low 2% range is pretty common.”

Rates fell for several reasons, she said. A year ago, a significant number of investors were still interested in the secondary market, keeping rates up. Once the pandemic hit, rates dropped dramatically, and people started going into forbearance and asking for revised



Bob McGovern

It was such a hot seller’s market in 2020, bidding wars and offers above asking price became common with a drop in inventory.

payment plans. It also triggered a rise in moves to affordable markets like Pinal County.

“Home prices are a bit inflated right now,” Davis said. “We have influx of people from Illinois and California and some other states with dramatically inflated home values that are putting in offers of \$10,000 to \$30,000 above the asking price and really driving the prices up. They’re getting so much for their existing home, they are willing to look at moving to get a bigger, nicer home they couldn’t otherwise

have afforded if they’d stayed where they were.”

Inventory remained low because attractive interest rates turned renters with good credit and a down payment into homebuyers.

“You’d be paying the same for a 3-bedroom home with a yard as you were for a 2-bedroom apartment,” she said.

The long daily commute to and from Phoenix became less of an impediment with more people working from home. Many prospective buyers no longer have to worry about a lengthy commute taking time away from family and friends.

“Before, the drive from Phoenix to Maricopa was a barrier, but with so many companies working remotely and people not having to deal with the commute and traffic on 347 it became a more attractive option,” Harris said.

‘I’M THANKFUL, BUT I’M REALLY TIRED’

Curiously, the hot residential real estate market had some segments of the industry working furiously to keep up with the demand and others able to work less and still benefit from the boom.

“It’s a lot of chaos and long hours,” said Kelly Witt, the manager of Empire West Title Agency’s Maricopa office. “There are a lot of days when I’m starting at 6 a.m., going home and working till 7:30 or 8:30. It’s just been crazy. It’s been going like this since the virus started. Who’d have thought the virus would cause this? When this first hit, a lot of people thought they’d be losing their jobs, and now they’re busier than they have ever been. It’s been quite a ride.

“I’m thankful, but I’m really tired. I’ve had many 16-hour days and there’s a lot of people who have done that; everyone is exhausted and they’re COVID-cranky.”

Petersheim said he saw exactly the opposite effect — his workload went down, but he was doing more deals than ever.

“For me it was the exact opposite,” he said. “Every time I’d list a home on Thursday and schedule an open house for Saturday and Sunday, the home would go under contract on Friday, and I’d have to cancel open houses for the weekend. People were looking for the open houses and sometimes there wouldn’t be anyone there.”

Buyers’ agents, however, found it difficult, he added.

“Some agents were writing 10-15 offers and not getting a house because there was so much competition,” he said. “It was very tough, especially for first-time buyers. All those stories they had heard about low-ball offers were from 2011 and 2012; now they better be prepared to write an offer at or over listing price the first time they see a home they like.”

Despite all the chaos for buyers, sellers and industry workers, Maricopa continued to boom all year. One more factor will keep the market moving forward in future years, according to Davis.

“When you’re going through neighborhoods in Maricopa, everything is being maintained well, and the homes show very well,” she said. “I don’t ever see a ‘bad part of town.’ The neighborhoods are very visually appealing; they’re pretty. In other areas of the Valley there are distinctions between where the middle-income people live and there’s where the rich people live.

“It seems like everyone helps out by taking pride in their community ... I think the more rural aspect of the community plays into that community feel and sense of pride and helps people feel like they’re a part of something bigger.”

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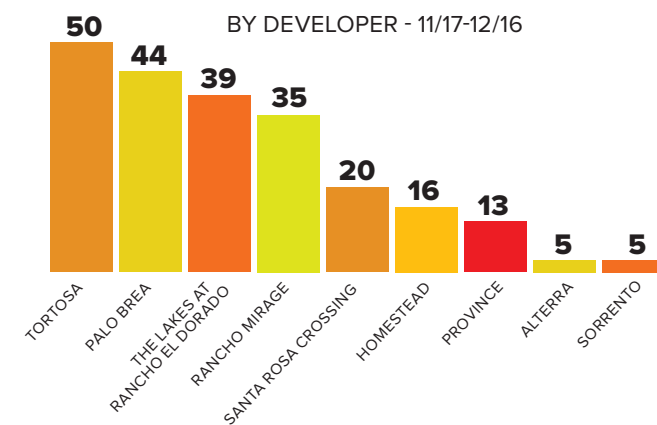
Bob McGovern

1. 41845 W. Lucera Lane, Glennwilde

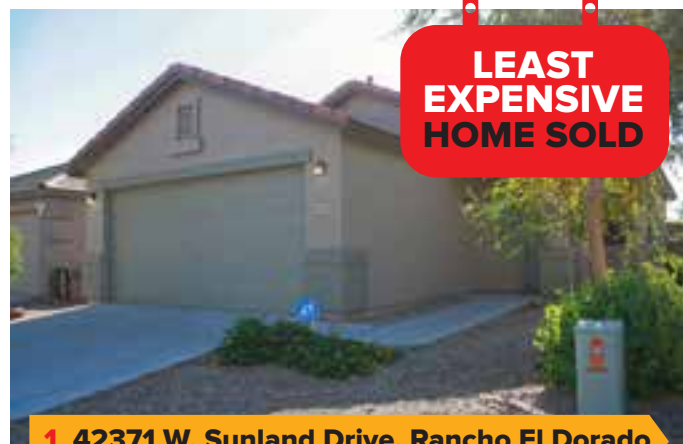
The most expensive home sold in Maricopa Nov. 16 — Dec. 15 was a two-story home in Glennwilde. The double-door front entrance leads into a separate formal dining and living rooms. The oversized kitchen features a large island, plenty of cabinets and a breakfast bar overlooking the family room space. Upstairs is a loft featuring a built-in desk area. The master has an extra-large walk-in closet and bathroom with separate tub and shower, plus his and her sinks. The backyard has an extended paver patio leading to a diving-depth pool and grass/landscaped area. This home sold in just two days for \$10,000 above asking price.

Sold: Dec. 1	Bathrooms: 4.5
Purchase price: \$455,000	Community: Glennwilde
Square footage: 4,282	Features: Extra-long driveway, three-car garage, loft, granite countertops, stainless steel appliances, tile flooring, diving pool
Price per square foot: \$106.26	
Days on market: 2	
Builder: Richmond American	
Year built: 2006	
Bedrooms: 5	
2. 20275 N. Peppermint Drive, Province	\$440,000
3. 20101 N. Peppermint Drive, Province	\$425,000
4. 42371 W. Bravo Drive, Rancho El Dorado	\$410,900
5. 40843 W. Little Drive, Rancho El Dorado	\$400,000

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**LEAST
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Bob McGovern

1. 42371 W. Sunland Drive, Rancho El Dorado

The least expensive home sold in Maricopa Nov. 16 — Dec. 15 was a one-story house in Rancho El Dorado with an open and bright floor plan. The kitchen and dining area are open to the family room and a large sliding door leads to the backyard. No neighbors behind the home provides extra privacy for the large space. This home sold in only two days for the asking price.

Sold: Dec. 9	Year built: 2003
Purchase price: \$189,000	Bedrooms: 3
Square footage: 1,065	Bathrooms: 2
Price per square foot: \$177.46	Community: Rancho El Dorado
Days on market: 2	Features: Vaulted ceilings, kitchen island, master with walk-in closet
Builder: Unknown	

2. 42178 W. Basie Lane, Province	\$196,000
3. 42359 W. Hillman Drive, Rancho El Dorado	\$205,000
4. 42611 W. Colby Drive, Rancho El Dorado	\$208,000
5. 42495 W. Jawbreaker Drive, Province	\$209,900



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

Renting your home? Keep these tips in mind

By Dayv Morgan

When property values increase in a hot, seller's market, some owners cash in on their equity by selling. Others turn their home into a rental property, drawing some income while their property likely continues to appreciate.

Here are some considerations to keep in mind in becoming a landlord:

Wear and tear: Tenants and pets can be hard on the home, especially on the carpet and paint. It's a good idea to replace any carpet with tile or vinyl planks and avoid using flat paint on the walls.

A budget for repairs: As landlord, you'll need to budget for repairs, not only for when the tenant vacates but to be prepared in case the air conditioning and other appliances break. Consider a home warranty plan. If you have nice landscaping or a pool in the backyard, you may want to hire someone to maintain them and include those costs in the rent amount.

Credit and background screening: This is a must to protect yourself. The application alone is not enough to tell the worthiness of a prospective tenant. You want them to pay the rent every month — on time.

Hire a property manager: If you want to be a landlord, but not have the related responsibilities, hire an experienced professional to

manage the marketing, screening and drafting of the lease documents. A property manager can provide expertise on tenant/landlord laws and keep you out of expensive tenant litigation.

Taxes: If the home is no longer your primary residence, you may have to pay higher property taxes. Moreover, when you sell you, may have to pay capital gains tax. Engage the services of an accountant with real estate experience to help you prepare for and avoid the pitfalls of tax time.

Property values: Playing the real estate market is a bit like the stock market. There is no guarantee property values will consistently go up year after year. If prices fall, you lose equity, plus rent values will also likely decrease.



Dayv Morgan

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

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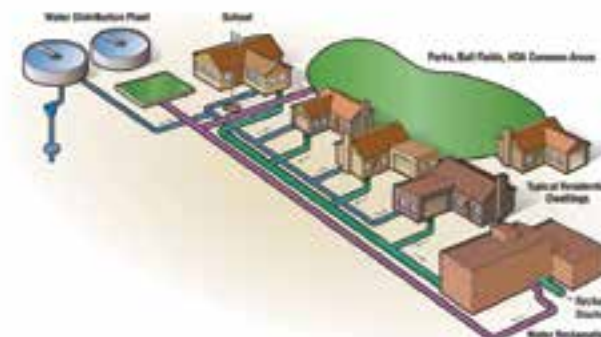
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3 plants to help your spirits bloom

By Harriet Phelps

The winter weather conditions outside do not matter if you have a blooming plant. I need only light and a blooming plant to feel good.

Here are three plants that provide necessary relief for me. The Amaryllis and Paper Whites are boxed beauties that provide blooming delight. The other is the Poinsettia.

The Amaryllis and Paper Whites come in many delightful colors. These bulbs are usually grown indoors, however. They are tropical and adapt in Zones 9 and 10. We can force them indoors by planting them in pots 1-2 inches larger than the bulb. Use well-drained soil and water when the topsoil is dry. Tropical means above 60 degrees and moist, not wet.

After the plant has bloomed, cut it below the pod. Large leaves will appear. Fertilize it monthly. We can plant it outside in shade in summer. Once it turns yellow, bring it inside. Cut it off and place in a cool area (55-60 degrees). Allow it to go dormant for 8 weeks to rest.

Paper Whites, Narcissus, are a forced bloom as well. Forcing the bloom starts with the provided packing or a 6-inch diameter pebble-



Harriet Phelps



Paper Whites



Amaryllis

filled bowl; wedge in four bulbs. Add water until the bulbs are covered and store in a dark cool place for two weeks. Replenish the water, then bring the plants to a sunny location as the leaves appear.

A favorite plant of the holidays is the Poinsettia, which is also tropical, originating in Mexico. The plant is finicky with specific needs. The red leaves are bracts and typically known as Christmas Stars, which bloom in December and January. The flowers are actually the tiny, yellow, berry-like structures at the center of each bract called cyathia. When buying, be aware exposure to draught and cold temperatures will cause the leaves to drop. The yellow buds look tight when you have purchased a quality plant.

In spring, return Poinsettias to a sunny area and water well. Then cut back the canes to 6 inches above the leaf joint to ensure bushing. After reaching 6-10 inches, pinch the tips to force branching. Once the outside temperature is above 60 degrees, move the plant outdoors to a shady and protected area and sink the pot into the soil. When nights become longer in fall, bring it indoors again.

Poinsettias require 12 hours of darkness to bloom. Move the plant to a dark area or cover with a box or paper bag. Then allow daylight to encourage re-blooming. Once blooming occurs, provide a semi-cool, draught-free and humid location in bright, indirect light with plenty of moisture. In early summer, feed the plant one tablespoon Epsom salt to one gallon of water. Repeat six weeks later. Do not add when using commercial fertilizer. Prune as needed to promote a bushy plant.

Happy New Year from Pinal County Master Gardeners in Maricopa!



Poinsettias

Local Realtor pays for homeowner upgrades

Dayv Morgan takes risk to ensure clients sell homes quickly, for maximum value

When it's time to sell or invest in a home, Maricopans have a unique opportunity to benefit from using a local agent who is so committed to selling a home that he's willing to pay out of his own pocket for improvements. Dayv Morgan of HomeSmart Success offers to cover the costs of renovating and updating a home before putting it on the market, in order to increase its value and marketability.

All homes experience wear-and-tear over the years, and Dayv counters that by installing new carpet, fresh paint and even full kitchen remodels when necessary. The selling price can then be increased to cover, and usually exceed, the cost of the improvements.

"Move-in ready homes sell much faster and for a significantly higher amount," he commented. "When a buyer walks into a home that looks and feels like it was just built, because it has new paint, flooring, and appliances, they will pay a premium."

Dayv, who sells over 100 homes annually, advised that such improvements not only help the seller make more money but also benefit the buyer as well. "Most buyers in Maricopa don't have the money, after they buy a house, to fix it up. They would much rather pay a slightly higher price and finance the upgrades through the mortgage. If they paid \$10,000 for improvements and put it on a credit card they would end up paying 14 to 18 percent interest.



Dayv Morgan

If that \$10,000 is instead done by the seller and included in the price of mortgage, now they're only paying 4 or 5 percent."

The program Dayv developed allows a seller to access his pool of preferred contractors, with whom he has negotiated reduced fees, or sellers can use their own referrals to make the repairs. Regardless of who completes the work, he pays up front for the improvements and is reimbursed from the proceeds of the sale, without charging any interest to the seller.

The idea came to him after seeing companies like Open Door and HomeVestors "low-ball" sellers to buy their home as-is, and then after making a few cosmetic improvements they would list the home on the MLS and resell it for a profit. He was surprised to see how much equity owners were giving away by selling their home direct to an investor. As a listing agent he created a process that allows sellers to "flip their own house" and keep the profit themselves. "It



BEFORE

doesn't cost the owners anything out of pocket, and it increases their return," Dayv noted. "It's a win-win for everyone involved — the buyer, the seller, myself as the Realtor, and even the city of Maricopa as it helps the neighborhood values to increase."

A 14-year resident of Maricopa, Dayv Morgan lives in the Palo Brea subdivision with his wife and four sons.

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Aging-in-place: Time for the rest of the story

By Ron Smith

Over the past year, I've focused on reviewing recommended checklists to improve the physical setup of your home for aging-in-place. COVID-19 has helped reinforce the value of improving your home's safety and ease of living.

As we get older, we start realizing simple things once taken for granted are no longer easy. When we raised our children, we taught them how to be adults. But no one taught us how to be older adults. So, over the next few months, we're going to explore ideas to help us recognize and better prepare to handle new challenges to successfully age-in-place.

The gift of time: We made it to retirement, so now what? Many have dreams of travel, exploring hobbies or new ideas, or

seeing more of the grandchildren. Others are just not ready. Even new retirees with retirement plans will eventually seek new challenges to bring more meaning to their golden years. How do they become engaged in meaningful activities or find ways to contribute to their community? Purpose gives us the energy to enjoy life.

Managing your physical health: Your physical health is a gateway to your future. Do you have a health maintenance plan? Are you taking advantage of preventive services? We must understand the importance of mental skills, strength, flexibility, balance and endurance to function on our own. Also vital is proper management of medications and being able to help yourself in an emergency.



Ron Smith

Healthy eating: Seniors must eat well and maintain proper nutrition and hydration. Is malnutrition a concern? Can you prepare your own healthy meals?

Your financial life: With 20-40 years of life ahead, do you understand your assets and have a financial plan to ensure you won't run out of money? Are funding options available, if needed? Does a reverse mortgage make sense?

Advance planning: Health care, financial and housing decisions will need to be managed. How will you function if you lose a spouse or partner? An end-of-life plan should be communicated to family, with instructions to carry out your wishes.

Modifications to your home: You may need substantial modifications to your home for safe entrance (ramps, lifts), access to another floor (elevators, chair lifts) or more accessible use of the toilet, shower, tub or even your bed. Have you thought about the cost, affordability and how they will be made?

Hiring people to help: Some will need help to deal with daily activities. Can you hire local resources to help you in your own home? Or do you already need assisted living or a nursing home? How do we find the proper resources and define criteria to guide those decisions?

Getting around: How do you get around in your community to shop, see a doctor or visit friends? Can you still drive on your own or have transportation options, and are they senior friendly? Inadequate transportation options are a potential source of isolation and barrier to necessary services.

Aspirations: What do you look forward to? What gives you meaning in life? How will you complete your bucket list? What gives you the motivation to embrace and enjoy life? These are important considerations for

Aging-in-place is about how your life will play out if you choose to stay in your home. We will explore these important components over the next few months.

Ron Smith is a Maricopa resident and an aging-in-place advocate. He is a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Committee, a member of the Maricopa Senior Coalition and a certified Aging-in-Place specialist (CAPS). To learn more about Ron, visit InMaricopa.com/Columnists.

Step into the new year with lessons learned from pandemic

By Joan Koczor

Every great tragedy leaves its mark. WW II. The Great Depression followed the stock market crash in 1929 and lasted 10 years. The attack on the Twin Towers in New York.

The senseless violence recently imposed on our cities. Statues representing those who were an important part of our history destroyed. Cities damaged by fire and vandalism. Churches were not spared. So wrong. Add to that the COVID-19 pandemic we were dealt early in 2020.

The restrictions imposed. Pandemic. Wash your hands. Social distance. Wear masks. Exercise caution wherever you go.

Store shelves being quickly depleted. People left without everyday essentials. All the things we thought would always be there were suddenly gone. We were left to scramble to

find what was necessary. Relied on strangers for help. Who would have thought there would be so much excitement seeing toilet paper on the store shelves? And going in one direction only down the store aisles.

What have we learned in 2020? Will the changes and lessons carry into 2021? How have we transformed?

Our safety, and the safety of family and friends, has become the No. 1 priority.

The pandemic has forced people to adapt and do things they would not have considered 10 months ago. Working from a kitchen table home office. Trying to remain safe and virus-free in jobs that require public contact. "Homeschooling" the children. Working with a reduced income. It's the "new normal."



Joan Koczor

For many of us, quarantine has forced us to return to a simpler life. Days are not as hectic. The majority of our day is spent in our homes with our families. Enjoying the simple things like playing a board game, doing a jigsaw puzzle or taking a walk. Or just talking — really talking — to each other.

Physical health is important but let's not forget mental health. It has been severely compromised. Isolation from others has increased depression and anxiety levels.

Let us learn from 2020. Think about the mistakes we have made. Could we have done things differently? Have we learned to be content with what we have? Has 2020 and all we've endured has made us a stronger and wiser, and more tolerant of others' behavior?

We survived. 2021 has arrived, holding great promise for change.

May the New Year bring you peace, happiness and continued good health.

Joan Koczor is a senior advocate and a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Board. To learn more about Joan, visit InMaricopa.com/Columnists.





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MES.MaricopaUSD.org

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45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.
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45725 W. Honeycutt Ave.
520-568-7100
MWMS.MaricopaUSD.org

Pima Butte Elementary School
42202 W. Rancho El Dorado Parkway
520-568-7150
PBES.MaricopaUSD.org

RAM Academy
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.
520-568-8100
MHS.MaricopaUSD.org

Saddleback Elementary School
18600 N. Porter Road
520-568-6110
SES.MaricopaUSD.org

Santa Cruz Elementary School
19845 N. Costa del Sol
520-568-5170
SCES.MaricopaUSD.org

Santa Rosa Elementary School
21400 N. Santa Rosa Drive
520-568-6150
SRES.MaricopaUSD.org

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TRENDING



City lights Christmas tree with flicks, fireworks (GALLERY)



Maricopa Mambas (12u) are state champions



County tables takeover, pushes Maricopa to get along with water district



Council members sworn in as Brown gets emotional sendoff



MUSD tracks bullying even during COVID



AZ researchers: 3-week lockdown needed to avoid COVID 'catastrophe'



Black Friday 2020: Lighter crowds, but some sweet deals



Police Chief Steve Stahl announces retirement



MHS confirms 2020 graduation date, seeks contact info

POLL



What is your favorite Christmas movie?

- ☐ A Christmas Carol (1951)
- ☐ A Christmas Story
- ☐ Die Hard
- ☐ Elf
- ☐ Home Alone
- ☐ It's A Wonderful Life

Results

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The Elementary Student Experience (Grades K-5)

- 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
- Playing games
- Listening to audio clips
- Watching videos
- Printable worksheets
- Specialized instruction for students with special needs

Support

- MUSD will offer ongoing support and training to parents and students to ensure that your child's online/distance learning experience is filled with rigor, relevance, and integrity.
- After school youth program and tutoring available at select MUSD schools through a partnership with the City of Maricopa

Contact your neighborhood school for more details!

Maricopa High School • (520) 568-8100
Desert Wind Middle School • (520) 568-7110
Maricopa Wells Middle School • (520) 568-7100
Butterfield Elementary • (520) 568-6100

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

Pima Butte Elementary • (520) 568-7150
Maricopa Elementary School • (520) 568-5160
Saddleback Elementary School • (520) 568-6110
Santa Rosa Elementary School • (520) 568-6150
Santa Cruz Elementary School • (520) 568-5170