



# Maricopa

[www.InMaricopa.com](http://www.InMaricopa.com)

February 2022

## *'One of a kind'*

Maricopa High senior earns  
place at Ivy League school



BUSINESS • COMMUNITY • EDUCATION • HOME • MORE

# SQUEEZING THE COMPETITION FOR 2022



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All work guaranteed at 3500 locations nationwide

**\*BUY 3, GET 4TH FREE FACTORY DIRECT**

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27560R20 Wrangler SRA .....	\$216.99
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24565R17 Fortera HL .....	\$172.99
26550R20 Fortera HL .....	\$222.99

**GOODYEAR ASSURANCE ALL-SEASON**  
65,000 Mileage Warranty

**\*BUY 3, GET 4TH FREE**

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21555R17 Assurance All-Season 94H BLK ...	\$198.99
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All work guaranteed at 3500 locations nationwide

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20565R16 Assurance Maxlife 95H BLK.....	\$176.99
21560R16 Assurance Maxlife 95V BLK.....	\$170.99
22560R16 Assurance Maxlife 98H BLK.....	\$145.99
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22565R17 Assurance Maxlife 102H BLK ..	\$209.99

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24565R17 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 105T OWL.....	\$246.99
24570R17 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 108T OW .....	\$240.99
26570R17 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 113T OW .....	\$238.99
24560R18 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 109H BW .....	\$266.99
26565R18 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 114H BW .....	\$284.99
27565R18 YOKOHAMA GEOLANDER AT G015 116H BW .....	\$290.99
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Most cars and trucks. Expires 3/31/22.

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INCLUDES: Battery check, lubricate your car's  
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Install a new oil filter. (Special oil filters slightly higher).

Includes hazardous waste fee. If your MFG. Requires 20W50, or full  
synthetic oil, or other special weights, there's an additional charge for  
other weights of oil. Price is for 5W20 or 5W30 synthetic blend oil up  
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- For non-adjustable rear suspensions
- Computer precisely aligns front wheels to rear
- Ensures straight steering wheels
- Necessary for accurate alignment of newer cars

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Prod. #21814/21830

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Free brake inspection

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\* Buy 3 select tires and get 4th free. Select tires only. Must purchase tire protection plan and nitrogen package, which includes valve stems, lifetime balancing, free tire rotations, free alignment checks, free flat repairs and free replacement for the first 25% of tread wear on a tire that is not repairable (with the nitrogen and tire protection plan purchased). Restrictions and exclusions apply. See store for complete details. Offer may not be combined with any other discounts unless otherwise stated. No dealer or carryout. Offer ends 3/31/22.

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Limit 1.

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1000

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9202482, 9002858, 6267348,  
6010947, 6115075  
\$2.00 each.

Glasses, a plate, a knife, a pair of scissors.

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**Feit Electric Dual Head LED Flood Light, LED Panel Bulb or COAST® Polysteel 400 LED Flashlight**  
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3002315, 3002310, 3008686, 3508751

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Dual Head Flood Light

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60 watt equivalent. Last up to 10 years. Warm White or Daylight.  
3597184, 3929098

**LED**  
LED Bulb 10/Pk.

**SALE**  
**\$14<sup>99</sup> each**

**Feit Electric LED Bulbs**  
• Enhance® LED Floodlight Bulb 4/Pk.  
• Color-Changing LED Smart WiFi Bulb.  
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**LED**  
LED Bulbs

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6266993, 6295950, 6406383,  
6406391, 6665004, 6715163,  
6715171

**LED**  
LED Utility Light

**SALE**  
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**Feit Electric 3' LED Utility Shop Light**  
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**LED**  
LED Utility Light

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# Calling All Future Kindergarteners!

Maricopa Unified School District invites you to join teachers and staff to tour your new school! Learn about our full-day kindergarten program and register for the 2022-2023 school year.



## MUSD KINDERGARTEN INFORMATION NIGHT

Tuesday, February 15, 2022  
5:30-6:30 PM

\*Online registration is available

### Documents needed for registration:

- Parent/Guardian ID
- Child's Birth Certificate
- Immunization Records
- Proof of Residency (electric bill, water bill, etc.)

[www.MUSD20.org/kindergarten](http://www.MUSD20.org/kindergarten)

For more information, contact your school site:

**Elementary Schools**  
**Butterfield Elementary School**  
43800 W. Honeycutt Rd  
520-568-6100

**Maricopa Elementary School**  
18150 N. Alterra Pkwy  
520-568-5160

**Pima Butte Elementary School**  
42202 W. Rancho El Dorado Pkwy  
520-568-7155

**Saddleback Elementary School**  
18600 N. Porter Rd  
520-568-6110

**Santa Cruz Elementary School**  
19845 N. Costa Del Sol Blvd  
520-568-5170

**Santa Rosa Elementary School**  
Spanish Dual Language Immersion Available  
21400 N. Santa Rosa Dr  
520-568-6150

**K-12 Online Education**  
**Maricopa Virtual Academy**  
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy  
520-568-5194





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?**  
Water heating accounts for about 18% of your home's energy use. Reducing your hot water use, employing energy-saving strategies, and choosing an energy efficient water heater for your home can help you reduce your monthly water heating bills.

SOURCE: www.energy.gov

- Alternative Payment Options:
- Online - www.ed3online.org
  - Mobile app
  - Fry's Marketplace & Walmart (fees apply)\*
  - Mailing Payment with attached Billing Stub\*
  - Payment by phone - (520) 424-9021
  - City Office Drop Box

41664 W. Smith Enke Rd., Suite 100

\*These methods of payments may not post same business day

41664 W. Smith Enke Rd.  
Suite 100  
Maricopa, AZ 85138  
(520) 424-9021



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MISSION  
Inform readers/viewers. Enrich advertisers.

BELIEFS  
We believe in:  
• An informed citizenry.  
• Holding ourselves and others accountable.  
• The success of deserving businesses.

VALUES  
• Integrity  
• Accountability  
• Open, honest, real-time communication  
• Prosperity for clients, community, company

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FROM THE EDITOR

Lessons learned from the pandemic

OUR ACTIONS AFFECT OTHERS.

That has to be the biggest takeaway from the COVID-19 pandemic we've all lived through for the past two years now. There are people who want to argue about vaccines and whether a mask is necessary. But that's not the point I'm trying to make.

At the end of the day, the real test of humanity is, how are we treating each other during these difficult times?

If you watch the national news, it doesn't appear we're passing any tests in how we take care of one another.

And how are we treating the beings around us who can't defend themselves, namely our pets?

I've grown accustomed to humans treating each other like dogs. But I'm not used to the idea of treating dogs like dogs.

If you visit the Pinal County animal shelter, it's pretty apparent that while dog may be man's best friend, it doesn't seem to go the other way.

Last year, there were 469 pet surrenders. And then there were nearly 1,400 strays picked up.

Those numbers tell me that 469 people at least did the responsible thing and discarded their pet at the shelter. And it also tells me three times as many



people just put their pets out on the street and were fine with letting Mother Nature take its course.

These were the animals people relied upon during their darkest periods of isolation in the midst of the pandemic shutdowns.

I have lived with animals all my life. And you start to realize they have feelings,

too. They relate to you in ways you can't even understand. And after spending so much time with them during lockdown, how do you just kick them out of the house and let them fend for themselves?

It's even harder to imagine, when you consider there were days during the summer where it was close to 120° out there. Water is not always easily available. And food isn't either, but these pets were more likely to become food for wildlife.

I worry about the animals in the county's triple-crowded shelter. And I worry about the ones who never made it there and died along side of the road.

But I also worry about humanity. What does this say about us?

JUSTIN GRIFFIN | EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
Justin@InMaricopa.com

CONTRIBUTORS



KRISTINA DONNAY

Are you feeling a little stressed out for no reason these days? Donnay might have some answers in this month's column.



BRYAN MORDT

Bryan recently joined the staff at InMaricopa as our Multimedia Specialist. Welcome aboard, Bryan!



BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.

Brian took a break from writing about crime to visit the Pinal County animal shelter and report on what he saw.

ON THE COVER

Tyler Brown, a senior, was photographed by Bryan Mordt at Maricopa High School.





## Air Maricopa

Maricopa's airfield ran perpendicular to John Wayne Parkway, more exactly where the overpass now sits. In this photo from the early 1900s, one of many planes lands in Maricopa Junction. In 1911, Cal Rodgers, financed by a new drink called Vin Fiz Grape Sodas, stopped at Maricopa Junction on the first transcontinental flight from New York City to Long Beach, California. Many repairs and accidents happened along the way. Rogers' train, "The Special," carried supplies for the repairs. The trip took 49 days and a distance of 3,417 miles by rail and 2,567 miles by air.



Our dedicated administration and highly-qualified teachers provide excellent education in Maricopa, Arizona.



### Our teachers and students enjoy:

- Full-day kindergarten
- Small class sizes
- Quality programs
- Spanish, PE, and Culinary Classes

*As the Mobile Elementary District Superintendent, I'm proud of the great people and the excellent education we provide. We work hard to offer the guidance and support our children need to succeed.*

**Teri Romero-Dominguez M.Ed.**  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR



**Bus service in the city of Maricopa and Hidden Valley**

## THIS MONTH BACK IN...

For these and other historical stories, visit [InMaricopa.com](http://InMaricopa.com).



## 2006

Spurred by the results of a consultant's extensive law enforcement study, the Maricopa City Council took action to implement its own municipal police force, beginning with a nationwide search for a police chief. The department had to be in place by June 30, 2007, when the city's contract with the Pinal County Sheriff's Office expired. MPD actually took over in October 2006, months ahead of schedule, but kept on PCSO for another year to help with night patrols.



## 2012

Shane Pannell went into the "Shark Tank" and hooked a deal. The Maricopa inventor took his "Sweep Easy" broom on the ABC show in Season 2 and lured Kevin Harrington and Daymond John to invest in his product. The broom features a scraper that ejects from the bristles to easily deal with stuck-on messes. Although the Sharks' offer later fell through, the stay-at-home dad brought his broom to market in 2018 and sells them on his website.



## 2014

A pilot died Feb. 23 when his fixed-wing, single-engine aircraft crashed at Ak-Chin Regional Airport between Maricopa and Casa Grande. Mark Knight of Tempe, the owner of the Sonora Wings hang gliding business, was flying for fun around 6 p.m. when his plane crashed into the dirt between the taxiway and runway. He was pronounced dead at the scene. In September 2019, two people were injured when a plane flew into a building at the airport.

Maricopa Historical Society; Brian Petersheim Jr.



Business, development around town

**ATL Wings** restaurant received an administrative zoning compliance permit for tenant improvements to a vacant and never-occupied, 1,258-square-foot storefront at 19975 N. John Wayne Pkwy. in Maricopa Towne Plaza. The owner of the property is Triple B AZ LLC.

The **McDonald's** restaurant at the Shops at Maricopa Fiesta, 20700 N. John Wayne Pkwy., will spend \$200,000 to remodel. RWB Construction & Development LLC will do the work for the owner, McDonald's Real Estate Company.



**Qwest Communications** will build a \$300,000 facility at 45114 W. Edwards Ave. to house telecommunications equipment. The construction will include the addition of new crew space, extension of the existing perimeter fence and two Conex storage containers that will sit adjacent to the fence line. Andrus Properties Inc. is the contractor.

A 713-square-foot fabric shade structure will be erected in Phase 3 at **Province**, 21178 N. Porter Road at a cost of \$22,000. Shade Net of Arizona Inc. will do the work for owner Oro Verde Farms.

**Tortosa** will build a new sales office and model complex at 35961 W. San Ildefonso Ave., located on Parcel H. DR Horton Inc. owns the property and work will be done by DRH Construction.

Permits were issued for new construction of the initial six units at **Bungalows on Bowlin** at 44900 W. Bowlin Road. The units include both two- and three-bedroom detached, single-story homes ranging in size from 1,012-1,355 square feet.



Sonoran Creek Shopping Center

Improvements will be made to a commercial building in **Sonoran Creek** at 20250 N. John Wayne Pkwy. for John Wayne Pkwy. Maricopa AZ LLC.

**West Maricopa Village** received land use approval from Commercial CI-2 to Planned Area Development for a 35-acre parcel. Developer Maricopa 35 LLC also received approval of the final plat of the residential development at the southeast corner of State Route 238 and North Loma Road.

**Marshalls** at Sonoran Creek will install an underground fire line at its upcoming store at 20250 N. John Wayne Pkwy. AR Mays


Construction Inc. will do the work for owner John Wayne Pkwy. Maricopa AZ LLC.

An underground fire line will be installed at **Omni Self Storage** at 18000 N. Stonegate Road for owner Omni Maricopa Self Storage LLC.

**ATI Physical Therapy** will install a wall sign of less than 100 square feet at its facility at 20320 N. John Wayne Pkwy. in Sonoran Creek. The owner of the property is John Wayne Pkwy. Maricopa AZ LLC and work will be done by Royal Sign Company.

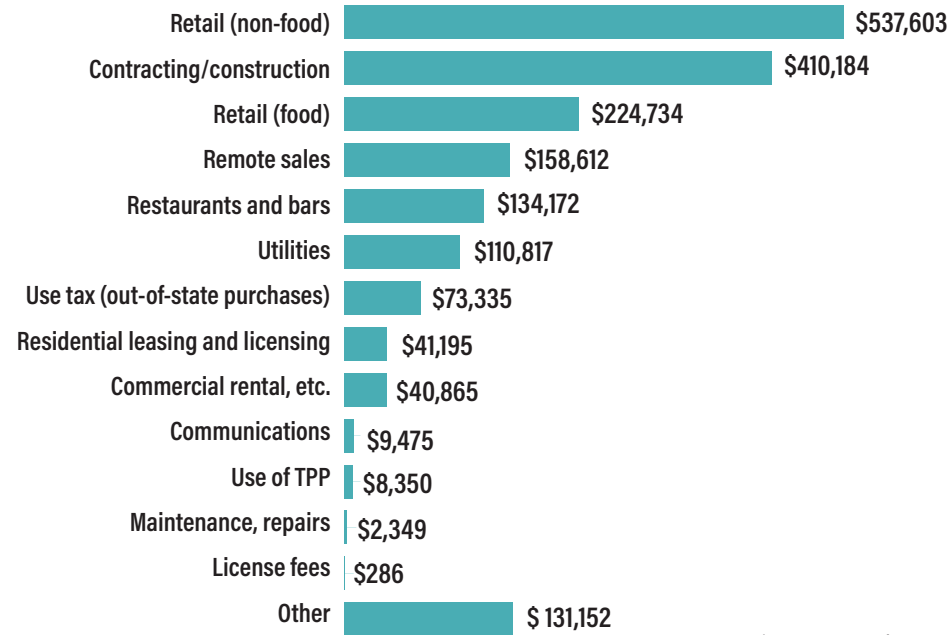
Right-of-way usage was approved for **REV at Porter**, 17805 N. Porter Road for installation of a pipeline by Lee's Pipelines Inc. for owner El Dorado Porter 27 LLC.

**Native Technology Solutions** will have right-of-way use on Wilson Avenue from Hathaway Avenue to Edison Road to provide services for businesses with Sonoran Creek Marketplace.

New gas service will be installed at 45700 W. Edison Road by **Underground Construction Company Inc.** It required a right-of-way permit. 

Maricopa Sales Tax Collections

In January, businesses paid more than \$1,883,135 in transaction privilege taxes. Here's where people spent money based on the amount of sales tax collected:



Source: Arizona Department of Revenue

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Meet Sun Life Health. Get to Know Our New Brand.

OUR PURPOSE

To improve the health and wellbeing of all people and communities we serve.

OUR COMMITMENT

To provide the highest quality, comprehensive healthcare to all people and empower our communities to prioritize health and wellbeing.



You deserve exceptional care, without exception.



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HEALTH STARTS HERE

Learn more about our rebrand.





BUSINESS



A summary of Dec. 15, 2021 through Jan. 13, 2022 food inspections by Pinal County Environmental Health Services



**Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, Hot and Cold Holding**  
Internal temperatures of several items below the required temperature of water in the steam table at 135°F.

**Cooling Methods**  
Internal temperatures of green salsa held in closed, 5-gallon plastic container in walk-in cooler 75-76° (≤41°F required).



**Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, Hot and Cold Holding**  
Internal temperatures of cheesecake and flan held in dessert display case 47-55°F (≤41°F required).

**Cooling, Heating and Holding Capacities-Equipment**  
Air temperature of display cooler 50°F (≤41°F required).



**Cooling (P)**  
Internal temperatures of cooked peppers and carrots held in a covered metal pan in reach-in cooler 58-60°F (≤41°F required).



**Handwashing Cleanser, Availability; Hand Drying Provision**  
Hand soap and paper towels not available at the only hand-wash station.

**Equipment, Food-Contact Surfaces, Nonfood-Contact Surfaces and Utensils**  
Excessive amount of food debris buildup on nonfood contact surfaces of the following in the kitchen: Prep cooler, oven, prep tables shelves, hand sink handles, light switches, prep cooler handles, blender bases and speed racks.

**Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, Hot and Cold Holding**  
Cooked ham and cheese croissants held at room temperature (78°F) in display case. Heated foods must be held at ≥135°F and chilled foods must be kept at ≤41°F.

**Maintaining Refuse Areas and Enclosures; Cleaning Receptacles**  
Buildup of food debris on and around grease receptacle. Approximate 20-foot trail of oil spillage from receptacle.

**Rob's Convenience**

**Certified Food Protection Manager**  
No employees have a certified food manager card.

**Food Labels**  
Operator is bagging and selling ice. Bagged ice must be labeled with operator's name and contact information.



**Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, Hot and Cold Holding**  
Internal temperatures of salsa and cut cabbage held in salsa bar 57°-62°.

**Cooling Methods**  
Internal temperature of cooked chicken in walk-in cooler 87-93°F (≤41°F required).

**Consumption of Animal Foods that are Raw, Undercooked, or Not Otherwise Processed to Eliminate Pathogens**  
Operator offering ceviche/raw shrimp without presence of disclosure to menu item.

**EXCELLENT**

- Basha's AFC Sushi
- Children's Learning Adventure Childcare Centers
- Circle K, 21212 N. John Wayne Pkwy.
- Denny's
- Fry's Marketplace — Murray Cheese
- Fry's Marketplace — Sushi
- Jack in The Box

- JB's Farmer's Convenience Store
- Maricopa Head Start
- Molly's House of Little Feet
- Panda Express
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- Sprouts Farmers Market — Bakery
- Sprouts Farmers Market — Deli
- Sprouts Farmers Market — Oumi Sushi
- Walmart Deli

**SATISFACTORY**

- Aliberto's
- Brooklyn Boys Italian Restaurant and Pizza
- Francisco's Mexican Food
- Good Donuts
- Rob's Convenience
- Tacos N' More

**EXCELLENT** No violations found.

**SATISFACTORY** Violations corrected during inspection.

**NEEDS IMPROVEMENT** Critical items noted during inspection cannot be corrected immediately requiring follow-up inspection.

**UNACCEPTABLE** Gross, unsanitary conditions necessitating the discontinuation of service.

Source: Pinal County

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# DOWN TO BUSINESS

The word is out, Maricopa is one of the **fastest growing cities in all of Arizona**, and businesses are taking notice!

A short drive down John Wayne Parkway and you'll see how quickly Maricopa's main thoroughfare is transforming. The vision of becoming a city where residents can shop and work where they live is becoming reality.

The Sonoran Creek Marketplace is just one measure of the momentum. Already home to a Sprouts Farmers Market, the shopping center has now added Discount Tire and MOD Pizza to the lineup. Marshalls, Crumbl Cookies, Cold Beers and Cheeseburgers, Jimmy John's, Thai Chili 2 Go, Filiberto's Mexican Food, and others are just around the corner.

*"Our community is seeing what years of planning and infrastructure projects can ultimately produce. We work closely with various developers, and the consistent feedback we receive is that our business-friendly culture and investment like the John Wayne Beautification Project signal that we care about the future of Maricopa. It shows that we are ready to welcome the next wave of businesses. Sonoran Creek is a thriving example that those businesses have come, and there are many more coming!"*

**Nathan Steele, Chief Economic Development Officer, City of Maricopa**

This new bullpen of businesses is helping Maricopa go after hundred of millions of dollars that until now have landed into the pockets of our neighboring cities.

This past year alone, Maricopa welcomed dozens of new businesses and much more is in store for 2022. Stay up to date on all that's going on around you and learn how it fits into the larger vision of our city by visiting [www.WhatsNewMaricopa.com](http://www.WhatsNewMaricopa.com).







## 2021 tax law update

BY CHRIS J. SCOGGIN, CPA

**E**VEN THOUGH THE BUILD BACK Better Act appears to have died in the U.S. Senate, there were several tax law changes in 2021, which will affect most Americans this coming tax season. Here's what you need to know and how you can prepare for the changes.

### Your Monthly Child Tax Credit Payments May Decrease (or Increase) Your Refund

For the first time in history, the IRS sent the child tax credit as monthly payments to qualifying families. Depending on the amount of your monthly child tax credit payments received in 2021, you may receive a bigger tax refund, get a smaller refund than expected — or even owe additional taxes. If you received monthly child tax credit payments, you must report the amount on your 2021 tax return. You should receive Letter 6419, which will state

the total amount of child tax credit payments you received. The IRS recommends that you compare this amount with the total child tax credit to which you're entitled.

The child tax credit for 2021 is up to \$3,600 for children under the age of 6 (up to \$3,000 for children ages 6-17). From July to December, qualified families received up to 50% of their child tax credit as monthly payments. Some families can claim the remaining amount on their 2021 tax returns. However, not all families received the payments, some chose to optout.

If the total child tax credit you qualify for exceeds how much you already received through your advance child tax credit payments, you can claim the remaining amount on your 2021 tax return. If you received more than you qualify for, you will need to repay some or all the excess payments back to the IRS when filing your taxes.

### 2021 Recovery Rebate Tax Credit for Third Stimulus Payments

For 2021, you may qualify for the Recovery Rebate Tax Credit. If you haven't received your third stimulus payment of \$1,400, you will need to file a 2021 tax return to claim this credit, even if you have no tax liability.

You need to know the amount of your third stimulus payment you received in 2021 for yourself, spouse, or dependents to claim your Recovery Rebate Credit. You'll receive Letter 6475 from the IRS in early 2022, showing the amount of your third stimulus payment. You should keep these letters with your tax records, and you will need the information to claim the credit on your 2021 tax return.

### You Don't Have to Itemize to Claim Charitable Donations

Normally, you must itemize to deduct charitable contributions. But for 2021, you can deduct up to \$300 for cash donations to qualifying charities (up to \$600 combined for married filers) whether you itemize or take the standard deduction for 2021.

"The increased charitable donation deduction for both individuals who itemized and for those who do not itemize (for) 2021 is a great incentive to support your favorite charity," James Chaston, CPA said.

"And there's a bonus for generous charitable givers who itemize. Those who claim charitable contributions as itemized deductions can claim cash contributions made to qualifying organizations up to 100% of their adjusted gross income (AGI) for the 2021 tax year only," Chaston said. Generally, the deduction is limited to 60% of the taxpayer's AGI. It is important to remember that the temporary increase of the 100% limit isn't automatic.

Please consult your CPA or trusted tax advisor to ensure you can utilize these larger charitable deduction limits. At CS CPA Group, we are accepting new clients and would love to meet with you in person or via zoom to discuss your specific situation.

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# What to know about testosterone

BY KRISTINA DONNAY, FNP-C

**T**ESTOSTERONE- IT HELPS SET PERSONAL records, increases muscle mass, and makes you more virile. But it's also true that low testosterone is usually misunderstood.

Your testosterone levels are highest in the morning between the hours of 7am and 10am and lowest in the evening. Testosterone follows the circadian rhythm of your body or your sleep cycle. To achieve optimal results with your testosterone, focus on workouts, big projects, or time with a significant other in the morning. Your high levels in the morning can be attributed to higher levels of focus, drive, and clarity.

## How it affects you mentally as well as physically

There is more to testosterone than just physical wellbeing. There are many studies and literature showing low testosterone levels are associated with depression and other mood disorders, even the early onset of memory loss and dementia. It has also been shown to be associated with a foggy brain or difficulty with concentration and being motivated.

At Maricopa Wellness Center, we have studied men's testosterone levels. When they become stabilized and are within their optimal zone, men become more mentally stable and focused. We see them have better memory recall and more drive in their lives.

There are three types of testosterone in the body. There's free testosterone which is readily available for your body and cells to use. The other two types are attached to proteins in the blood albumin and sex hormone-binding globulin. Albumin-bound testosterone is also available for use by the body. Free testosterone and albumin are known as bioavailable testosterone. Sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG) is not available for use by the body. As we age, our SHBG increases while our bioavailable testosterone decreases. A simple blood test can determine our total testosterone as well as our free testosterone and can help determine whether low testosterone is causing certain symptoms.

Symptoms of low testosterone can include:

- Muscle Loss
- Weight Gain
- Fatigue
- Sleep problems
- Hot flashes in men
- Night Sweats
- Lower sex drive
- Irritability
- Depression
- Hair Loss
- Erectile Dysfunction
- Memory Loss

Men who are experiencing one or more of these symptoms should consider getting their blood tested for low testosterone. Many men dismiss these symptoms as side effects of stress; but in many cases, it is low testosterone.

Head injuries can also lead to low testosterone. Many former athletes, especially football players, may suffer from low testosterone due to the rigorous nature of sports. My husband played high school and college football and when we tested him at 35, had the testosterone levels of a 60-year-old man. We have personally seen his quality of life improve with the adoption of bio-identical hormone pellet therapy.

**The path to wellness is full of various approaches including pills, creams, patches, and more.**



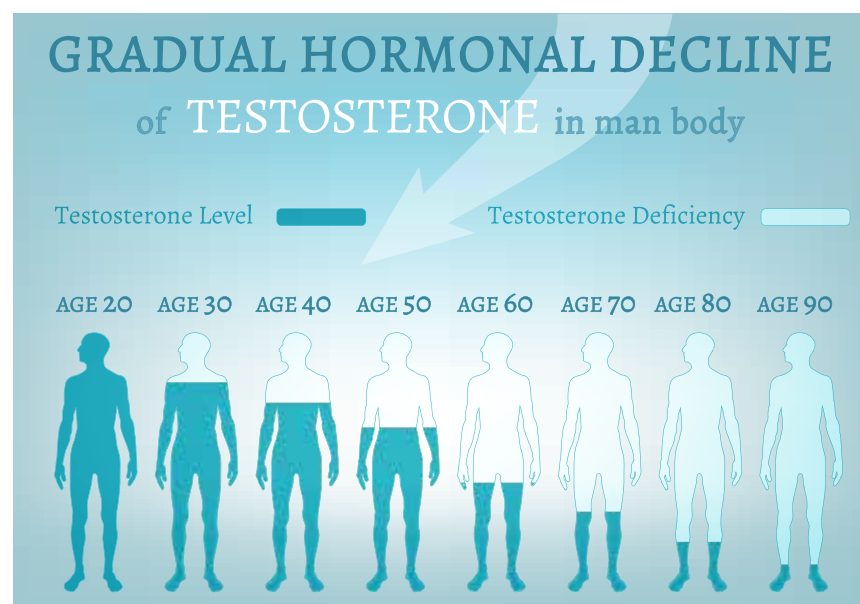
Here at Maricopa Wellness Center, we specialize in bio-identical hormone replacement pellet therapy. The chemical structure of the plant-based hormones mimic the body's natural hormones making it safe and effective. The pellets deliver consistent hormones to keep your body in an optimal state. Pellets communicate with your body to release the right amount of hormones at the right time for a sustained period. Other methods can leave you with spikes and dips in your daily or weekly hormone levels.

Our providers know that no two people are the same and custom tailor each treatment to cater to your optimal levels. With the addition of supplements to help balance the body you can experience your old self again and regain your youthful exuberance.

Call today to schedule a consultation and see if you may be suffering from low testosterone. ☎

☎ **520-464-6193**  
**MaricopaWellnessCenter.com**  
**41600 W. Smith-Enke Road**  
**Building 14, Suite 3**

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# Top Tips for Better WiFi



**Number 5: Router placement matters.**

Walls and other barriers can impede your WiFi signal. Place for your router is a central location with as few obstacles as possible between the modem and your connected devices. Locate it high off the floor, and away from metal objects and other electronic devices that can interfere with your WiFi signal.



**Number 4: Be aware of what devices are connected to your network and their internet speed capabilities.**

More devices connected at once means less bandwidth is available for each device. And some devices can't keep up with faster WiFi speeds, which slows down all the others.

**Number 3: Close WiFi hungry applications when you're not using them.**

Leaving some programs open, like those used for online streaming or video games, will use up bandwidth, even after you've finished using them.

**Number 2: Protect your network with a strong password.**

Choosing a secure WPA or WPA 2 password will protect your personal information, and keep other people from using your bandwidth, thus slowing your WiFi speeds.

**Tip Number 1: Upgrade your hardware.**

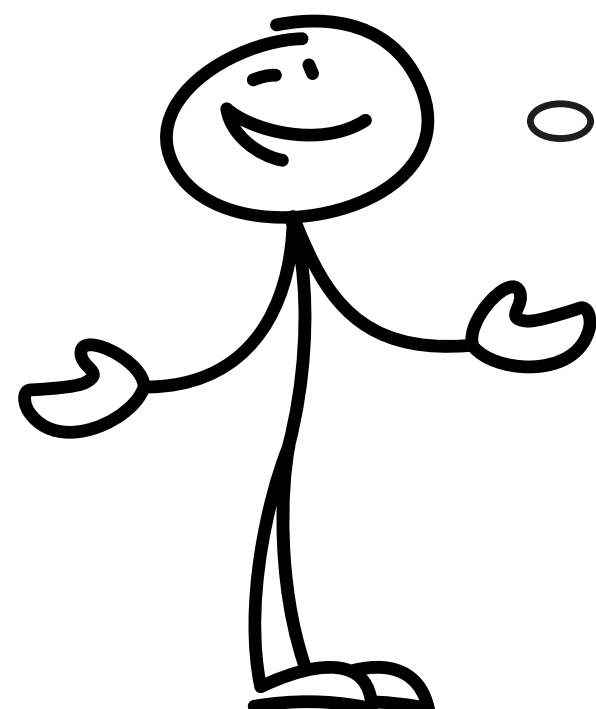
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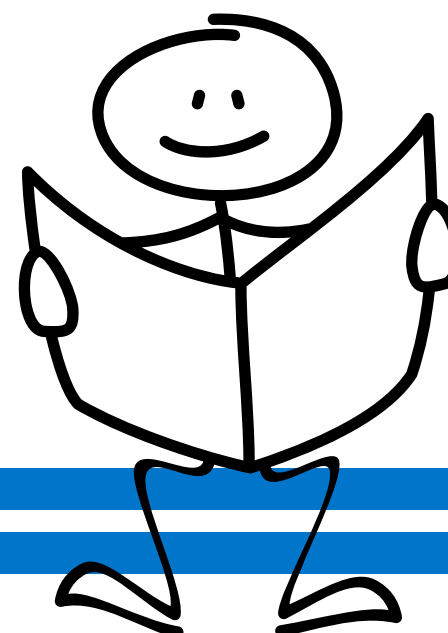
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## Discussion: Maricopa Police Chief James Hughes on crime reporting

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

Merenzi Young

**I**N 2021, THE MARICOPA POLICE Department transitioned from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system to the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System, also known as "NIBRS."

The switch, which became official last month, was long overdue, according to Maricopa Police Chief James Hughes.

"The old system has been around since 1930," Hughes said. "I think when you consider that fact alone, it's time for an update."

Hughes believes the new system will offer a more detailed picture of crime activity in the city for current and future citizens.

In fact, NIBRS was created by the FBI to improve the overall quality of crime data collected by law enforcement. It captures details on each crime incident — as well as separate offenses within the same incident — including information on victims, known offenders and relationships between offenders, arrestees and property involved in crimes. To fully understand the effects that NIBORS will have on crime reporting, it's a good idea to look back at the UCR system.

As Hughes explained, the older system was also created by the FBI, but tallies crime in a different manner that misses the big picture sometimes.

"It just focuses on what they call the eight major index crimes," Hughes said. They are homicide, rape, robbery, burglary, aggravated assault, larceny over \$50, vehicle theft and arson.

Using the UCR method, some crimes are overlooked statistically for others that are deemed worse.

"Let's say you have someone who robs a convenience store, forcibly takes the keys from someone, steals their car, then drives out and runs from the police, takes out a stop sign before getting arrested and is under the influence and has drugs in his possession," Hughes explained. "That would be 10 or 11 crimes in this one embellished example."

The UCR system required that all those crimes be represented by the highest, or worst crime, Hughes said. "We'd only report the highest one," he said. "We'd only report the armed robbery and none of the others."

Hughes noted the other crimes would be tallied, investigated and prosecuted, but for the purpose of calculating crime rates, only the armed robbery would be considered.

"Actually, there's one exception," Hughes added. "The DUI would be picked up in Part Two. In UCR reporting, there are two parts. Part One crimes are the more serious crimes,

which consist of major felonies, person-related violence. Then there are Part Two crimes, which include disorderly conduct, drug offenses and DUI offenses.

NIBRS' more comprehensive approach to reporting crime results in better analysis of the statistics.

"If you take my earlier example, there were many crimes there that wouldn't get reported," he said. "I think there were victims of those crimes, and they deserve to be counted."

But to get those numbers, the department had to purchase a new crime reporting module that would allow for the new pull-down menus. In addition, training was needed.


The level of detail provided by the new system impressed Hughes.

Hughes is a numbers guy. He feels the expanded numbers will offer a greater understanding of how to better allocate department resources and help elsewhere, too.

"It's a little bit more work upfront for the officers, but I like it," Hughes said. "Then, we can really identify the problems we have in our community. So that's more data. That's all stuff that's being done internally, but it just provides a better view of public-facing crime."

As the city grows in population and commerce, other aspects of crime will come to the forefront, but with the new system, it will have proper context, Hughes said.

"Let's say there's six big-box retail stores in the city," Hughes said. "And they have aggressive loss-prevention policies. That's going to mean more shoplifting crimes reported. If someone is wanting to move to Maricopa from Virginia, they'll be able to look at the crime reports online before coming here and see that the crimes are shoplifting and not violent crimes, like theft and murder. They can make the decision about whether this is a place they want to raise a family."

The department ran both UCR and NIBRS simultaneously for all of 2021. As of January, the department dropped the antiquated UCR system. 

**"Let's say there's six big-box retail stores in the city. And they have aggressive loss-prevention policies. That's going to mean more shoplifting crimes reported. If someone is wanting to move to Maricopa from Virginia, they'll be able to look at the crime reports online before coming here and see that the crimes are shoplifting and not violent crimes, like theft and murder. They can make the decision about whether this is a place they want to raise a family."**

CHIEF JAMES HUGHES

### THE CHALLENGES OF GETTING STARTED

The new numbers will no doubt prove useful in understanding city crime and improving public safety, but the process to get the technology right was itself a fascinating story.

When MPD was trying to initiate the switch from UCR to NIBRS, its records management vendor, Spillman, was bought by Motorola.

"That product really degraded over the course of a year," Hughes said. "Customer service was so bad. They wouldn't offer any training and finally, we said 'We're done.'"

MPD switched to Axon.

"(Axon) didn't meet a lot of the milestone promises that we expected to be met," Hughes said.

With a desire to move forward, Hughes brought Motorola back into the picture and played the two companies against one another.

"Motorola took notice," Hughes said, "As to almost say, 'Whoa, wait a minute, someone's taking our cookies,' so then Motorola got their stuff together and then we were able to leverage our partnership with Axon to get the stuff that we needed and get our system up and running."

On top of that, Hughes expects a refund.

"We actually paid \$25,000 for the module," Hughes said. "It was close to two years ago, and I'm getting our money back because it wasn't completed in time."

**RELATED CONTENT:** The Maricopa Police release crime statistics from 2021. A comparison of the numbers from 2021 and 2020 can be found on page 22.



## Statistics tell the story of public safety in Maricopa

The Maricopa Police Department released crime figures last month for 2021. The numbers are largely the same as 2020, with a few exceptions.

Violent crimes – homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault – were up by a total of 34 crimes. There was one murder in the city. Aggravated assaults accounted for the increased overall numbers, as they nearly doubled, from 58 in 2020 to 106 last year. Robberies were down from nine to six, and rapes were cut in half, from six to three.

There was a dramatic decrease in property crimes last year. Defined as commercial or residential burglary, theft, theft from a vehicle and stolen vehicles, those crimes decreased by a total of 140.

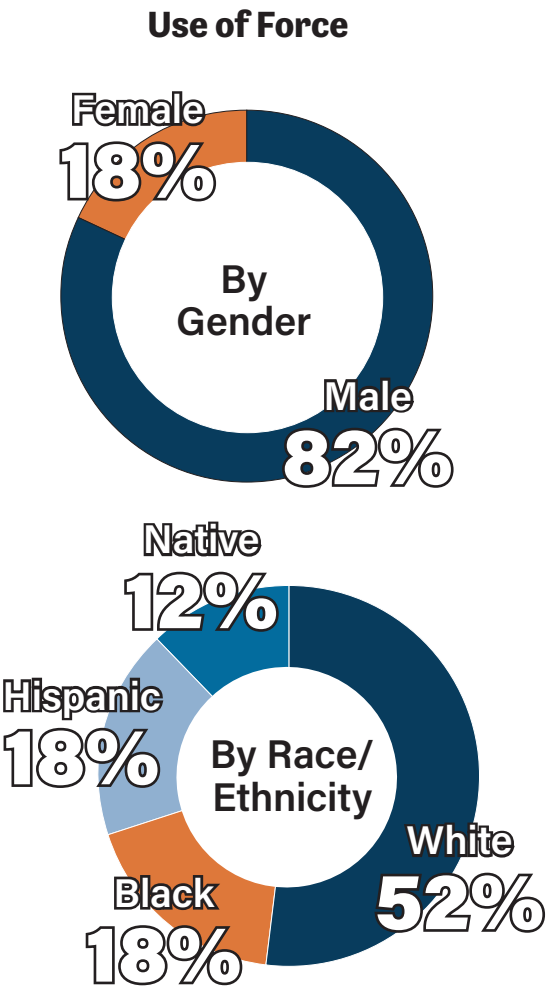
With people returning to work after the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, the traffic offenses were elevated. Collisions and traffic stops were each up by nearly 30% each.

The crimes are all reported using the Universal Crime Reporting (UCR) statistical method. The department also compiled data using the National Incident Based Reporting System, (NIBRS). Those numbers will be available later this year. 2021 was the

final year that the department will use the antiquated UCR method.

There were 17 “use of force” incidents in 2021, down more than 25% from the 2020 total of 24. He defined use of force as any time an officer uses a method other than verbal compliance to get cooperation, such as using a taser, a takedown, or constraint.

The demographics of those upon whom force was used showed that 82% of the time force was used against males and 18% against females. The racial breakdown was as follows: White 52%; Black 18%; Hispanic 18%; Native American 12%; unknown race 5%; and Asian and Pacific Islanders both 0%.



Traffic Offenses	2020	2021	+/-
Collisions	570	729	+159 (+28%)
Citations	3,396	3,677	+281 (+8.3%)
Traffic Stops	5,803	7,394	+1591 (+27%)
Parking Citations	7	369	+362 (+5,171%)

Violent Crime	2020	2021	+/-
Homicides	0	1	+1 (+100%)
Rapes	6	3	-3 (-50%)
Robberies	9	6	-3 (-33%)
Aggravated Assault	58	106	+48 (+82%)

Property Crime	2020	2021	+/-
Commercial Burglary	16	16	0
Residential Burglary	59	41	-18 (-30%)
Theft	348	292	-56 (-16%)
Theft from Vehicle	142	93	-49 (-35%)
Stolen Motor Vehicle	62	45	-17 (-27%)

Miscellaneous Crime	2020	2021	+/-
DUI	145	239	+94 (+65%)
Assault	156	196	+40 (+24%)
Disorderly Conduct	139	165	+26 (+19%)
Drug Offenses	210	229	+19 (+9%)
Fraud	196	233	+37 (+19%)
Runaways	65	100	+35 (+54%)
Sex Offenses	128	128	0
Criminal Damage	259	263	+4 (+2%)
All Other	393	514	+121 (+31%)

Source: City of Maricopa, Uniform Crime Reporting data

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Two dogs make the most of their limited space at the Pinal County Animal Care and Control center. The shelter has taken in nearly 2,000 animals in the last year.

# Pinal shelter ‘triple overcrowded’ as owners return pandemic pooches

BY BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.

**W**HEN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC began in early 2020, many people suddenly stuck at home battled their loneliness by adopting a pet.

In fact, more than 23 million American households adopted a pandemic pet, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

But now, as the world continues to move past the pandemic and people start going back to work, some are returning their pets to shelters.

And while a May 2021 survey by ASPCA suggested there is not a national trend of

pandemic pets being returned, the phenomenon is nonetheless causing crowding problems at one local shelter, according to its director.

Last year, Pinal County Animal Care and Control in Casa Grande, the shelter nearest Maricopa, received 469 pet surrenders and took in 1,362 strays. Located at 1150 S. Eleven Mile Corner Road, the facility continues to take in more animals and has well exceeded its limit, said its director, Audra Michael.

"Our dogs are about triple overcrowded," she said.

While the Pinal County shelter is beyond capacity, some rescue groups attempt to help by

taking some animals to find them homes.

"Cats typically get rescued by a rescue organization and brought to the Phoenix or Tucson area at their giant adoption facilities with more traffic," Michael said. "We have about 15 rescue organizations we work with."

## Getting out of the kennels

While the facility is over limit, dogs need to get out of their crowded kennels, so around noon every day dogs get to play with each other in a gated area.

On top of the playtime for the pups, volunteers visit the shelter to walk the dogs.

Bryan Mordt



Clockwise from above: Shelter director Audra Michael sits in her office with Smootch; Molly Fleck and Morgan Romano, volunteer dog walkers; a long row of holding cells for dogs are seen; volunteer Joyce Kleikame holding Elias the cat; busy staffers field calls at the Pinal County animal shelter.







Clockwise from top:  
A holding area for cats;  
a dog is walked by a  
volunteer; volunteers  
unload supplies for the  
animals.

**You Tube**  
For additional  
content, check out  
the InMaricopa  
YouTube page.

Workers at the shelter use a bulletin board to keep track of the dogs that have been walked to ensure no mutts are overlooked.

Queen Creek resident Tommy Erland, who recently visited for his first day as a dog-walking volunteer at PCACC, said he lost a dog years ago. When he saw online volunteers were needed, he decided to make the trip to Casa Grande to regain familiarity with the animals, hoping that he may soon make the decision to adopt another dog.

"We get to walk, and help people at the same time," he said.

### Adopting a furry friend

Adoption has advantages for both the human and the animal, Michael noted.

When people decide to adopt a pet, they are helping reduce overpopulation and may even be saving the animal's life. While you may want a cute puppy, they can be quite stressful, she said. But, typically, animals at the shelter are adults that are housetrained and have

passed through the biting and chewing phases that can be quite irritating.

Adopting a pet from PCACC is simple. With no background check required, prospective adopters provide a form of identification and sign an agreement assuring they are giving their new pet a good home. There is an adoption fee of \$50.

The shelter has four requirements to adopt a pet:

- **Every adopted animal must be spayed or neutered:** PCACC will keep your dog or cat until it is transported to the veterinarian on the date of sterilization. After the surgery, you can pick up your new pet at the end of the day.
- **All dogs must receive the 4-in-1 vaccine:** The vaccination includes Adenovirus Type 2, Coronavirus, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus and Canine Distemper.
- **Microchipping:** All dogs must be microchipped, but cats can be chipped upon request.


- **All owners must have the means to properly care for their pets:** Pets must be safely kept and have adequate food, water and shelter.

All told, people can get take a pet home from the shelter for about \$50, said Michael, who noted "if you go to a pet store ... it could be up to \$3,000."

### How you can help

Pinal County Animal Care and Control needs your help, now more than ever. It's currently seeking volunteers to help walk dogs and even foster them to help get them out of the shelter. Even small donations to the shelter are a big help. The following supplies are needed:

- Blankets and towels
- Wet and dry dog food
- Jerky-type dog treats

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# Couples working together make a tough job look easy

BY JAY TAYLOR

Kyle and Hannah Norby met in 2012 as students at Maricopa High School, where they both work today. Hannah is a culinary arts instructor and Kyle teaches digital photography.



**CAREERS ARE TOUGH.** You work every day, deal with your boss and co-workers, maybe you've got a client you don't like much or someone is trying to jump over you for that big promotion.

Marriage can be difficult, too. There are kids, finances and family. Maybe his friends are not her friends, or you don't do enough things together — or you do too many things together. Either way, it's a minefield. There's a reason half of marriages end in divorce.

So, putting those two things together sounds like a horrible idea, right?

Not necessarily, according to several Maricopa couples enjoying marital bliss while working together.

Let's face it, for this to work, the marriage must already be on solid footing. A rocky marriage multiplied by more hours together and fewer topics of conversation to distract each other equals, well, nothing good.

But if things are solid, such an arrangement can enhance a relationship and bring a couple even closer. It definitely works for some.

Kyle and Hannah Norby met in 2012 as students at Maricopa High School — he was a junior and she was a freshman — and have been together ever since. They both work at the high school, where she has been a culinary teacher since 2018. Two years ago, Kyle was hired by the school as a digital photography teacher.

It wasn't the first time they have worked together, and they wouldn't want it any other way.

"We've had pretty much all of our jobs together," Hannah said. "We've worked together three different times. We worked at Copper Sky as lifeguards when we were in high school. Then when we moved to Las Vegas so I could go to culinary school, we worked at the same hotel. And now we're together at MHS, so we've really never done anything but work together, so we don't know anything else."

Kyle said their shared careers fit perfectly into their outside lives.

"We get along really well, we go the same places and like the same things," he said. "We get the same amount of time off at the same times of the year, so it works perfectly for us. And the personal never gets in the way of work."

Maricopa Police Chief James Hughes also

Kyle Norby

shares career and home lives. His wife Brandelyn is a recreation coordinator managing the new community center and senior programming. They met while working for the city about six years ago and were married in March 2019.

They find family gives them an opportunity to bond outside of work and their two teenage sons and 4-year-old daughter provide plenty of fodder for conversation.

"We have family dinner pretty much every night of the week, even if it's a little later some nights because of work responsibilities," Brandelyn said.

The chief said those dinners, and the conversations, are a huge part of building family bonds.

"That's huge, it's a big priority for us," he said. "When you're dealing with teenagers, sometimes they're not saying a word; other nights, they're dominating the conversation. As our daughter went from age 3 to 4, she has become more of a contributor to the conversations, rather than a detractor, so her role is growing, and that's kind of cool. But what's important is having everyone around the table together."

Submitted



Tom and Zoyla Beckett both work for the Maricopa Unified School District. He is director of human resources for the district and she teaches Spanish at Maricopa High School.

That time also provides an opportunity for conversations that don't center on work. That's something that stood out to another couple working together — the ability to share work conversations, but then move on from them.

Tom and Zoyla Beckett both work in the Maricopa Unified School District — he is the director of human resources and she teaches Spanish at MHS. Tom said having parallel careers is a benefit to them.

"There is such a value to be able to share the vision and goals from the organization you're working in," he said. "You're not feeling like your attention is divided because you're both working in the same environment. There are not 'your events' or 'my events' it's much more 'we' and 'us.' We drive to work together in the morning, and I take her home at night. That's always been a great experience for me, being able to share that time every day."

But Zoyla said there is a limit.

"Tom's rule is that when the ride home is over, the shop talk is over," she said. "And that's fine with me. We have so many other things to talk about because we share a lot of interests."

That is another common thread among these

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couples. Shared interests provide a way for them to bond over something other than their careers.

"We try to keep a balance," Tom Beckett said. "It would be very easy to bring work home and keep it going all night long. We share our days and act as sounding board for each other, but we have diversions in our life that allow us to get away from shop talk. We enjoy walking, hiking, movies, tennis. We have an active lifestyle and are both healthy, and we are fortunate to have the diversions to allow us to share things other than work."

The Hugheses agree. Since they both work for the city, they have Fridays off, and Brandelyn said those are date days for the couple while the kids are in school.

"We make it a point to go to lunch or go shopping for whatever home renovation we're working on (they own two rental properties), and then it's family time all weekend, whether it's hiking or whatever we're doing," she said.

James echoed the theme of shared interests.

"We also have common interests outside of work that allow us to change our focus away from the city," he said. "We like to stay active. We're both into home renovations and upkeep and management of the rental properties. Brandi manages them, and I swing a hammer. So, we're not just at home worrying about what's happening with the city of Maricopa. We trust the people we work with and that allows us to leave it behind and still have peace of mind."

The Norbys said they do talk a lot about work, primarily picking each other's brains for ways to do better for their students, but also about larger issues.

"We do talk a lot about stuff after school," Hannah said. "We talk about our students' projects. I want to hear about his day and he about mine. If we have a kid that did really well on something, we want to share that with each other. We're also interested in school politics and try to watch the Governing Board meetings, so we know what's happening on a larger scale."

But much like Tom Beckett's moratorium on shop talk when the commute home is over, the Norbys draw a line.

"Especially if we are traveling, we try to keep it off school," Kyle said. "Weekends are the same. We try not to bring our laptops home on weekends so we can leave work at the school. We really like to take Saturdays and Sundays to recharge. We found that we were doing it too much early on and it got to be too much."

But the gist of it is, the things that make any good marriage work apply to making one work when sharing a career with a spouse.



Maricopa Police Chief James Hughes shares employer and home with his wife, Brandelyn, who serves as a recreation coordinator for the City of Maricopa.

James Hughes said for he and his wife, it's being aligned personally.

"I think the fact that our personalities mesh well is a big plus," he said. "Neither of us are prone to gossip. We're not prone to negativity, and we're not on top of Facebook and things like that, so we really tend to have good, positive conversations."

The Becketts say being friends before dating and marriage has bolstered their relationship both in marriage and career.

"I think people in education love people and are compassionate," Tom said. "Educators tend to gravitate toward one another and find admirable traits in one another. It might be harder if one of us was in a profession that didn't, so our profession has certainly helped our relationship."

Zoyla thinks it takes a special kind of relationship to make such an arrangement work.

"We couldn't do it if we didn't respect each other's jobs," she said. "If I say something about my classroom, and he's not listening to me as a spouse but rather as the HR person, that can create problems. It takes a special person to respect the boundaries of each other's job but still be supportive of what they're doing."

The Norbys are on board with that sentiment.

"It's not for everyone," Hannah said. "Lots of people tell us they couldn't do it."

"It takes a certain kind of relationship," Kyle agreed. "We grew up together, so it's a little different for us than most couples who work together. Aside from the time after I graduated from high school, we've always been around each other all the time. But I really think it takes a special relationship to make this kind of arrangement work."

Victor Moreno

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Bryan Mordt

## Up, up and away

Hot air balloons lit up the night sky on Jan. 14 at the Copa Glow at Copper Sky. It was a visual treat of color and majesty for those on the ground, and for the more daring, tethered rides were offered. The event, which also served as a night market with food vendors, drew thousands of people.



Bryan Mordt





# Festival promoter rooted in gospel, soul

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**AUBREY MORRIS, THE PROMOTER** for an upcoming soul music festival at Copper Sky, started his life in music early.

The bug hit Morris, who lives in Maricopa, at the age of 12 when he started playing drums while growing up in Chicago.

At 16, Morris progressed to touring with gospel bands.

Now, he works as an information technology professional during the day, and at night, promotes events.

For the past few weeks, Morris has spent many sleepless nights preparing for the Maricopa Black Heritage Experience 2022, which will be held Feb. 18-19.

While playing drums for various gospel bands in Chicago, Morris realized he was more interested in other aspects of the music business.

“From there, I just decided I wanted to start promoting shows, not be a musician,” Morris said. “So that’s how I started.”

Ever since, Morris has had a knack for being at the right place at the right time.

A graduate of esteemed Kenwood High School in Hyde Park on the south side of Chicago, Morris was in and around music on a constant basis. Sometimes, without even leaving his apartment complex.

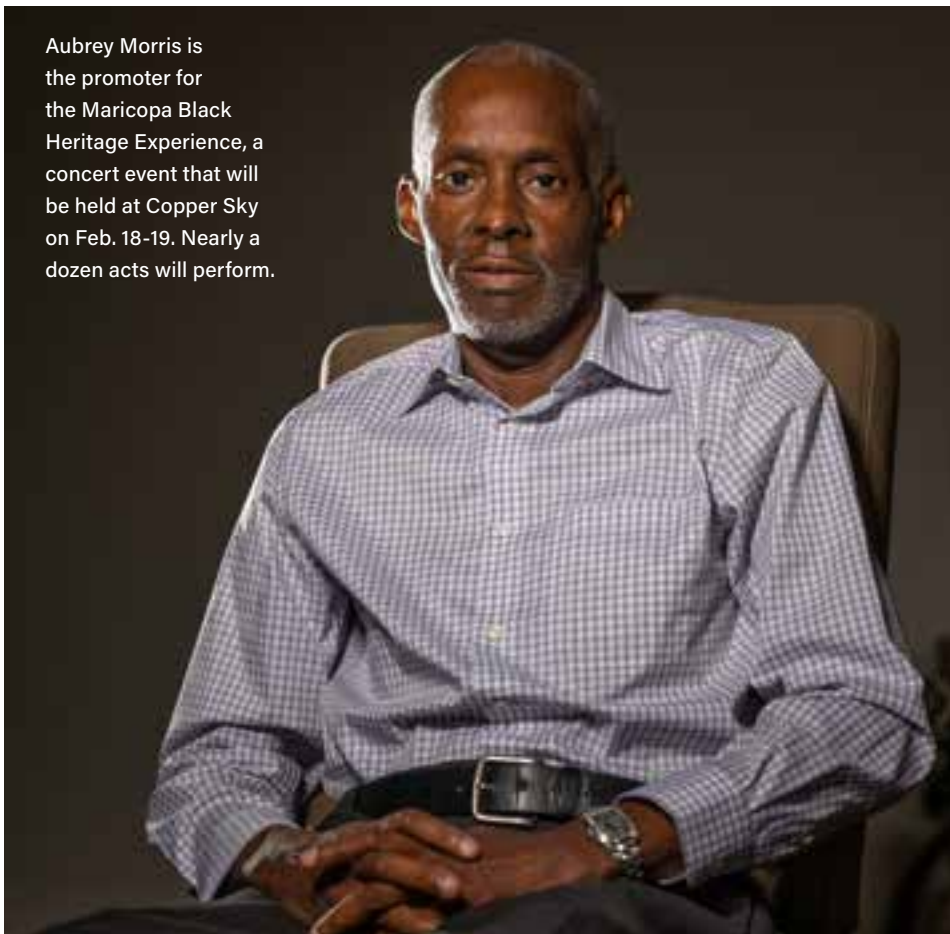
“Growing up, my best friend was Mark Stevens,” Morris said. “We lived in the same building at 5230 South Trexler in Chicago. Mark’s sister was Chaka Khan.”

If you were in any way artistically inclined, Kenwood Academy was the place to be.

“At the time, it was the newest high school in Chicago,” Morris said.

Kenwood was in a neighborhood where

Aubrey Morris is the promoter for the Maricopa Black Heritage Experience, a concert event that will be held at Copper Sky on Feb. 18-19. Nearly a dozen acts will perform.



Muhammad Ali and Louis Farrakhan owned homes — and where former President Barack Obama would start his political career years later.

Attending Kenwood was a preview of sorts for Morris, who has stories about brushes with fame. But it’s the more recent stories that make him smile.

He takes great pride in his involvement in bringing the Vandellas to Phoenix for a Fourth of July Festival, the “Fabulous Phoenix Fourth,” a few years back.

“That was quite an honor,” Morris said. “Because if you think about it, from the original Motown roster, there are only a few still alive: Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, Martha Reeves and Stevie Wonder. After that. The pickings get real hard.”

“I set up a meet-and-greet in Scottsdale two hours before we opened the doors. It had to be 300 people out there that came with albums for them to autograph.

“Now, remember these ladies are in their late 70s. They’ve been singing together since they were teenagers in high school. That was special because at that point, they’re not artists, they become music royalty, they’re considered royalty. They are original Motown artists.”

## Beginnings

For his first 30 years as a promoter, Morris stuck with his love of gospel.

He cut his teeth dealing with crazy situations. When things went well, he celebrated, and when they got a little sideways, he learned from it and moved on.

Morris recalled one crazy night in Mississippi in 2000.

“I promoted a show in what they call the ‘Golden Triangle’ (the cities of Columbus, Starkville and West Point),” Morris said. “So, I got the top 10 or 12 traditional gospel acts in the country to do a three-day tour.”

Known as “The Blockbuster,” the show included a couple of Grammy Award winners.

Everything was going well. Then one of the headliners came to Morris with a problem.

“So, Friday night, the concert went great,” Morris said. “But on Saturday, he tells me, ‘Aubrey, I’ve got a big show in Chicago at about 9 o’clock.’”

Morris jumbled the schedule, allowing the artist to play his show earlier, and jumped into motion to schedule a private jet to fly the artist up to Chicago in time for his night show.

“To my surprise, the flight was only like three thousand dollars,” Morris recalled. “They

Bryan Mordt

flew into Chicago. The limo took them do the show, brought them back to the airport and brought them back to Columbus, Mississippi.

“That was probably one of the craziest weekends I can remember.”

A story like that could almost distract from Morris working with the Five Blind Boys of Alabama and the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi.

But it didn’t.

“They’re the groups who laid the landscape of traditional Black gospel music,” Morris said. “They’ve won every award you can possibly win in the music industry. They’re the reason why we called it ‘Blockbuster.’”

If not for some quick thinking, it could have been a disaster. Morris even today has a knack for managing crises.

Demetrius Seabrooks, the production manager for the Maricopa Black Heritage Experience, admires the way Morris handles talent and emergencies.

“The thing that most impressed me was how he cuts to the chase,” Seabrooks said. “He doesn’t sugarcoat anything. He taught me that being straightforward weeds out people you don’t want to deal with in the first place.”

## A transition

Gospel music was exciting and rewarding for Morris, but as time moved on, he considered working with soul acts.

“I started looking at other genres, what we call classic R&B from the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s. Motown, that’s my niche,” he said. “But no rap and no hip hop, ever.”

Morris is pretty much open to music of all kinds — as long as it has a positive message.

“I don’t like the negative connotations,” Morris said of some music.

“That’s not what we do,” Morris said. “I grew up on Al Green, you know. Marvin Gaye. Barry White. Where every song had the word ‘love’ in it. Some songs don’t have love in them. They have other four-letter or five-letter words and if so, I choose to stay away from that.”

His interests started to expand when friends in other parts of the music industry took notice of his work with gospel acts.

The transition from gospel to soul and pop music wasn’t difficult to make. Gospel has always served as a proving ground for artists, Morris explained.

“The record companies, say, ‘Hey, there’s a whole lot of talent over there singing gospel music and they’re not making any money doing it,’” he said. “They’re saving souls and not making money, but we’re gonna go and put some money in their pockets. You saw a lot of them start leaving gospel.”

Submitted

Gemini Porter, who had lived in Maricopa, worked fastidiously to help bring the first Maricopa Black Heritage Experience to Maricopa last year. Porter, who was part of the 1990s power group Men at Large, died a few weeks before last year’s event.

## The show that Gemini wanted

During the Maricopa African American Heritage Experience, one man will loom larger than the rest: the late Gemini Porter, a singer for the ’90s soul group, Men at Large.

Porter, who lived in Maricopa, worked to help bring the first Maricopa African American Heritage Experience to fruition in 2021. Unfortunately, he died a few weeks before the event.

Nisha Varnsdale, an assistant producer for the event, felt Porter’s untimely death was a galvanizing event for organizers.

“We’re both from Chicago and we both knew Gemini,” Varnsdale said of her relationship with Aubrey Morris. “He and Gemini were both working to make the first one happen last year and when Gemini passed, it brought everyone closer together.”

Seabrooks, the DJ for the event, saw his duties expand to “keep the show rolling.”

The event will serve as part of a Porter’s legacy, he said.

“I believe the event was heaven-sent,” Seabrooks said. “It was his (Porter’s) brainchild. He was a resident of Maricopa. We needed to make sure that we did something for our city.”

## IF YOU GO

**What:** Maricopa African American Heritage Experience 2022

**When:** Show starts at 6 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 18, and at 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 19. Doors open two hours before the show.

**Where:** Copper Sky Regional Park, 44345 M.L.K. Jr. Blvd.

**Who:** Acts scheduled to appear include Chico DeBarge, The Intruders, Adina Howard, Willie Rogers, David Banks, Neamen Lyles, comedian Evan Lionel, Raydio featuring Arnell Carmichael, Tommy Dukes, Willie Clayton, and Elaine Stepter.

**Tickets:** Advance two-day pass: \$50. At the gate: \$65. Fee-free tickets can be purchased on a cash-only basis at Honeycutt Coffee.



Gemini Porter

## A LASTING LEGACY

John Morris wanted his son at Kenwood Academy.

“They were the only school in the city at the time that had a computer,” Aubrey Morris recalled of his father’s motivation. “Back then, computers were a brand-new thing.”

That foresight left a lasting legacy for his son: today, at the age of 60, Aubrey is a software engineer.

John was a plant superintendent for Kohl and Madden, a company that dealt in printing ink. He had a knack for spotting trends, Aubrey said.

“He would get these reports in the morning from their corporate office,” Aubrey recalled. “They would overnight these reports to him, and he said, ‘What the heck is going on? How do they know what we’re doing in Chicago?’”

At the age of 14, Aubrey’s father secured him a job in the company as a computer operator.

“That’s the title they put on me,” Aubrey said. “But it was more or less delivering reports to the executive.”

The job was a springboard; he would go on to attend the University of Illinois Chicago.

“My first job out of college was data processing manager for Seiko watch company,” he said. “I was 21. After that, I’ve only had about four jobs in that span. I stay with companies a long time.”

Morris currently works as an AS400 Development Manager with Scottsdale-based American Reliable Insurance.





## In the New Year, take an honest approach to relationships

DR. HARRIET PHELPS, PsyD

**G**OOD, WE HAVE THAT RESOLUTION MOMENT out of the way. Now to begin a movement of another kind.

At some time or another, we have all put our good intentions out there as a resolution for another year and then days later we are repeating our past mistakes, and nothing changed.

Then comes the guilt-trip. Do not pack for that trip since guilt is only good for two seconds and a change. We must acknowledge what we thought was a good idea was simply an idea and we did not mean we would commit to a change.

Hint: we change when it becomes painful enough. Between profession and experience the one thing I have learned is: They are watching us. And by 'they,' I mean our children.

Wisdom tells me we are only as good as our teachers. As the late poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou once predicted, once we know better, we do better.

We are not able to change anything without new knowledge. Like the fountain of youth, I have discovered I can forgive myself for not having the knowledge and asking my children to be better parents than I was.

February is the Love month. I always tell my friends and family that I love them. There are a few I have freaked out by my declaration of love. Many think it is about couple or sexual love. It is about love. The kind of love born of respect.

Regardless of whether it is spouses, children or friends, it is love.

Love is patience. Practice it with one another.

We all have our failings and limitations. Remember we learn to do better. It is easy to be all about feelings, but what if we allow the other person theirs; we seek to understand what it is that is important to them, too.

I ask, help me understand what is important to you and I will help you understand what is important to me. Criticism is reduced and removed



to seeking understanding. Then we commit to understanding and resolution.

**Show love and gratitude.** Some can give a lot to love and gratitude, but many do not understand what that means.

Let people know you are grateful they are in your life. Gratitude is not necessarily about affection or emotions but acceptance and appreciation. Love the important people in your life unconditionally, warts and all.

Sometimes it is awkward and lacks understanding, however, I have not met anyone who does not understand acceptance from age 4 to 104. We all desire acceptance, unconditionally.

**Always choose honesty.** If you become unable to express your honesty with yourself or another, then you are not truthful with yourself or the other.

Honesty can sometimes be a difficult choice. But it sets the foundation of our relationships. It's a punishment to be told something we think is a truth, only to find out later that it was not.

Conflicted ideas can lead to chaos.

We often do not trust our own instincts to be valid.

But don't overthink or overanalyze.

Trust your gut and heart tell you the truth and do not keep feelings from being expressed appropriately.

And always, tell yourself you are loved by you.

Happy New Year. 🍷

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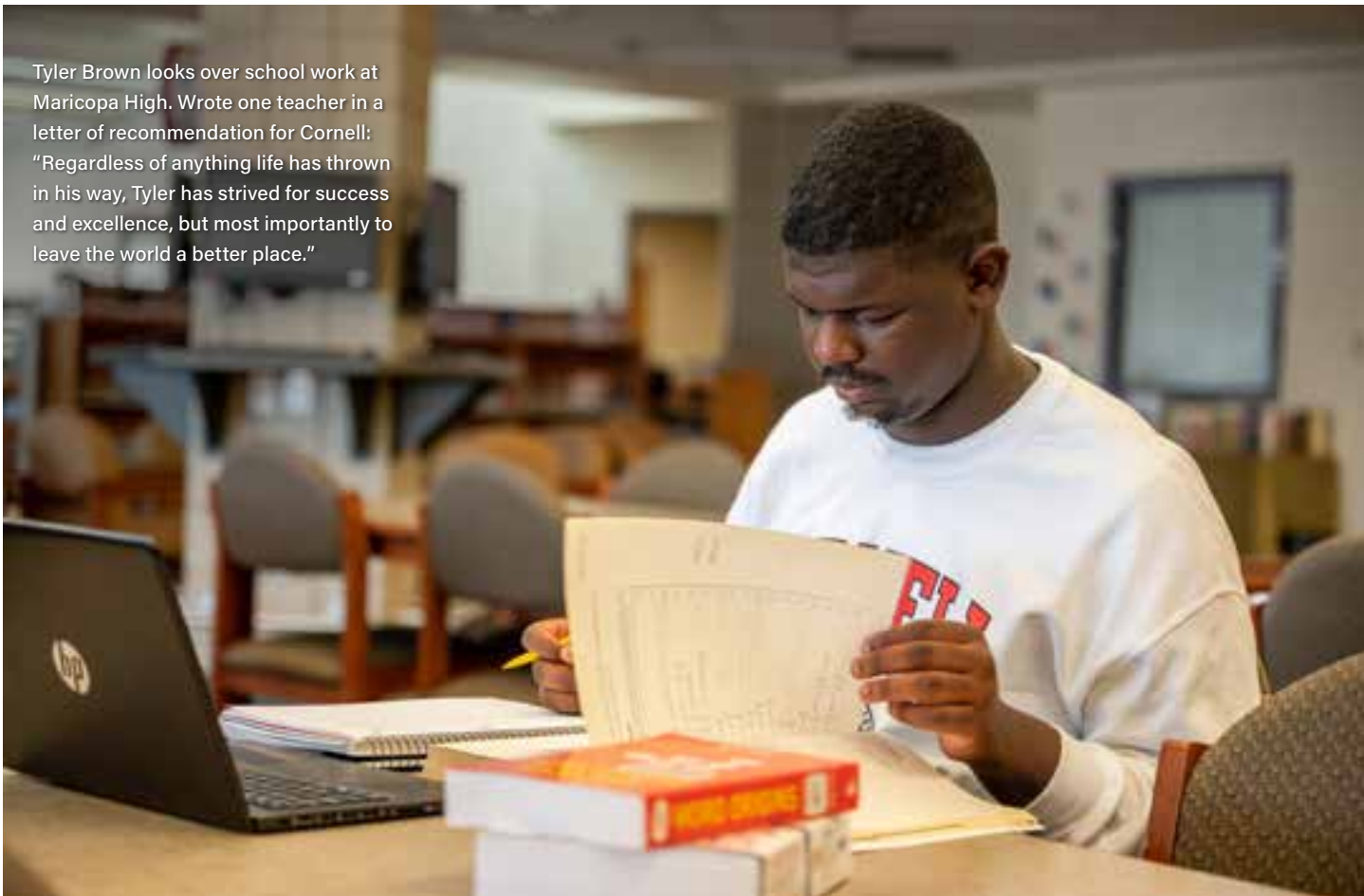
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# Senior came to MHS to refocus studies — and now he's headed to the Ivy League

BY BOB MCGOVERN



Tyler Brown looks over school work at Maricopa High. Wrote one teacher in a letter of recommendation for Cornell: "Regardless of anything life has thrown in his way, Tyler has strived for success and excellence, but most importantly to leave the world a better place."

**T**YLER BROWN'S FIRST IMPRESSION of Cornell University came in an Advanced Placement history class in Arkansas, courtesy of a teacher who required students to use Cornell Notes, a note-taking system created by an education professor there in the 1950s.

That impression was negative for Tyler who, like many other students, found the notes technique time-consuming and burdensome. But that would change soon enough.

Tyler, 18, now a student at Maricopa High School, is in the final months of his senior year and preparing to graduate in May. He moved to Maricopa from Paragould, Arkansas, in July to get a fresh start in a new city and re-focus on his studies before his dream of attending a competitive college went up in smoke.

A young Black man, Tyler was ready to leave behind the racial slurs he heard in the hallways of his Paragould school for new opportunity in Maricopa. He also left behind a family he loved so much it was interfering with his school life.

It was an uncommon and brave decision for an uncommon and brave student.

Tyler is "eccentric" and "a unique mix of humility, ambition, resilience and determination," according to one of his MHS counselors. One of his teachers calls him "one of a kind."

At a very young age while growing up in California, he developed an interest in geography and maps. Traveling the interstate often with his family, he became curious about interchanges and places along the highway.

By age 8, he had memorized the interstates, and a year later memorized where they led. Soon after, he could map the way to his grandma's house and tell you what each city was famous for. Before he turned 12, he could reconstruct by memory a map of all the major freeways in the state.

And though he stood out a bit on his arrival at Maricopa High — "one of the first things kids noticed about me was my accent ... it was the big talk," he said — Tyler quickly settled in, making friends immediately and enjoying school lunches that were much better than he was used to.

"July 7 was one of the best days of my entire life," he said of the day he arrived in Maricopa, "starting someplace new where I could finally hit the reset button."

Bryan Moritt

He found MHS staff and administration very welcoming. In fact, as soon as he arrived for the first day of school, they immediately sat him down, identified coursework to challenge him and began talking about applying to colleges.

But first there was the not so insignificant matter of rebuilding his academic confidence.

## 'I couldn't keep up'

For Bernadette Russoniello, a career and college coordinator at MHS, Job One was to help her new student get back on track and conquer his self-doubt about attending a competitive college.

"I met Tyler his first day at MHS and he made an impression within moments," she said. "Tyler is a unique mix of humility, ambition, resilience and determination. We have worked together closely this past school year and he consistently seeks out advice, resources and support."

In Arkansas, he had had excellent grades in his freshman and sophomore years, but they began to slip in junior year as the pandemic set in at his rural school without access to technology and reliable wi-fi. He also noticed that his teachers seemed to downgrade their expectations for him.

At the same time, his mother became ill, and Tyler took on greater responsibility at home, helping to care for two younger siblings, including one with special needs. Moreover, he was holding down an afterschool job at Walmart, where he often worked until 10 p.m. before returning home to make sure his siblings had completed their homework.

By the time he could sit down and think about his own schoolwork, it was often midnight or later. Some nights he was too tired and just went to bed, trying to make sure he could get some sleep before waking up at 5 a.m. to begin helping again with his large family's morning routine.

He got behind and, uncharacteristically, began to perform poorly on tests.

"It got to the point where I couldn't keep up," Tyler said. "I had to choose between sleep and good grades. I chose sleep because if I can't stay awake, I can't help out."

He eventually reached out to his teachers to explain the challenging circumstances at home but found their understanding underwhelming. That reality, combined with the racial slurs directed at him in the hallways, was making his life difficult.

His mother would apologize to him about the situation — she withheld specifics of her illness trying to minimize the distraction —

Bryan Moritt



After overcoming some doubts about his own abilities, Tyler Brown honed in on his studies after moving to Maricopa from Arkansas. As a result, he gained early acceptance into Cornell University, an Ivy League school ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as the 14th best university in the country.

but Tyler kept on even as his academic and career dreams became imperiled. It eventually became too much.

"Going through that took a toll mentally, physically and emotionally," he admitted. "I just couldn't keep up with it, so that's when my mom made the difficult decision about (me) going to Maricopa."

In May 2021, Tyler's grandparents, Rose King and Paul Turner, moved to Maricopa

after living with Tyler and his family in Arkansas. The couple had considered a move to Texas but the winter storm last February and the threat of tornados — 44 in the first four months of 2021 alone — led the couple to look west. Searching for a medium-sized area that wasn't hard to get around in, and had the necessary amenities, led them to Maricopa.

Tyler followed two months later.



### Taking a shot

“As a senior (at MHS), I felt like I had to start from scratch,” Tyler said.

One day, he was surprised to see his name on a “Hopes and Dreams” list of students applying to competitive colleges and universities that Russoniello kept on her wall. He told her he didn’t think he compared to the other students on the list.

“Most of these students are ranked Top 10 (in the school) and then there is me, who is nowhere near those students,” he said, his humility on display. “So, it took much convincing. Especially as an African American student, it’s not expected for kids like me to go to such a college or even attempt to.”

By then, Cornell University had made a second impression on the senior (who had long dreamed of attending Stanford). The highly selective institution in the city of Ithaca in the Finger Lakes region of Central New York had sent him information about its Urban and Regional Planning program, the collegiate course of study he hoped to pursue.

He liked what he saw. It was squarely in his wheelhouse, and he took quick notice of a club for Blacks, Indigenous and people of color within the College of Architecture, Art and Planning.

“That’s what drew me to Cornell,” he said.

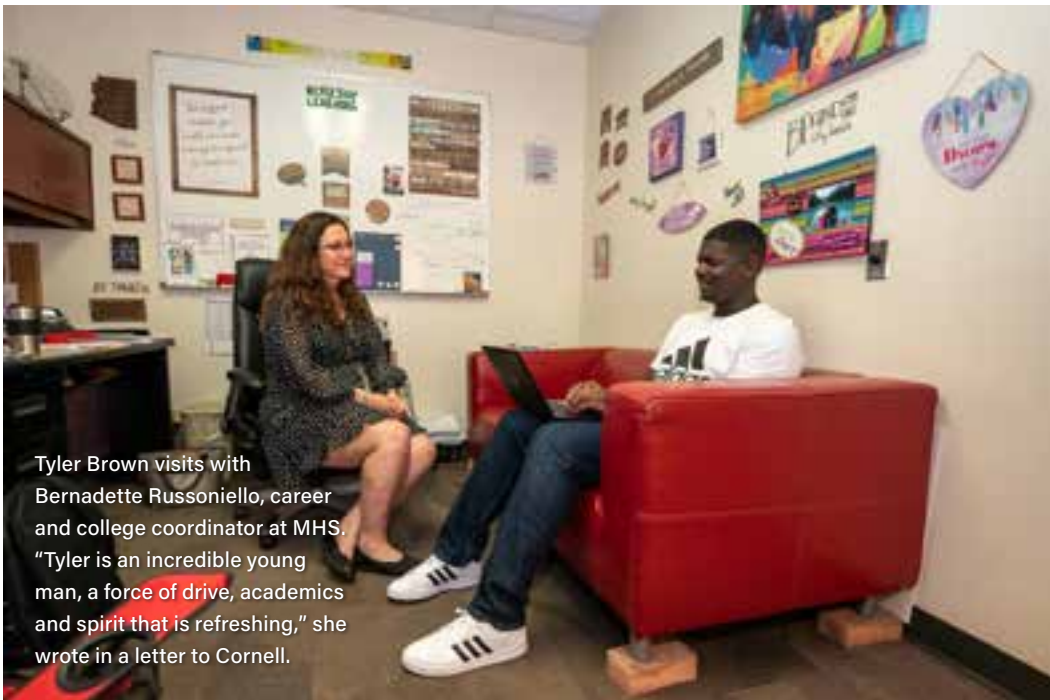
Tyler also was attracted to one of the founding principles espoused by Ezra Cornell during the official dedication of the university in 1868: “I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.”

The concept of “... any person” meant that people from all walks of life, all income levels, races, religions and genders could attend the university. Similarly, “... any study” underscored the freedom to pursue academic interests wherever they lead.

That guiding philosophy, which continues today, would allow Tyler to explore wherever his studies led. That appealed to him.

But Tyler wondered if he really had a chance to be accepted, especially since he didn’t have the “best grades” coming off his junior year. After all, this was an Ivy League institution that admitted just 8.7% of 67,380 applications in 2021. And just 3% of its students annually hail from the Southwest.

But Russoniello and others, including English teacher Kathryn Noga, had taken stock of their new student. They could see the Honor Roll student’s grades rebounding, even as he became a student ambassador for the senior class and participated in Student Council.



Tyler Brown visits with Bernadette Russoniello, career and college coordinator at MHS. “Tyler is an incredible young man, a force of drive, academics and spirit that is refreshing,” she wrote in a letter to Cornell.

They persuaded him to take a shot, and in late October he sent off an application to Cornell.

### ‘An investment worth making’

The application included letters of reference from Noga and Russoniello.

“If there were one word to describe Tyler Brown, it would be resilient,” Noga wrote to the Recommendation Committee. “Regardless of anything life has thrown in his way, Tyler has strived for success and excellence, but most importantly to leave the world a better place.”

“As a young Black man, Tyler is well aware of the current and critical conversations occurring on race in our nation,” she added, describing the first essay he wrote for her class. “In a heartbreaking page of prose, he divulged some of the pain and struggle he carries with him just because of his race. The racism he experienced alone is harrowing, but instead of focusing on that, Tyler continually chooses to rise above circumstance.”

Tyler was a unique opportunity for the college, Noga told the committee.

“In my time as a teacher, I would argue that there have been very few students, if any, who have been as bold enough to take risks, as resilient enough to rise above circumstance, as persevering enough to keep trying, and as compassionate enough to still desire to give back and make sure the work he commits his life to is for the benefit of others as Tyler Brown,” she ended her letter. “He is truly one of a kind. He is an investment worth making



### TYLER BROWN

**Maricopan since:** 2021

**Residence:** Tortosa

**Family:** Mom Shaneka. The fourth oldest of nine kids; he has four brothers, a stepbrother and three sisters. Grandparents Rose and Paul.

**Career goal:** Urban planning

**Inspiration:** John Lewis, the late U.S. congressman and civil rights activist of Georgia. “I’ll always model my character and behavior after him. He knew when to fight for what’s right. He knew the idea of ‘good trouble.’”

**Favorite things (so far) about Maricopa:**

“The people, because they are so nice and welcoming. The location/area, with the mountains surrounding the desert and farmland. The fact that most of the community is built completely in a suburban way or has a suburban feel.”

**Favorite hobbies:** Socializing; writing; reading about infrastructure, history and highways; discussing politics

**Favorite musical genre:** Anything

except for country, but if I had to

choose, more than likely pop rap

**Favorite food:** Sushi, but burritos

are “a very close second.”

Bryan Mordt

because he will be a role model for future generations; I am confident in that.”

Russoniello wanted the admissions folks to know that Tyler was a special student — and person.

“Tyler is eccentric; he sets daily learning goals and benchmarks, spending time each day reflecting on his strengths and deficits,” she wrote. “He defies stereotypes, striving to exceed and refusing to be pulled down by peers or social expectations. He possesses an intense drive to improve and better himself. He is charming, articulate and genuine; a natural storyteller and a great listener. Above all, he is resilient, embracing challenges and always growing.”

Tyler is the type of student who wants to belong and be involved, she noted.

“For our first assembly, he took the spirit stick (a tradition given to the most spirited class) out of my office and took it home for a makeover,” she related. “He returned it ablaze in ribbons and bling in our school colors. He sought out our Student Council sponsor and asked to participate in the assembly; at Homecoming he was sprinting along the bleachers with our giant spirit flag, waving the banner and cheering on his team with more pride and energy than students who’ve resided here their whole lives.

“Tyler is an incredible young man, a force of drive, academics and spirit that is refreshing,” she concluded.

Still, on the mid-December day Cornell announced its early acceptances, he figured his chances were slim. Russoniello had invited Tyler over for a pasta dinner and though he felt like he was putting her out, she insisted and he eventually acquiesced.

They ate before news of the decisions was posted online at 5 p.m. Figuring the server would be “blowing up” with less-patient applicants, Tyler waited 15 minutes before opening his laptop to find out what the Cornell admissions office thought of him.

When he logged in, a video slowly opened.

“It took me a good couple seconds to understand what it was saying. I saw the word ‘Congratulations’ on there, but it took me a second to grasp what was happening. And then I was like, ‘Oh my God, I got in! There’s no way I got in.’ To this day, I still think that decision was kind of fake.”

“I was so happy and tearful and overjoyed,” he added. “After all these years of struggling, and the past few weeks of constant worry (about his chances), it was a relief.”

Will Barkoff

### A future of ‘discovering things’

Her son’s early acceptance to Cornell, ranked the 14th best college in the country this year by *U.S. News and World Report*, impressed Shaneka Burton, who saw her difficult decision pay incredible dividends.

“Oh gosh, I was very, very excited,” she said.

“I’m impressed. ... I always tell him to reach for the stars, that you can achieve anything you want to be,” said Burton. “He said this is what he wanted to be as a toddler, stuck to it and I couldn’t be even more proud of him than I am today.”

“It’s always difficult letting your children go as a mom, but I knew Tyler was destined to



Uris Library and McGraw Tower is seen on the campus of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Lake Cayuga is seen at top right.

be more,” she added. “He always wanted more and so it really came easy for us and him to have better and do better. ... I’m not surprised because he’s always been dedicated and determined, and he always pushed himself for more.”

Tyler said his mother is his biggest inspiration. They’re in touch every day by phone or text, she said.

Always supportive, he remembers her telling him he could go to any college in the world, that he was that smart. “She was pushing me to be the best person I can be,” he said.

Burton, whose health is significantly better today, doesn’t see Tyler straying far from his core interests of geography and maps.

“In the years ahead, I see him discovering things,” she said. “He loves to discover things. He loves to map out things. My vision for him is to see him somewhere like NASA or Google



“*I saw the word ‘Congratulations’ on there, but it took me a second to grasp what was happening. And then I was like, ‘Oh my God, I got in!’*”

TYLER BROWN

or the National Geographic channel.”

She recalled that when the Yellow Pages phone book was delivered in their California neighborhood when Tyler was a boy, he would sit down and go over the maps.

But there is more to her son than infrastructure and topographical lines, Burton is quick to add.

“He’s smart and he’s intelligent, but he’s also very kind and helpful. He listens to people. He always wants to take on people’s problems and help solve them. He’s just a good person all around.”

Tyler has yet to visit the Cornell campus, with its irregular layout and eclectic architectural styles, but he will have lots of company when he heads there later this summer.

“That’s going to be a family trip,” said his mother.





# MUSD, construction team put good fortune to good use

BY JAY TAYLOR

**I**N THE SPRING OF 2021, EVERYONE knew Maricopa was going to get a second high school.

Maricopa High was crowded. The city was growing at an incredible rate. But what kind of high school would it be?

Initially, not much of one. The district only had \$21.5 million for construction, meaning students would be learning in a new but “bare bones” facility.

Then, Maricopa Unified School District had a bit of good fortune.

A crowd gathered at the site of Desert Sunrise High School in January to celebrate the setting of the structure's final beam. Leaders and citizens from throughout the community were on hand to sign the final beam as part of the ceremony.

On July 31, the state legislature, prodded by then- Rep. Bret Roberts of Maricopa (R-District 11), tucked an additional \$18.8 million into the state budget for construction. With the late allocation, the construction budget nearly doubled to \$41 million.

The new funding meant MUSD officials and the construction team of general contractor Chasse Building Team, Orcutt-Winslow Architects and Facilities Management Group, the project manager, could work to enhance its plans for the school in the eastern part of the city, recently christened Desert Sunrise High School.

Initial plans called for a classroom building, a gymnasium that included a cafeteria, multi-purpose area and restrooms. There was no administrative space allocated – that was to be set up in converted classrooms, then retrofitted when additional funding became available.

The football field was going to be just that — a grass surface where the football and soccer team could play. No bleachers. No lights. No restrooms. No concession area.

But Roberts’ efforts changed all that.

commons building that’s part of Phase 2. That incorporates counseling, a lecture hall, a performance area, theater and learning stairs.”

**MARK RAFFERTY**



**PARTNER AT FACILITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP**

“Getting the second round of funding took the stress out of the project for me. But the stress I felt before the funding increase wasn’t because of the funding, it was because the school they were going to have to build before Phase 2 just wasn’t representative of Maricopa.”

“There are a lot of things to choose from when you’re funding a high school. A lot of it is tied to athletics because it has to be if you’re going to be a comprehensive high school. This is now a comprehensive high school, and if you don’t have athletics, you don’t have a comprehensive high school.”

**DR. TRACEY LOPEMAN**

**MUSD SUPERINTENDENT**



“What it means for students is, we can truly make a reality the master plan that we have developed for this school. Our architect has a master plan, and the second allocation gets us quite a few steps closer to that final product.”

“We will now have fully equipped classrooms, complete with technology, first-rate furnishings and dynamic teaching spaces. We will create a space that fully meets the needs of our students. There are a lot of collaborative spaces, and we support that kind of teaching.”

“That (student services building) will be the focal point of the school,” she said. “It will incorporate the student services building that’s going in now and includes the lobby, main entrance, administrative offices, full library, bookstore, health services and security. Next year, it will be integrated into the student

**BIBY CARBONNEAU**

**ASSOCIATE AND PROJECT MANAGER FOR ORCUTT-WINSLOW ARCHITECTS**

“Knowing it was a state-funded project, we knew we could design a space that wouldn’t feel bare bones. We work around those kinds of issues all the time. We could use certain materials that could keep costs down, yet still meet the state standards.”

“But once we found out we would have more funding, we looked for what else we could bring for the kids — things like more natural light in the hallways, bringing in operable partitions to facilitate community-based learning, and little touches that could comfort them. It was exciting that there was additional funding available for the students. Architecture and construction can be really stressful, but this was a relief knowing we were going to be able to give more to our teachers.”

Brian Petersheim Jr.



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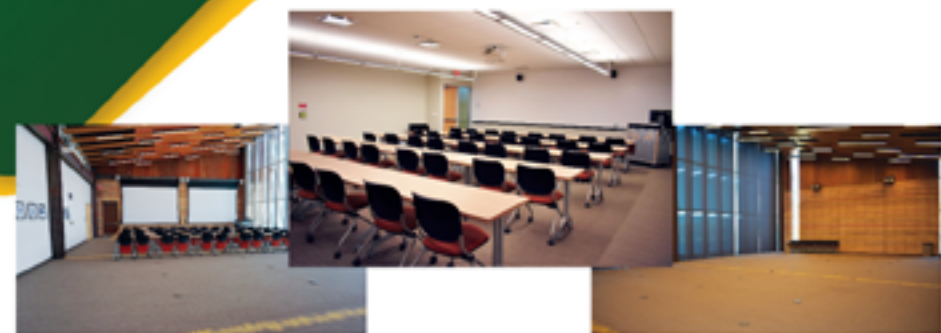
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## EDUCATION



Maricopa Vice Mayor Vincent Manfredi and Patti Coutre sign the final beam for Desert Sunrise High School before it's put into place.

### A wide array of improvements

Construction of the student services building has been fast-tracked and allowed for moving administrative functions out of the classroom building and into the student services building. The benefits will include:

- More than double administrative office space to about 6,300 square feet
- Counseling, health care and other services will be hosted in the new administrative building.
- Building it upfront will save \$400,000, which would have been the cost of retrofitting the classroom building.

### Athletic facilities

With the additional funding, Desert Sunrise High School will have a fully built-out athletic facility with:

- Natural grass football/soccer field
- Scoreboard
- Lights
- Bleachers
- Concession area
- Restrooms
- Two competition-ready softball fields
- Two competition-ready baseball fields
- Rubberized track
- Finishing touches including grass, curbs, sidewalks and lighting
- Sports equipment including practice and game uniforms for football, soccer and track
- Maintenance equipment like mowers

Brian Petersheim Jr

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## The current state of our schools

BY MURRAY SIEGEL

**T**HE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC continue to negatively affect learning in our public schools, and recent reports indicate the nature of the problem is accelerating.

Districts in Arizona and across our nation have experienced an increasing loss of classroom teachers, substitute teachers and bus drivers. These losses have caused some schools to close due to insufficient personnel.

Beyond the staffing problems, there is a need to examine the state of our schools today. To get an accurate analysis, it is necessary to

seek the opinions of experienced classroom teachers. During my 48-year teaching career, I have taught in various schools in five states and observed teachers in action in a host of schools across the nation.

Input from friends and former students who are teaching today increases my concern about the current state of our schools. I wanted to see if my concerns are relevant, so, I spoke with a friend who has taught in several school districts. The points she made matched my observations, which led me to write this column. For the last six years, I have taught as a volunteer at Butterfield Elementary, where the administration and faculty have proven diligent in battling these problems.

Our neighborhood school might be doing well, but the ecosystem of education extends far beyond our community, and we must be concerned about the state of public education locally and nationwide.


Rigor in education is useful but it must be matched by resources and training to support the teachers on whom the burden falls. Technology can be a vital tool in the education process, but it tends to cause public expectation of immediate feedback

and assessment. If expectations are not met, the teacher receives the blame when the fault might lie with the technological process.

New educational technology and new curriculum require teachers to stay current on “the next new thing” in education. Are they provided the time and resources to do this?

The fourth and greatest concern involves the need for parents to maintain awareness of their child’s daily learning progress and partner with teachers to maximize educational opportunities.

An overriding concern is the need for an environment of respect for teachers. The concerns defined here are real, yet they can be overcome with cooperation between administration, faculty and parents all over our nation.

If children are our future, maximizing learning is the responsibility of all citizens. 

*Murray Siegel, Ph.D., has more than 44 years of teaching experience and volunteers at Butterfield Elementary School.*

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## Staging a home on a budget

BY DAYV MORGAN

**S**O, YOU WANT TO SELL YOUR HOME, but you don't have thousands of dollars to bring in brand new furniture to stage it.

I'm not going to tell you that staging isn't important, because it is. But despite what you may see on television, you may not be in such a bad position.

It's been my experience that many buyers prefer to see the home empty. When the house has no furniture there are no unseen imperfections in the walls and floors, which can be easily hidden by a carefully placed rug or end table.

But there are times when you can't move until you sell your home, and the question becomes one of how to effectively stage a home with the furniture you have on hand.

There are ways to make a huge difference while spending very little money.

Here are a few tips:

**Declutter your rooms:** The key is to make sure that you clear up as much floor and wall space as possible. Clear floors and walls will make rooms look bigger. Don't try to fill your closets with the stuff you cleared from the rooms either, potential buyers want closet space. Instead, rent a storage unit for a few months.


**Invest in storage shelving:** This will make rooms feel well-organized and neat. In addition, it will also allow a buyer to see the value of your storage space. By doing this, you visually increase the square footage of your home.

**Cleanliness:** You have likely been living in your home for years and may have become to blind to some stains and dust that other people will see. Hire professional cleaners.




**Fix it before you forget it:** Repair anything cracked, broken, or improperly working, like dripping faucets or blinds that don't open.

**Paint:** While painting the whole interior is usually the best option, a less expensive alternative is to repaint high traffic areas. Choose a neutral light-enhancing color scheme. Focus on common areas like the kitchen or the living room where people seem to spend the most time.

**Curb appeal:** Imagine you are stepping out of your car and seeing your home for the first time. It's a lasting impression. Buyers form their opinions about the value of your home based on the condition you have kept it. Whether you have a lawn or desert landscape, make sure it is neatly trimmed. Take care of any discolored areas on the façade of your home.

Staging is important, but at the same time, you shouldn't feel that the inability to purchase new furniture is a setback. If you take care of your home and get rid of the clutter, potential buyers will be able to easily picture themselves in your home. 

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

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## Master Gardeners plant seeds with advice, expertise

BY AL BRANDENBURG



**M**ANY NEWCOMERS AND INEXPERIENCED gardeners in Arizona need advice to successfully grow flowers and vegetables in our desert climate and soil conditions.

Often, that expertise in home horticulture is provided by Master Gardeners through educational programs and projects. The local program, based at the Maricopa Agricultural Center (MAC), is under the auspices of the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Science Cooperative Extension program for Pinal County.


During a rigorous 12-week course, Master Gardeners become trained volunteers working to provide the public information on environmentally responsible gardening and landscaping. One of the many ways they assist the Maricopa community is by creating and maintaining a demonstration garden and orchard to showcase new developments in plants and trees, planting methods, grafting, composting and irrigation methods. In addition, Master Gardeners also work with schoolchildren, teachers, seniors, community gardeners and homeowners.

Recently, the Master Gardener group held a series of classes at a local help center on what to grow and when to grow it, how to properly

read seed packets, planting and tending micro greens, irrigation set-ups for growing in pots and raised beds as well as planting seeds and transplants.

More classes scheduled at the Maricopa Library and Cultural Center will focus on building raised beds, improving soil makeup and discussing which vegetables and plants are best suited to our desert environment.

You can become a Master Gardener by attending fall classes at MAC to learn how to apply your gardening knowledge and skills to the community by answering garden

questions and otherwise educating others. Your involvement will lead to an increase in knowledge and skill in yourself and those you reach. You will use your knowledge of plants to improve the lives of others and the local community. This, ultimately, will lead to a bigger change in the world around us. 

*Al Brandenburg is a Pinal County Master Gardener.*

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### HELP FOR 'GREEN' THUMBS

Local Master Gardeners help fulfill the educational outreach mission of University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Science's Cooperative Extension program with the following activities and services:

- Solving plant problem questions via a helpline (520-374-6263)
- Providing a website with in-depth info and tips ([mac-pinal-mastergardener.org](https://mac-pinal-mastergardener.org))
- Giving talks to local groups on the best growing and irrigation techniques
- Introducing children to gardening at local schools
- Presenting gardening information at area garden and trade shows
- Organizing educational programs and conferences
- Providing annual plant sales and best practices information (first Saturday in March)



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## HOME

### most expensive HOME SOLD



41921 W. Laramie Court Jan. 5 \$ \$699,000

This single-story home in Glennville sits on an oversized corner lot with an RV gate and 4-car tandem garage. The home features upgraded tile flooring and carpet in the bedrooms. The kitchen includes oversized island; gas cook top; wall-mounted oven and microwave; under-cabinet lighting on the upper and lower cabinets; large walk-in pantry; and stainless-steel appliances. From the great room there is a view of the covered patio and pool. There is a built-in gas firepit and outdoor kitchen. This home was on the market nearly five months and sold for \$100,000 under the original list price.

**Community:** Glennville  
**Square feet:** 3,293  
**Price per square foot:** \$212.26  
**Days on market:** 147

**Builder:** Fulton  
**Year built:** 2018  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Bathrooms:** 3.5

- 43250 W. Knauss Drive, The Villages .....\$580,000
- 37929 W. Montserrat St., Rancho Mirage.....\$545,000
- 41581 W. Harvest Moon Drive, Province .....\$542,500
- 44236 W. Adobe Circle, Cobblestone Farms.....\$535,000

### least expensive HOME SOLD

36522 W. Santa Monica Ave. Jan. 1 \$ \$249,990



The least expensive home sold was a single-story, new home under construction in Tortosa. The home features 20-inch tile flooring throughout living areas and carpet in bedrooms. The open concept features a nice sized kitchen with large island, stone countertops and stainless-steel appliances. The home also has faux wood blinds on all windows, r/o system, and is listed as a Smart home with built-in Wi-Fi. The home sold in 22 days at list price.

**Community:** Tortosa  
**Square feet:** 1,568  
**Price per square foot:** \$159.43  
**Days on market:** 22

**Builder:** DR Horton  
**Year built:** 2021  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Bathrooms:** 2

- 18642 N. Toledo Ave., Tortosa .....\$257,990
- 43866 W. Sagebrush Trail, Rancho El Dorado .....\$280,000
- 46094 W. Windmill Drive, Maricopa Meadows .....\$290,000
- 38190 W. San Ildefonso Ave., Rancho Mirage .....\$298,200

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## What to expect from Social Security in 2022

BY JOAN KOCZOR

**O**VER 50 MILLION AMERICANS rely on Social Security for at least a portion of their retirement income. When you consider that 180 million people have paid into the system — and hope to collect checks someday — it's clear the federal program serves as the foundation of many Americans' retirement plans.

There are changes to keep in mind in the new year.

The maximum possible Social Security benefit for someone who retires at full retirement age will be \$3,345 in 2022, up \$197 from 2021.

The average Social Security benefit for retired workers is expected to climb by \$92 to \$1,657 per month due to the cost-of-living adjustment. Married couples in which both spouses receive benefits will see an estimated \$154 increase to an average payment of \$2,753 per month in 2022. But remember part of your cost-of-living adjustment could be used to pay for Medicare premiums.

### COLA hike won't cover inflation

Social Security payments are adjusted each year to keep pace with inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers. Existing Social Security recipients will see their benefits increase by 5.9% in 2022, a significantly larger adjustment than the 1.3% COLA in 2021.

The 2022 adjustment is the highest in decades, but it's not enough to keep pace with overall inflation faced in 2021. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the general Consumer Price Index increased 6.8% in the

12 months through November 2021.

As if trailing inflation weren't enough of a problem, many Social Security recipients won't see that the entire increase in their benefit checks. Medicare Part B premiums are increasing by more than 14% to \$170.10 per month from \$148.50 per month. People who are signed up for both Social Security and Medicare have their Part B premiums paid directly from their Social Security benefit. As a result, those folks will likely see less of an increase in their take-home benefit amount than they might expect.

The Social Security Administration posted personalized COLA notices online in December. You can view the benefit by logging into your My Social Security account. [🔗](#)

Source: [msn.com/en-us/money/retirement/social-security-changes-coming-in-2022](https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/retirement/social-security-changes-coming-in-2022)

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

[ssa.gov/myaccount](https://ssa.gov/myaccount)

[InMaricopa.com/Columnists](https://inmaricopa.com/columnists)



## Aging in place: Is it for you?

BY RON SMITH

**B**ECAUSE THERE IS “NO PLACE like home,” aging in place may have many benefits: it can cost less if you own your home, slow advancement of memory loss by maintaining your social network and help improve your self-determination. Staying in your own home can support a healthier and safer living environment. But it doesn't happen easily or without planning. Consider these primary factors as part of a successful retirement:

**1 Financial readiness and affordability.** Nearly a third of older households spent more than 30% of their income on housing, Harvard University Joint Center reported in 2014. That's a potentially significant obstacle to aging in place. By 2035, as many as half of older, cost-burdened households will spend more than 50% of their income on housing. In addition, 51% of older workers have saved less than \$50,000 for retirement.

**2 Disability accommodations.** By 2035, stairs, traditional bathroom layouts, and narrow doors and hallways may pose challenges for 17 million older houses inhabited by someone with a mobility disability, a 77% increase from today, according to HJJC. Yet only 3.5% of U.S. homes offer a zero-step entrance, single-floor living, and wider doorways and hallways to accommodate a wheelchair.

**3 Remodeling costs.** If improvements (ramps, better lighting, etc.) are needed to age in place, consider average renovation costs range from \$50,000-\$200,000. But there is some hope that Medicare Advantage programs in the future may cover some costs.

**4 Alternative housing.** To accommodate stretched budgets and limited resources, some options exist for housing, including



home sharing, multigenerational living, village concepts and independent living. They, too, require universal design features to promote a safe, comfortable and livable environment.

**5 Long-term care.** Insurance stats show someone turning 65 today has about a 70% chance of needing some type of long-term care over their lifetime. While one-third may never need such care, 20% will need it for longer than five years. On average, people need long term care services for three years. In the Phoenix area, three years of assisted living costs between \$141,255 and \$169,725 with long-term nursing care about \$295,650. That cost is projected to be \$533,976 in 2040!

**6 Home care costs.** Need a home health aide? One will cost about \$62,920 locally in 2022, Genworth estimates. Volunteer support services, however, might help extend the years spent at home and reduce the amount of institutional care that might be needed.

**7 Family considerations.** Do family members live near you? Can they assist with your care? Can you live with them? How do you reassure your family you are safe and living well if they don't live nearby?

**8 Not for everybody.** Not all people should age in place. The goal is to thrive in places and communities that are best — in the moment. There can be many other exciting options for some. The point is the living-at-home option can be a better solution for many if they are prepared for it. [🔗](#)

Ron Smith is an aging-in-place advocate, a Certified Aging in Place Specialist and a Certified Living in Place Professional.

[InMaricopa.com/Columnists](https://inmaricopa.com/columnists)







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## calendar 02.22

**1**  
**Maricopa Historical Society meeting**  
7 p.m., City Hall  
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

**7**  
**Maricopa Historical Society Monthly Meeting**  
5 p.m., Redwood Room  
Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**9**  
**MUSD Governing Board meeting**  
6:30 p.m., Maricopa Unified School District Office  
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

**11**  
**MOPS - A Group for Moms**  
9 a.m., Copper Sky  
44345 W. MLK Jr. Blvd.

**14**  
**Maricopa Planning & Zoning Commission meeting**  
6 p.m., City Hall  
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

**Friends of the Library meeting**  
5:30 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**15**  
**Maricopa City Council meeting**  
7 p.m., City Hall  
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

**25**  
**MOPS - A Group for Moms**  
9 a.m., Copper Sky  
44345 W. MLK Jr. Blvd.

**Sundays**  
**Narcotics Anonymous**  
7-9 p.m., Maricopa Community Church  
44977 W. Hathaway Road

**Mondays**  
**Narcotics Anonymous**  
7-9 p.m., Maricopa Community Church  
44977 W. Hathaway Road

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
6-7 p.m., Community of Hope Church  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

**Tuesdays**  
**AARP Tax-Aide Income Tax Preparation**  
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Maricopa Cruise-in**  
5-9 p.m., Walmart parking lot, near McDonald's  
41650 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
6:30 p.m., Mt. View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

**Celebrate Recovery Small Group Meeting**  
5-9 p.m., Maricopa Community Church  
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

**Wednesdays**  
**AARP Tax-Aide Income Tax Preparation**  
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Mt. View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

**Al-Anon - New Beginnings**  
10 a.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

**Thursdays**  
**Maricopa Police Cadets meeting**  
6 p.m., Maricopa High School  
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

**Teen Support Group**  
6:30 p.m., Northern Lights Therapy, PLLC  
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway, Ste. 103

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

**Fridays**  
**Al-Anon - Strength & Home AFG**  
7 p.m., Community of Hope  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Mt. View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

**Saturdays**  
**AARP Tax-Aide Income Tax Preparation**  
9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

ALL EVENTS ARE TENTATIVE

For details on these and other local events — and to list your own — visit [InMaricopa.com/Calendar](http://InMaricopa.com/Calendar).

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