

# in Maricopa

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July 2022

MARICOPA  
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ELECTIONS  
2022

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the issues*



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## ON THE COVER

All four City Council candidates discussed the issues that will shape the future of Maricopa, including transportation, jobs, residential growth (apartments) and public safety.

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# Inflation, the new COVID-19

## FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, THE REASON

behind labor and material shortages could be easily summed up: COVID-19. It was the reason for empty shelves at stores, a postal service that didn't always work, longer-than-normal waits in the drive-thru line for fast food, and hour-long waits for a table at your favorite restaurants.

But as those pressures start to ease, the problem replacing COVID-19 is inflation. In case you haven't noticed, prices are on the rise.

We see it at the gas station, the grocery store, basically everywhere. At least in the short term, it doesn't appear to be going away.

Here at InMaricopa, we're not immune.

Every month, we publish a high-quality magazine that's delivered to more than 26,000 Maricopa households. The price of the paper and all of the materials used to print our magazines has increased 40% since June 2021. And with July came yet another cost increase.

Don't worry, we're not planning on doubling our costs for a subscription: That would be impossible, because it's 100% free to our readers both in print and online.



The point of this note isn't to garner sympathy, but it's a call of solidarity with our readers and business community. We feel your pain.

This statement has been overdone over the last few years, but we are truly in this together.

Our goal is to put together a magazine that's reflective of the many different voices in our community and, thanks to our advertisers who foot the bill, we will continue to do so, even during these challenging times.

All we ask is, if you appreciate our efforts to report the happenings in Maricopa both in print and online, patronize the businesses that support us. They make it possible for us to do our jobs and for you to have a voice that truly originates from Maricopa.

InMaricopa, to be exact.

**JUSTIN GRIFFIN | EDITOR**

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### ALYCIA HAYES

Alycia has a background in paleoethnobotany and is an archaeologist and program manager at the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument in Coolidge.



### BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.

Brian took time out of his busy weekend to write about the winners of InMaricopa's Best Dad contest, as voted on by InMaricopa's readers.



### CHRIS J. SCOGGIN, CPA

Inflation — it's on the tip of everyone's tongue these days. Chris takes the time to discuss how businesses should navigate these waters.

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### MISSION

Inform readers/viewers. Enrich advertisers.

### BELIEFS

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- 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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## Progress in action

This month, Desert Sunrise High School will accept its first students. It's a milestone and a statement about the population growth in Maricopa over the years. Just a few years ago, all that sat at the site of Desert Sunrise was a stand of pecan trees, which was known as the Cortona property. It's shown in a photo taken a few years ago. Desert Sunrise, shown in an aerial shot by Brian Petersheim Jr., will start off with just freshmen and sophomores this year. In the second year, the school will add a junior class, and then a year later, a senior class.



## THIS MONTH BACK IN...

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



# 2005

In July, Maricopa schools welcomed students for the first day of the new school year. Pima Butte, a new elementary school in Rancho El Dorado, opened its doors for the first time. The school was built for \$4.14 million, including furnishings. The State Facilities Board funded most of the project. Pima Butte is the historical name for "M" Mountain, a significant landmark north of Maricopa. The school took the nickname of the Mustangs. In its first year, the school saw an enrollment of about 440 students. It has roughly the same enrollment today.



# 2009

Maricopa police officers responded to a report of a sheep stuck in a drain ditch in The Villages. The call came from a resident who, out for a morning stroll, heard what she described as a sheep-like sound coming from the roadside drain. On the scene, officers ruled out a stuck sheep, but eventually determined the noise was from a frog stuck in the drain. Global Water was called to help remove the creature. "I have lived in Arizona a long time, and in the rural areas during monsoon season it's not uncommon for frogs to be seen," said Officer Christina Pantoja.



# 2017

The monsoon season was particularly active five years ago, with at least four flooding events in July alone. The last week of July proved to be the busiest, with hefty showers and flooding each day that closed roads throughout Maricopa. "Road flooded" signs were posted at entries near the Vekol and Santa Rosa washes, as well as others throughout the area. Officials reminded citizens to remember when they come to a flooded road, "Turn around, don't drown." It's common-sense advice to remember every monsoon. Flooded roads are dangerous.

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HENRY WADE

# Leach, Manfredi, Vitiello and Wade share views on Maricopa's future

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

The next four years will be pivotal in the growth and development of Maricopa.

This year's City Council election and the winners' leadership on several core issues will help shape the city's future.

Four candidates — Adam Leach, Vincent Manfredi, Rich Vitiello and Henry Wade — are running for three seats on the council.

Leach, a Maricopa Realtor, has never held public office. Manfredi, Vitiello and Wade are incumbents.

Manfredi, the city's interim mayor, is co-owner and advertising director of InMaricopa. Vitiello is the general manager for Kooline Plumbing. Wade is director of housing counseling services for Chicanos Por La Causa.

The primary will be held Aug. 2. Early voting begins July 6.

All four candidates discussed relevant issues, including transportation, jobs, residential growth (apartments) and public safety at a recent town hall at the Maricopa Library and Cultural Center. Those issues often overlapped as candidates talked about the future of Maricopa.

## JOBS

When it comes to jobs, there was consensus among the candidates good-paying jobs are needed. There was also agreement that with the appointment of former Mayor Christian Price as president and CEO of the Maricopa Economic Development Alliance (MEDA) the city has an energetic cheerleader who will sell the benefits of doing business in Maricopa.

"I feel that's an important aspect of job growth," Wade said. "You have to have a strong, economic development department, which we do, and they work very hard to make sure that the places that are looking to employ

people are interested in coming here."

Vitiello said law enforcement is a pillar of economic growth.

"The business owners need to feel safe opening up shop here," he said. "They are going to make investments in their products and their businesses and need to know that customers are going to feel safe in their establishments. If we make it safe, businesses will come to Maricopa."

While no candidate asserted they create jobs, Manfredi explained City Council sets the tone for business in Maricopa. He noted just four years ago, Maricopa had a reputation for being extremely difficult to deal with. City officials piled excessive regulations and permit reviews on business owners.

That's not the case anymore, Manfredi said. It's quite the opposite.

"I've pushed, and everybody has pushed, for us to get out of the way of small business," Manfredi said. "And that leaves the small

## HOW THE PRIMARY WORKS

Voters can select three candidates. With four candidates on the ballot, the total number of votes will be divided by the number of candidates, four. Then that number will be cut in half. Any candidate getting an eighth of the overall vote, plus one vote, earns a seat and does not participate in the general election.

Should a general election be required, twice as many candidates advance as there are seats on the ballot. So, if one seat remains open, the two highest vote-getters not already elected from the primary would face off in the general election, with the candidate achieving a simple majority winning the seat. If only one candidate wins election through the primary, three candidates advance to the general election to contest the two remaining seats. In either case, since there are only four candidates in this election, anyone not elected in the primary would advance to the Nov. 8 general election.

business with the ability to concentrate on growth and job creation, and not red tape and bureaucracy."

"I've worked with Exceptional Healthcare in building hospitals," Vitiello added. "They've built 19 of them in Texas and they loved working with the staff here in Maricopa."

Leach said better-paying jobs are a necessity in Maricopa, but more infrastructure is needed to help the process along.

"I think the first step is that land has to be zoned, which I think they might have some or not even any," Leach said. "That's the first step. The second step is to allow a company, a developer, to build a building that will attract those businesses. Because right now there's nothing. There's nothing here. You go up in the Valley in Chandler or Gilbert, they have buildings around and so they can ensure that it's plug-and-play. We just have to do the inside and we're done here."

Manfredi said that while such projects are already popping up, such as Estrella Gin and Seven Ranches, more are necessary.

"What we need is light manufacturing and other types of careers in the city of Maricopa," he added. "But that starts with getting places that are shovel-ready, so businesses can build and hit the ground running."

## TRANSPORTATION

There isn't a more impactful issue in the city of Maricopa than transportation. The desire to fix State Route 347 is expressed by all the candidates. But opinions varied on the amount of progress being made.

Wade mentioned the encouraging news last year of Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis of the Gila River Indian Community writing a letter to voice support for improvements to SR 347.

Wade pointed out the pivotal role he played in bringing together Lewis and then-Mayor Christian Price.

"The reason that the Gila River Community had been reluctant to do business with us was because of the relationship," Wade said. "We didn't have one, and if you don't have a relationship, it's hard to get something done. When their governor indicated he'd never been to our city hall before, I made arrangements for him to come and talk about the important things.

"Nothing is going to move until we get to the point where we're working together," he added.

Leach said the 347 was a chief motivator for his decision to run for office. He's grown impatient with the situation.

"It's a lot of talks," he said, characterizing the lack of progress on a solution. "This is coming,



ADAM LEACH

Age: 43

Hometown: Rehoboth, Massachusetts

Years in Maricopa: 16

Family: Married to Tylene; sons Rowan Dickson and Paxton Leach

Political background: Republican

Community service: I volunteer a lot within the city (Cub Scout Pack 389, Boy Scout Troop 389, flag football coach and soccer coach. (Stepped down from Parks, Recreation and Library.)

What are your qualifications to be a councilmember?

My qualifications are that I am a hard-working, dedicated, passionate person who wants the best for our community. I am a local real estate agent, investor and entrepreneur.

How would you improve the city's transportation infrastructure?

I know the City offered transportation out of the city some time ago, and since stopped the service. I would like us to bring that service back and promote the value of this service. As we all have seen, the price of gas has risen. Transportation to Casa Grande and the Valley is key to reducing vehicles on the roads.

How should the city approach commercial

and housing growth?

The City boards (P&Z, etc.) and City Council need to make sure the interests of the residents are first and foremost. We need additional commercial space that is spread out within the city (like East Maricopa) would be a huge benefit and need. The housing growth has been a lot in the last few months with land purchases, etc. The communication of how long until we the residents see the land being developed should be better and more informing of the design plans.

What is the one thing you'd like to change about Maricopa as a councilmember? I would like to see councilmembers assigned to different sections of the city to help be a better voice for the residents in those areas.

What is your proudest achievement? My proudest achievement is being a dad to my two sons.

On what aspect of city government are you least knowledgeable? I would say my least knowledge of city government is our local ordinances.

MARICOPA CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2022

this is coming.' I understand it takes a long time to get funding and get things done, but realistically, how come we can't just get some sort of better goal of when it might get done, some sort of improvement, and not just, 'It's coming, it's coming. It takes time,' because again,

I have a 16-year-old son who will be eventually driving on the road that I'm afraid for."

The complexity of fixing SR 347 comes from the many stakeholders involved. There's the city of Maricopa, Gila River Indian Community, Ak-Chin Indian Community, Pinal County,





VINCENT  
MANFREDI

**Age:** 51

**Hometown:** West New York, New Jersey

**Years in Maricopa:** 12

**Family:** Married with 3 daughters

**Political background:** I am a conservative Republican. The first political campaign I volunteered for was Ronald Reagan in 1980 when I was 10 years old. I have volunteered on numerous campaigns for local, county, legislative, statewide and national

candidates. This volunteerism has made me friends at every level of government, which has helped when lobbying for the needs of Maricopans.

**Community service:** Since moving to Maricopa, I have volunteered with Maricopa Pantry food bank; FOR Maricopa food bank; Maricopa Historical Society; Maricopa Unified School District; Babe Ruth League; Maricopa Little League; MHS Football, Softball, Basketball and Soccer Boosters; and many other charities

and organizations, including working with our veterans.

**What are your qualifications?**

I have served for more than seven years on City Council, the last six months as vice mayor. I will be trusted to be the interim mayor as we search for a replacement for Mayor Price. I currently serve on Budget and Finance City Council Subcommittee, Central Arizona Governments (CAG) Regional Council Member, Rural Transportation Advocacy Council, Pinal County Regional Transportation Authority Board of Directors, and the Arizona League of Cities & Towns Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Works Committee. I have engrained myself in every aspect of city government and given my time to the city freely. I have only missed three council meetings in 12 years, and two of those were to attend my daughters' graduations.

**How would you improve the city's transportation infrastructure?** I serve on four transportation boards or committees impacting the

city of Maricopa. I have dedicated myself to improving transportation for the citizens of Maricopa. We as a city will continue to repair, expand and add roads within city limits. The current Capital Improvement Plan I helped formulate as a member of the Budget Finance Subcommittee has \$59 million dedicated to streets infrastructure. The East-West Corridor and Green Road bypass are the two biggest projects we are working on, and both will have a huge impact on the traffic in the city. We have allocated over \$30 million collected from developer impact fees on new construction for the East-West Corridor alone.

Of course, SR 347 takes up most of my worries and my goals consist of an extra lane in both directions, an overpass at Riggs Road, interchanges at Maricopa Road, Casa Blanca Road and at the cement plant, and a new interchange at I-10.

**How should the city approach commercial and housing growth?** All growth needs to be approached in a measured way to allow for what we need and

what we want. Housing and transportation are the two biggest obstacles to commercial growth, and we have been working to alleviate both.

**What is the one thing you'd like to change about Maricopa?**

I have brought about a ton of change already; I would like to continue to see an increase in the quantity and variety of restaurants. I love the local shops we have, but we need more. I hate driving out of town for things and would prefer we have it all right here. We also need to focus on jobs and industry so residents can work, live and play all at home in Maricopa.

**What is your proudest achievement?**

Being father to three great daughters is my proudest achievement. When I see the strong women they have become, it underscores that everything I did up until meeting them was just preparation for my life as their father. Everything else pales in comparison.

**On what aspect of city government are you least knowledgeable?** Human resource legalities.

Bryan Mordt

Maricopa County and the Arizona Department of Transportation. All parties must agree on a solution.

Manfredi, who sits on the board of several transportation advocacy groups in the state, disagreed with Leach's characterization.

"You know, he (Leach) mentioned there's a lot of talk and nothing getting done," Manfredi said. "Just last year, we worked with state legislators to budget \$35 million for an overpass at Riggs Road. This year alone, there's another \$11 million in inflationary cost measures to increase that \$35 million to \$46 million. And that should pass in the next couple of weeks.

"That's a huge improvement. Most accidents on 347 happen at Riggs Road. It will be a two-lane overpass over the 347 at Riggs Road. We have money for it. Construction should start in the next 12 months or so. It should be finished in the next four years."

As was seen with the John Wayne overpass completed a few years ago, at least half of a project's funding must be secured before ADOT will get on board, Manfredi explained.

"Then we got to work on everything else and we are working on it," he said. "We're putting it together."

## Housing

When it comes to housing, apartments are a controversial issue in Maricopa. But Vitiello doesn't feel like they should be. He asked the crowd about their past living situations.

"How many people here have ever lived in an apartment?"

Just about everyone raised their hand in affirmation.

"When young adults are starting out in life, they can't afford to buy a home. Prices are skyrocketing nowadays," Vitiello said. "And I don't know about you guys, but I'd like for my kids to be able to move out of the house."

Wade said as the city grows, different kinds of housing are going to be needed.

"It's inevitable," Wade said. "It is going to happen. When we first started talking about apartments, many years ago when we had housing experiment study and we studied the need for apartments, guess what? The need was there, and it continues to exist.

"And I have to agree with my current co-councilmembers, that the young professionals want a place of their own. They can't afford to purchase a home, but they can afford to live in an apartment for a period of time. What we have to be conscious of and recognize is we have to be responsible in our growth process and our zoning process.

"We have to make sure that we make good decisions for the developers and ensure that the developers make good decisions when they're coming into our community to build," Wade said.

Manfredi said the stereotypes about the people who live in apartments are unfair.

"I admit, when I first moved to Phoenix before coming to Maricopa, I lived in apartments for a couple of years," he said. "I don't think I'm garbage. I'm not a bad person."

Manfredi said apartments will drive job growth.

"Diversified housing allows people to come here and work here. It's important."

He said companies like Intel, which has a huge campus in Chandler, have differing levels of pay.

"They'll have people making \$50,000, \$60,000, \$100,000 or \$500,000," he said. "They all have different kinds of housing they're going to be looking for. The fact that we're putting that in today and adding that availability will open up a brighter future for the development of jobs."

## Public safety

The crime rate is relatively low in Maricopa, but the increase in cars on the road means traffic issues are a concern for residents, especially with apartment complexes coming to the Porter Road corridor in the vicinity of several schools that cause traffic problems of their own.

"My wife just got a speeding ticket," Vitiello quipped. "She was doing seven miles over the speed limit. They didn't care who she was."

*continued on page 14*

MARICOPA  
CITY COUNCIL  
ELECTIONS  
2022

## 'DISTRICTING' CITY COUNCIL

One change to city government proposed by Adam Leach would have residents voting for their city councilmembers based on geography. Seats on the council would be assigned to different precincts across the city. Currently, council members are voted in at-large.

In explaining his support for such a change, Leach offered up the residents of East Maricopa, more specifically Tortosa, which he pointed out has a lack of lights, infrastructure

and commercial space.

"I hear that a lot that people out that way don't get their voice heard by any means," Leach said. "For an actual resident to go in front of city council and voice their voice is really challenging, just like it's challenging for me to speak in front of all of you.

"So, could you imagine if you're one person there, in Tortosa, trying to speak and say, 'Hey, what about the infrastructure? It takes us an extra 25 minutes to leave! That's why that would be my whole point of ensuring that that resident has a voice to go

to that councilmember and they can take it back to the whole city council itself."

Councilmember Vince Manfredi pointed out he publicly posts his cellphone number for constituents to call and speaks with people in Tortosa and everyone else in the city for that matter.

"Call me. Talk to me, or scream at me. You can reach me," Manfredi said. "I'm not hiding. I'm available and open to everyone in Maricopa, regardless of which neighborhood they live."

Henry Wade agreed with Manfredi.

"I'm answerable to the voters," Wade said. "I have no idea why you would want one representative when you could have six. When you send an email to the City Council, it goes to all six of us and we're moving at warp speed trying to get to that question. Very often, you will get a response from two or three people at the same time."

Councilmember Rich Vitiello echoed those sentiments.

"We're out there for everybody," he said. "We don't care where you live. I'll say it over and over again: We work for you."

in Maricopa

Town Hall

See ad on page 46

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**RICH  
VITIELLO**

**Age:** 57

**Hometown:** New York City

**Years in Maricopa:** 17

**Family:** Wife (Joann), 4 daughters, 10 grandkids

**Political background:** Republican; however, the City Council is a non-partisan group of elected officials. Nobody runs as an "R" or "D."

**Community service:** Current City Council representative; previously, I volunteered with the Maricopa Police Department, Food Bank, 2040 Vision Committee, City Board of Adjustments, MUSD JV softball coach, fundraisers for Maricopa residents in hardship, donations of bicycles to the fire and police departments, umpire at the American Legion annual softball game and graduated from the Maricopa Leadership Academy.

**What are your qualifications?** Transparency, honesty and accountability are what made me successful in 25 years of international business experience. I have been actively engaged in city government issues and have participated firsthand in initiatives



that have a direct impact on Maricopa's development, growth and quality of life. Before I was elected a City Council representative, I was appointed to the 2040 Visionary Committee and the Board of Adjustments. As a candidate, I am endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police and the Arizona Association of Firefighters. I truly care about this city and our community. I am currently the general manager for Kooline Plumbing and have first-hand local business experience.

**How would you improve the city's transportation infrastructure?** Our current traffic flow

is an issue to some residents, especially those who travel on the 347 during morning and evening rush hours. Unfortunately, issues on the 347 outside of the city limits are out of our hands. Within the city limits, we've got our city engineers and traffic people studying traffic flow to lessen congestion through signal timing and coordination on an ongoing basis. When we speak to business developers about opportunities, we do our best to enlighten and encourage business development in areas other than the 347 (John Wayne Parkway) business corridor. We have availability on Maricopa-Casa Grande

Highway, Edison Road between SR347 and SR238, and other areas, especially near City Hall. Obviously, the 347 is an issue, but I believe that as more businesses are established here, people will stop driving out of town to go to work.

**How should the city approach commercial and housing growth?**

In 2018, I noted that "Maricopa is currently composed of numerous single-family houses. Our city has enough land to support alternative forms of housing, such as townhomes and condos, and in doing so may see that it retains residents who could not afford to buy or rent a single-family house. That would increase our local workforce and may help to attract new business. We also have a burgeoning senior population, and I believe it is imperative that senior housing, such as assisted living centers, be developed within our city. This could enable families to stay in the local area, preventing them from being separated by distance or economic factors."

I stand by that statement. We're seeing some recent developments in apartments and other housing that will enable those who need alternatives to single-family residences get

what they need so our workforce and families remain local. And yes, there will be some growing pains. There always are when things change.

**What is the one thing you'd like to change about Maricopa?**

I said it before - Maricopa needs more local, high-paying jobs. I'll do what I can to help our residents stay local and not have to go out of town to get high-paying jobs. The changes we've seen have moved our city from a small town to a growing city that can compete with others to gain business development and benefit our residents economically through jobs and opportunities. I want to do more.

**What is your proudest achievement?**

Marrying my wife and raising our four daughters and 10 grandchildren. On what aspect of city government are you least knowledgeable? One third of Maricopa is in a flood zone, affecting city housing, transportation, growth and business development. I am learning more about how this issue may be resolved by sitting in on events and meetings with Flood District President Dan Frank and Mayor Christian Price. I look forward to learning more and working with other officials.

Bryan Wordt

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While that story was good for a chuckle among the crowd, Vitiello said Maricopa police don't have the ability or the budget to write hundreds of tickets.

Every time a ticket is written, the fines go to a state fund that's distributed throughout the state. Maricopa seldom gets any of that money back, meaning each ticket written is a loser for the city due to the cost in time for a

HENRY WADE

Age: Not disclosed

Hometown: Los Angeles

Years in Maricopa: 14

Family: Married, Gayle Randolph; 3 sons; 1 grandson

Political background: Non-partisan elected official; 8 years on City Council

Community service: Many youth programs, including Youth Council Advisory. My heart resides with the community of Maricopa.

What are your qualifications? One year as vice mayor, seven years on City Council, where I have participated in the most important issues facing the city, including transportation, economic development and public safety issues.



How would you improve the city's transportation infrastructure? To improve transportation, I would work with local government entities, including Ak-Chin Indian Community, the Gila River Indian Community, Pinal

County and the Arizona Department of Transportation. I would work together with my fellow councilmembers for us to put our best foot forward on improvements. I think we're on a good path to smart transportation. I think as we continue to

build relationships with our partners and our community members themselves, we shall develop policies that are reflective of our commitment to smart transportation.

How should the city approach commercial and housing growth? Methodically and responsibly. We have the ability to provide efficient and local growth. We have strong residential planning and economic development departments. We have a solid partnership with MEDA, of which I am a board member, that helps to tell our story to businesses looking to locate to our community. With the installation of Mayor Christian Price as MEDA president and CEO, he will help us to make thoughtful and intelligent decisions for our overall growth.

What is the one thing you'd like to change

about Maricopa? Less political signs.

What is your proudest achievement? Mock City Council, as part of the Councilmen on the Corner program. I took a group of young people, ages 7-15, and showed them how the City Council actually works, from nomination of councilmembers to voting on issues to developing a project with city departments and presenting the City Council to the public. The greatest thing was watching the young people take ownership of the process.

On what aspect of city government are you least knowledgeable? Public safety, since it is a structured organization in and of itself. It has its own intricate policies, which often change. I am always looking to learn more about public safety so I can keep my constituents better informed.

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GOVERNMENT

patrol officer to stop a car and write a ticket, and then possibly go to court to defend the action.

While the police department will add four more officers in the coming year, staffing levels aren't a concern for MPD Chief James Hughes, Manfredi said.

"When I speak to the chief, he doesn't complain to me about the budget," Manfredi said. "He says it's what he needs. I've asked him about the number of officers he has. I've asked him how many he needs. He wants more. Of course, everyone wants more, but unfortunately, you know there are budget constraints that are involved, but we do spend

a nice chunk of our budget — more than half — on public safety."

Another public safety issue is the lack of a City-run ambulance service.

"That would be one of my goals, to bring its own ambulance within Maricopa. Not a for-hire, but its own," Leach said.

Vitiello said the council has grappled with the issue for the last few years.

"We have talked about it for about two years," Vitiello said. "We're looking at several hundred thousand dollars per ambulance and we'll probably start off with one or two, maybe used, but we are definitely going to have that in this city because we all already want it."

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Bryan Mordt





# Sonoran Desert Parkway: The rubber meets the road

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**C**ONSTRUCTION OFFICIALLY began on the Sonoran Desert Parkway last month, but the road project is hardly a new idea.

The first purpose-built parkway in the state of Arizona is more than a decade in the making.

Former Mayor Anthony Smith, who left office in 2012, first championed the idea. His successor, Christian Price, has worked fastidiously for the last decade to garner support for the project. Both men were present for the groundbreaking in mid-June.

The project has been around long enough to have undergone a name change.

Formerly referred to as the East-West Corridor, Sonoran Desert Parkway will link John Wayne Parkway on the south side of Maricopa to Interstate 10, providing an alternative to State Route 347 to get to the Valley.

While the roadway itself may look like a straight shot on a map, there have been plenty of twists and turns to get to the point where city, county and tribal officials were able to gather on a hot Monday morning in June to celebrate the beginning of construction.

The first of those curveballs came earlier this year when the Arizona Supreme Court —

on a legal technicality — shot down the Prop 417 half-cent sales tax enacted a few years ago by Pinal County voters aimed at improving roads throughout the county. About \$80 million already collected for transportation projects will be refunded.

The tax was supposed to raise \$4 million of the \$26 million needed for the Sonoran Desert Parkway project.

City Manager Rick Horst said except for the \$4 million coming from the county roads tax, which will be back on the ballot this fall, the project will be funded by impact fees paid by developers. And while a March poll indicated broad support from voters for the tax, if it does fail at the ballot box, the city will find a way to make up the shortfall.

Horst said the project is too important to let stall.

“You know, at the end of the day, if you’re always waiting for the cavalry to show up to bail you out, you’re probably going to fail more often than you succeed,” Horst said. “So, as a progressive community, both through our City Council’s leadership and our staff’s tenacity, we were not going to let that stand in our way.”

A motor grader sits on site in the pathway of the Sonoran Desert Parkway. The 20-mile-long roadway will connect Maricopa with Casa Grande and Interstate 10.

“We were going to find other ways to germinate and create this project and allow it to happen.”

## Access points

One of the biggest flaws in the transportation infrastructure in Maricopa is getting to and from the Valley, where most residents work. State Route 347 is the one road in and the one road out. The four-lane highway is plagued by congestion, particularly at rush-hour, and it is dangerous due to three high-speed intersections.

Maricopa Vice Mayor Vince Manfredi serves on several county and regional transportation boards, including the Rural Transportation Advocacy Council and the Pinal County Regional Transportation Authority board of directors. He explained access to and from Maricopa is a popular topic of discussion throughout the city.

“Being able to create a new and different way out of town is what people ask for,” Manfredi said. “Number one is, ‘When are we fixing the 347?’ And then it’s, ‘When are we going to get another road out of town?’”

It’s important to have another way to get in and out of Maricopa, but the new parkway will also improve connectivity between Maricopa and Casa Grande.

With employers like electric car manufacturer Lucid and plumbing fixture giant Kohler opening manufacturing plants in Casa Grande, that city is becoming a hub for high-paying jobs. Sonoran Desert Parkway will make it easier for Maricopa residents to work jobs there instead of the Valley.

Matt Herman, a member of the Casa Grande City Council, said the road will enhance cohesion between the two cities. To get Sonoran Desert Parkway to the finish line, Casa Grande’s leaders will play a pivotal role.

“We all know how important infrastructure is for the future of our communities,” Herman said. “And with us working together, bringing employees back and forth between our two cities, bodes well for the future.”

Bryan Mordt

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The dotted line marks the planned path of the Sonoran Desert Parkway. The road project will include a bridge over the Santa Rosa Wash in Maricopa.

### ETA for first phase: One year

The initial leg of the project is a 1.6-mile stretch between John Wayne Parkway and Porter Road along the Farrell Road alignment. The four-lane parkway eventually will link SR 347 to Interstate 10, incorporating a stretch of the Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway, giving residents of the south side of the city a more efficient route to connect with I-10.

There will also be the capacity to expand it to six lanes.

Ross Renner is the transportation engineer with the Capital Improvement Program for the City of Maricopa. He's responsible for ensuring the process is smooth.

"I've still got a page and a half list of things that need to get done to get us to the end. We keep clicking them off, but there are still a few on that list. We'll keep working at them. My goal is to remove all the roadblocks for our contractor."

Construction is expected to take 12 months, according to Renner, and he hopes a ribbon

cutting will be possible in June 2023.

"That's our game plan unless we run into unforeseen conditions that push the end date," he said.

Part of expediting the project was closing Farrell and Porter roads to local traffic.

"That shaved about four months off the construction duration," Renner said.

After Maricopa completes its phase of the project, the next steps will be up to Pinal County and Casa Grande. All total, nearly 20 miles of new highway and a new bridge over the Santa Rosa Wash will be built.

Renner said there are still hurdles to clear.

"We still have some issues with utility companies getting out of the way before we can start construction on the bridge," Renner said. "We're coordinating with them."

### A 'must' for a growing city


There's a massive housing project coming south of town, near Stanfield. The 1,886-acre Santa Cruz Ranch project will be the site of 6,600 homes and an estimated 21,000 residents who will need a more efficient way to get to the Valley than the laborious drive through Maricopa on John Wayne Parkway and then SR 347.

Plans for a new Interstate 11 spur have been bandied for years, but as with most federal projects, the gears move slowly. The project is at least a decade away from breaking ground.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from July 2020 to July 2021, Casa Grande had the seventh fastest growing population in the country, expanding at a rate of 6.2%, followed by Maricopa at 6.1%.

The parkway will be needed to help accommodate growth in Maricopa. That expansion is coming, which Horst feels will benefit the taxpayer.

"Growth is what will enable us to continue to lower property taxes for our citizens," Horst said. "And growth will continue to enable us to bring business opportunities here. If our citizens don't have to continue to travel outside of the city to conduct those business opportunities and we can get back that \$400 million a year our citizens spend in other communities, think of how much better off we'll be."

"I don't call it a parkway," Horst added. "I call it an economic corridor. This isn't just about getting cars from point A to point B; it's about enabling growth." 

### THE PARKWAY, DEFINED

Sonoran Desert Parkway will be the state's first parkway built for the purpose of moving traffic and not viewing scenery.

The Arizona Department of Transportation defines a parkway as "a type of highway that includes limited access thoroughfares designed for recreational driving of motorized vehicles through a scenic landscape or landscaped route without at-grade intersections or traffic stops."

There are four scenic parkways in the state:

- Swift Trail Parkway
- Organ Pipe Cactus Parkway
- Sky Island Parkway
- Kaibab Plateau — North Rim Parkway

#### Editor's notes:

- On July 1, Vincent Manfredi became interim mayor, replacing Christian Price, who resigned.
- Manfredi is co-owner of InMaricopa.

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# DIM and why you need it

BY KRISTINA DONNAY, FNP-C

**E**VEN THOUGH YOU KNOW A HEALTHY diet should include lots of fruits and vegetables, are you getting enough of them?

Even with the best intentions, most Americans do not consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. And even when they do, they may not realize they are skipping some of the most important ones.

Recent research has shown all fruits and vegetables are not the same when it comes to their nutritional value and health benefits. Studies have determined cruciferous vegetables have more nutrients per serving than many other vegetables.

## What is DIM?

DIM (phytochemicals, diindolylmethane) is an indole phytonutrient found only in cruciferous vegetables. The way DIM gets into your system is an interesting process. Chewing cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, plant enzymes release DIM into your system. When exposed to stomach acid, these enzymes form a compound called indole-3 carbinol. This compound then yields DIM.

## What does DIM do?

With DIM, it's all about the relationship with estrogen. DIM directly affects the estrogen hormone and how it metabolizes.

You may not realize how much estrogen does for the human body. Estrogen regulates the growth and development of reproductive organs, assists in fertilization and pregnancy, controls the growth of the uterine lining, maintains bone structure, maintains the normal structure of skin and blood vessels, effects weight management, and regulates various metabolic processes.

## When in balance, estrogen keeps the body happy, healthy

Here's where it gets fascinating. Did you know there is more than one type of estrogen in the human body? One is called 2-methoxyestrogens or "good estrogen." Researchers have speculated increasing the production of this type



of estrogen would be very beneficial. This is where DIM comes in. DIM can increase the ratio of "good" to "bad" estrogen. Regularly using it as a supplement promotes beneficial estrogen metabolism and helps restore a healthy hormonal balance.

## DIM supplements can be used effectively by men and women

Since the benefits of DIM are directly linked to estrogen, you may think only women can take it. There's a common misconception that estrogen is a female-only hormone. The male body also produces and requires small amounts of estrogen as well. Estrogen supports the production of healthy, viable sperm. In men, estrogen is converted from testosterone and metabolized in the liver. Imbalances in the "good estrogen" to "bad estrogen" ratio can be responsible for the development of certain cancers, weight gain, brain fog and joint pain in men just as in women.

## DIM supplements' side effects


Micronized DIM has been available and in use for many years. During this time, there have been no reports of adverse effects associated with DIM.



Some people have noticed harmless changes in urine color when taking DIM supplements. This happens because DIM metabolites have an amber color that transfers to your urine. This is not uncommon as dark urine also occurs in individuals who eat large amounts of cruciferous vegetables.

DIM supplementation excels at:

- Balancing hormones
- Providing antioxidants to prevent damage from free radicals in the body
- Supporting weight loss
- Improving memory
- Boosting your mood
- Supporting strong bones
- Enhancing energy
- Reducing PMS symptoms
- Helping to balance estrogen
- Improving cardiovascular health
- Increasing healthy muscle development
- Improving prostate health in men

If you love your cruciferous vegetables, you may also want to consider taking Micronized DIM. You would have to eat nearly eight pounds of cruciferous vegetables a day to get the same benefits as taking DIM supplements.

If you decide to start taking DIM, please find it in a micronized form. A micronized form is the only way for the body to adequately absorb DIM. The DIM we carry at Maricopa Wellness Center is a high quality, easily absorbable micronized form, medical grade, and third-party tested for potency. 

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**Building 14, Suite 3**

SPONSORED CONTENT

# Business, development around town

**Dish Wireless** will spend \$45,000 to install new equipment at an existing wireless telecommunications facility at 17169 N. Murphy Road. Volkswagen of America DBA Vorelco Inc. is having the work done by Engineering Wireless Services LLC.

A 320-square-foot maintenance building will be constructed at **Copa Flats Apartments**, 17485 N. Porter Road, at a cost of \$43,748



by Johnson Carlier LLC for owner Maricopa AH LLLP.

The Maricopa Unified School District will add a fabric shade structure at **Maricopa Elementary School**, 18150 N. Alterra Parkway, at a cost of \$10,890, with work to be done by Shade N Net of Arizona Inc.

Pinal County will make \$450,000 in tenant improvements at the **Pinal County Public Health Clinic** at 41680 W. Smith-Enke Road to create space for the clinic's new 12,000-square-foot Family Advocacy Center. Danson Construction LLC will do the work.


**Anglin Dairy** will spend \$994,740 to demolish structures, slabs, footings, foundations, power poles and septic tanks at

its dairy at 22292 N. Green Road. Breinholt Contracting Co. Inc. is contracted for the work.

**REV@Porter** will build 12 duplexes at 17805 N. Porter Road at a cost of \$1.4 million. The units are part of a 194-unit, single-family-home-for-rent community at the southeast corner of Porter and Bowlin roads. The owner, EVR Porter LLC, will also spend \$989,119 for contractor Sodella Construction Inc. to build five 2-bedroom and two 3-bedroom detached units.

**Meritage Homes** will erect a 60-foot flagpole at its model home at 21770 N. Lynn St. in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado for \$1,000. Assiette Enterprises Inc. DBA Arrow Graphics will do the work.

**Knochel Bros Inc.** will make on-site subdivision improvements at Sorrento Phase 3 for owner Azalta LLLP. Azalta also will make improvements to Sorrento Phase 2.

**Meritage Homes** will make subdivision improvements for a single-family residential subdivision at Rancho Mirage Estates Phase 2, parcel 13 at 18684 N. Barano Drive. Meritage will conduct the work. 

GETTING TO know

ENRIQUE A. ESTEVES  
Small Business Owner, The UPS Store

Hometown: El Paso, Texas

Resides in: Scottsdale

Maricopan business owner since: 2013

Family: Marly, Marly Jr. and Enrique Jr.

Pets: Mawi and Ronnie

Dream vacation: Tokyo

Like most about Maricopa: The people and the small-town feeling



FAVORITE ...

Charity: St. Vincent de Paul

Movie: Gladiator

Song: Only The Young (Journey)

Team: Phoenix Suns

Food: Pizza, salmon

Restaurant: Sumo Maya

Words to live by: Everything happens for a reason

 Learn more about Enrique at [InMaricopa.com/Getting-to-Know](https://InMaricopa.com/Getting-to-Know).

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# How to play the credit score game

BY JIMMY AND SYLVIA RIOS

**IF YOU KNOW THE RULES OF THE GAME,** you will win the game. With credit, the rules are not easy to understand because of the many algorithms used to score a person.

## 1 Payment History

Your payment history—whether you pay your bills on time or not—is the single biggest factor in your credit score and accounts for 35% of your score. All three credit bureaus hold payment history information on each of your accounts.

If you repay your debts on time, lenders consider you a better risk.

## 2 Amount Owed

The second-largest credit score factor is credit utilization. How much of your available credit you use accounts for 30% of your score. Generally speaking, credit utilization refers to

### FICO CREDIT SCORES

**800-850: Exceptional**  
**740-799: Very Good**  
**670-739: Good**  
**580-669: Fair**  
**300-579: Poor**

*FICO is an acronym for Fair Isaac Corporation.*

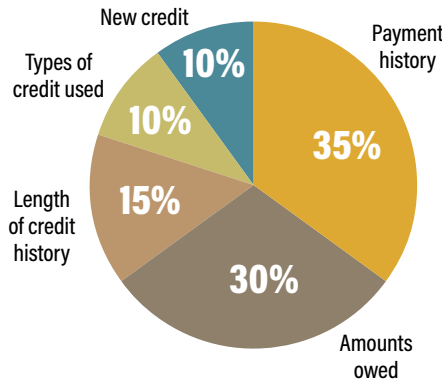
revolving debt—credit cards, store cards or home equity lines of credit, for instance—rather than fixed loan debt.

Try not to use over 30% of your available credit. Whatever you do, don't max out your cards.

## 3 Credit Age

Your credit age is based on the age of your oldest account. The older your credit, the more

### What affects your score?



robust this part of your scoring model will get. You don't have too much control over your credit age, so it only accounts for 15% of your FICO score.

One of the most important things you can do to keep your credit age solid is to not close older accounts. Lenders like to see that you have a long history of responsibly managing your credit accounts.

## 4 Types of Credit

Lenders like to see evidence you can handle numerous types of debt, and that is why credit mix is part of the FICO picture. Credit mix—the number of different credit cards, personal loans and other kinds of debt you hold—makes up 10% of your FICO score.

Strictly speaking, there is no ideal credit mix, but it won't hurt to hold a couple of different types of accounts. If you are looking to boost your score, focus on credit utilization and payment history before credit mix.

## 5 Credit Inquiries (New Credit)

New credit inquiries make up about 10% of your credit score. In simple terms, every time you make a new credit application for revolving or installment credit, potential lenders pull your credit report. This is called a hard inquiry, which is documented to keep track of how actively you shop for credit.

Hard inquiries aren't the same as soft inquiries. Soft inquiries happen when you pull your own credit, or when lenders pre-screen or pre-qualify you for credit offers. They don't make an impact on your credit score at all.

**Jimmy or Sylvia Rios live in Maricopa and can be reached at:**

**480-935-6049, 480-341-2901**  
**Jimmy@NextLevelCredit.net,**  
**Sylvia@NextLevelCredit.net**  
**NextLevelCredit.net**

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# A business owner's guide to inflation

BY CHRIS J. SCOGGIN, CPA

**EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT** inflation, I learned in grade school — too much money chasing too few goods and services. Supply and demand. It is not any more complicated than that.

Just as there are certain inviolable laws of physics, there are certain laws of economics that stay true no matter what. The law of supply and demand is one such rule. For most consumers, extra money in your pocket is going to create demand for something. When the supply of that particular product or service is limited, the price will go up. Reduced supply + increased demand = inflation!

So how can a business owner survive and thrive in an inflationary environment? Here is a practical guide for items that you can do to protect yourself and your business.

## Pass along reasonable price increases

Eighty percent of your customers will understand a reasonable price increase based upon the increased costs of material and labor to you. You should be closely monitoring your COGS by comparing what it cost to produce a "unit" last year to what it costs to produce the same or similar "unit" this year. If your costs went up 10%, you should be able to justify a 10% increase.

## Sell more!

You may say this is easier said than done. How are you to increase your prices AND increase your unit sales? This is how:

Remember your REAL competitors are also increasing their prices. If they are not, they won't stay competitive for long. You should also look to increase your marketing and advertising budgets. This environment will make consumers re-evaluate their supplier/provider relationships. Make sure they can find you at the top of the search list!

## Reward your producers for productivity

Every business has more productive and less productive employees. Make sure you are rewarding your best staff by setting up temporary incentives rewarding efficiency and productivity. Make these incentives fun and



meaningful. Create a visible way to track this productivity. You may find a mediocre producer finds a different gear when work becomes a competitive endeavor. This also ramps up your business output to keep up with increased customer demand.

## Invest in technology that reduces labor costs

Sometimes, the upfront investment in technology will deter the business owner from making the leap. However, as staffing costs grow to consume a larger percentage of your cash flow, the investment in technology becomes much less painful. In particular, look for technology that increases output per employee.

## Get rid of expenses that do not drive productivity

Now is the time to eliminate all wasteful and non-productive expenses. Whether that is cancelling subscriptions to software apps or not renewing the lease on office space no one uses, take a red marker to your operating expense budget and cut, cut, cut! You have already set up

an incentive system to increase your employees' pay. They won't mind that they are not getting free soda or lunches.

## Creating a more agile business

For a healthy company, an inflationary economic environment can be an excellent and disruptive way to re-engineer your business. You can finally pass through long-overdue price increases, reward employees who make your business successful and hire experienced employees from competitors who are not as appreciated by their soon-to-be former employers.

The keys to survive and thrive are:

1. Price your products and services fairly.
2. Create incentives that drive employee productivity.
3. Cut unnecessary waste and costs out of your business.

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The three winners of the Best Dad InMaricopa contest gathered at sponsor Maricopa Ace Hardware to accept their prizes. From right, third-place Mark Webb Jr., Ace Hardware owner Dave Karsten, first-place winner Kevin Hunt, Ace general manager William Gonzales, and Cherilyn Johnston, the wife of second-place winner Justin Johnston, who attended via FaceTime.



## Maricopa's hard-working fathers honored

BY BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.

**KEVIN HUNT KEEPS BUSY WITH NINE CHILDREN AND 41 grandchildren.**

The first-place winner of the 2022 Best Dad InMaricopa contest sponsored by by Karsten's Maricopa Ace Hardware was nominated by his daughter Lana Allred and several other children.

"These fathers that were all nominated, they all have one thing in common and that's serving their families and serving others," Ace Hardware owner Dave Karsten said as the winners gathered the day before Father's Day to accept their prizes. "We got 40 nominations, and you know there are a lot of dads out there working hard every day."

There is never a dull day for Hunt, according to the nomination submitted by Allred.

"He takes them on bike rides, plays games, attends all their events," she wrote. "Let me tell you, that is a lot of events to attend, even the out-of-state kids' and grandkids' events."

As the top winner in the contest, Hunt had his choice of three prize packages from Ace Hardware. He selected the whole-house paint package with 25 gallons of Dunn Edwards paint, valued at \$1,000.

He will also receive a family photo session from Victor Moreno Photography, a credit from Electrical District No. 3, house cleaning from The Maids of Maricopa, a smart thermostat from 911 Air Repair, garage door general maintenance from ANOZIRA Door Systems, and a cooler from Exceptional Hospital.

Hunt's wife, Lou took third place in May's Best Mom contest.

Second-place winner Justin Johnston was not able to attend the prize session in person; he was in Las Vegas visiting his father for Father's Day.

But with the help of his wife Cherilyn, Johnston joined the group via FaceTime. His two children helped his wife claim his prize.

"He has had a lot of challenges in his way, and he never let that get in the way of showing how important his kids are," Cherilyn said of her husband.



Kevin Hunt, the first-place winner, is surrounded by his wife Lou and other family members, as well as Ace Hardware owner Dave Karsten and general manager William Gonzales.

Johnston selected a prize package of a Traeger Pro 575 Grill with the Pro 575 starter package, which includes grill cover, chicken, poultry and prime rib rubs, apricot BBQ sauce, Traeger 'Que BBQ Sauce, Traeger hat and Traeger holiday ornament, valued at \$1,000.

He also will receive a family photo session from M Photography, yard care from Donovan's Landscaping, a Circle K gift card, hat and tin mug from Wildcat Landscape Supply and a cooler from Exceptional Hospital.

Mark Webb Jr., the third-place winner, was nominated by his daughter Zoe Joy.

"He is a great dad, and he is always there for us," she said when asked why she nominated her father. Mark's son, Chase added his dad is always going the extra step to make him happy, both playing with him and letting him play on his computer.

Bryan Moritt



Third-place winner Mark Webb Jr. with his son Chase, daughter Zoe and wife Larah. Dave Karsten and William Gonzales of Ace Hardware are at rear.

"Family always comes first with him. He is always there for his siblings, parents and kids," his wife Larah said.

Mark said that he was not expecting to be nominated and that he was speechless, but said, "It's nice being loved and knowing that everyone cares."

Mark Webb Jr. was awarded a DeWalt power tools combo kit, with swag, valued at \$1,000.

He will also receive yard care from Donovan's Landscaping, a coffee shop gift card from Wildcat Landscape Supply, a t-shirt from Wildcat Landscape Supply and a cooler from Exceptional Hospital.

### BEST DAD NOMINATIONS

#### GIBRAN ALMANZA Wife Ruby

**Hernandez:** Gibran Almanza is the most caring dad! His schedule as a Cemex truck driver is very unpredictable, and he still manages his time to spend it with his family. He's the best role model for our three children. He is the best example of how a parent should love their kids. We love him very much and appreciate all his dedication. His sacrifice for this family means the world to me. He gives me the opportunity to raise our children as a stay-at-home mom.



#### GARY ANDERSON Wife Ashlea:

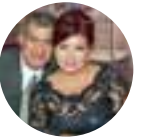
Protector, provider and friend, these words describe Gary's core. He first became a father as a foster parent, showing an unconditional love and fierce



protection that allowed our foster children to thrive. Now, a father of four, you can find him changing diapers, hosting impromptu living room dance parties, or making popcorn for family movie night. An Army veteran, Gary's dedication to put others before himself shows his heart of service; he's even been honored for chasing down and stopping a purse thief! He loves wholeheartedly, works diligently and leads by example. Best. Dad. Ever.

#### OSCAR ARANDA Son Fernando:

He was always the "two job-working, fix anything at home, in the garage or the basement, cook anything on the grill, grow anything in the yard and still wake up early to take me to sports and show up to every event even if it meant doing so in work clothes kind of guy." Nothing stopped him from being the best dad, and I'm so thankful for all he has ever done.



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**THOMAS AVINO**  
**Wife Ashley:** Thomas is the best dad in Maricopa for many reasons. He is raising his four stepdaughters and two sons. Thomas works seven days a week to provide for his kids. He takes them to soccer, dance, t-ball and other school functions several times throughout the week. He is constantly on the go and never takes any time out for himself.



**JERRY BOALES**  
**Wife Holley:** Two years ago, Jerry became the stepdad to my children. He loves my children with all his heart. He is kind, patient, compassionate, loyal, devoted and loving. I believe he deserves the "Best Dad" award. I want him to know how much I appreciate the way he has accepted and loved me and my children.



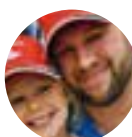
**MICHAEL BOOTH**  
**Wife Victoria:** He stepped up and became a father to my two children 12 years ago while raising his own son with special needs. He has been amazing to them. He hasn't missed a band competition. He is so proud of the young adults they are becoming. If it wasn't for him, they would never have known what it was like to be loved by a true father. He has worked very hard to make sure they get to do everything they want, all while teaching them about hard work and being kind to others.



**ZACH BRAY**  
**Wife Hali:** He's everything you would want in a dad. He's patient, funny, ambitious and helpful. He donates, he works, he plays and makes the best role model for our three kids. Even when life is hard, he always steps up to the plate, and he does it with a smile.



**JAMIE BRISBIN**  
**Wife Kelsey:** He is more than "Jamie Brisbin State Farm." He is our everything. He makes the worst dad jokes. He will wake up at 2 a.m. with



our new baby. He is the reigning chess champion in the house; although, after teaching three kids to play, they are determined to beat him. He cooks the best steak, ribs and fried chicken. He is always up for a new camping and hiking adventure. No matter what the kids do or wherever they go, he will always be there. He is the most loyal man and the backbone of our family.

**MIKE BUSHONG**  
**Wife Aaliyah:** I married the best man in the world. Mike Bushong is the hardest-working, most dedicated and patient man I have ever met. I came into our relationship with six children. Mike has ALWAYS been there for my (our) daughters. He stepped in as if they were his biological children, and he changed our lives. Mike has shown my children they have a person in life who is always there for them. When we became grandparents, Mike took on the role and is an extraordinary grandfather to our two beautiful grandsons. Mike is the best husband, father and grandfather.



**BRANDON CLARK**  
**Wife Sarah:** We had our first daughter last May and Brandon has worked tirelessly since then to provide her and us the best life. He became a girl dad like a champ and plays dolls, picks out dresses and cuddles with the best of them.



**RAUL COMACHO**  
**Daughter Alyssa Muñoz:** I think my dad is the best dad in Maricopa because he stepped up and showed me what a real dad was. He always wants the best for me and is always there for me and my brothers.



**JULIO CORTEZ**  
**Wife Elda Isabel Ramirez:** We have 11-year-old triplets who have a lot of medical challenges. Julio has been a great support and loving father/partner for us. He selflessly helps me every day



by helping me clean the house, cook, administer medication; he helps me be the mom that they need me to be. He's an amazing father. He can go from fixing our car to having his nails painted by our daughters, from cleaning the yard to playing dress-up. We are very fortunate to have such an amazing person by our side.

**MIKE COURTLAND**  
**Wife Rhonda Courtland:** Mike is a very caring loving man who will do anything, without complaint for his child and grandchild. He is a calm man, never prone to exaggeration, anger or drama. He has assisted with vet bills, rent and groceries any time they need it. He will drop everything to run to their aid no matter what time it is or how far he has to go. Teaching through example, he raised our daughter with morals, manners and a good sense of self. Anyone who knows him can say honestly they love him.



**JOHN CROSS**  
**Wife Vanessa:** This best dad loves our five children wholeheartedly! He is a true superhero who always supports and guides our children throughout their lives.



**BRIAN DAVIS**  
**Son Wyatt:** My dad has successfully raised all his children to be respectful and self-driven. He is very generous in assisting his neighbors, volunteering with his HOA, and constantly offering help and support to all of his family and neighborhood friends. He is an amazing father and grandfather to our children.



**SHAWN DIXON**  
**Daughter Abigail:** What makes a dad great? It is giving us his time. My dad does this and always has. He works hard to provide us with all the basics like food, clothing and shelter. He always wants to play with us — endless games like Phase Ten, Sixes and Oh Heck. He loves to hike and explore the



country. He builds anything my mom asks. He always puts us kids first, and we love him for it. My siblings and I feel his love; we know we can always count on him. He definitely is the best dad!

**ERIC ESTEP**  
**Daughter-in-law Carissa Estep:** Eric is the greatest a dad can ever be. He isn't perfect, by far, but he always has the greatest intentions for everyone he contacts. He would probably disagree, but he is a very affectionate and patient man to his children, his grandchildren and me. Ever since the day I met him, he has accepted me and my son with open arms and has never let us down. I don't have a biological dad around to call my own, but Eric has made my expectations of "Dad" a hit out of the ballpark and exceeded them all.



**JESSE ESTRADA**  
**Wife Diana:** Jesse and I have seven children. Together we have fostered in Maricopa. He is an amazing husband and father, and he means the world to our grandchildren, taking them to practices or games, or babysitting so their parents can have a night out. I'm not quite sure how he finds the strength to be wholeheartedly involved with our family, but he sacrifices his wellbeing, sleep and energy to ensure we are happy. I pray the Lord keep him with us always; I don't know what we would do without him.



**DEMARIOUS FROST**  
**Son Tyron:** He has one arm and still works very hard to support me, my sister and my brother.



**DANIEL GAMBOA**  
**Wife Lauren:** Daniel is one of the most "hands-on" kind of dads you'll ever meet. He takes the kids to school, changes diapers, shops for their clothes, gets on the floor to play, takes them to the park, the list goes on. The way he helps so much around



the house sets an amazing example for our boys to show them running a household is a team effort and everyone needs to give 100% every day. We are so grateful to have him in our lives!

**JONATHAN GOMEZ**  
**Wife Janelle:** Jonathan is very hardworking and always putting others before himself. He takes his wife on dates and is always making her laugh. He attends the kids' sports activities and spends quality time with them. In his spare time, he helps with renovating our home and serves others who need help in our community. He also teaches math while striving to be a good role model to students at school. He is always trying to do his best to help others. He has always been positive, making wherever we are feel like home and spreading his Aloha Spirit.



**MICHAEL GONZALEZ**  
**Girlfriend Serena Rubio:** Michael has time and time again put his son before himself. As a veteran, he has volunteered and assisted those around him and has raised his son alone since he was 5 months old. Michael has given his whole heart into everything he does, without asking anything in return.



**CURTIS HALL**  
**Sons Brandon and Garnet:** We would like to nominate our step-up dad, Curtis! He came into our lives four years ago and took on the role of raising two boys that aren't his own. Now we have a little brother and he treats us all the same. He works hard every day with his own HVAC company here in Maricopa and provides support and love and is a huge role model to our family. He deserves to know his hard work is paying off, not only with work but with being a great dad.



**RYAN LAFRAMBOISE**  
**Daughter Sage:** My amazing, loving and fun dad should be nominated for Best Dad in Maricopa because he treats me like royalty. Whether he's making me food, telling me dad jokes, carrying me on his back or working hard for his kids, he always makes sure we, his three kids, have what we need and more! I am known to him as his "little princess," and he sure makes me feel like it! My dad is the most handsome and caring baldy I know. I love you, Dad!



**DAMIAN LOPEZ**  
**Daughter-in-law Ashley Joly:** Damian is a veteran from the Navy and has two wonderful children and a beautiful wife who he works two jobs to take care of. From 4 a.m. to 9 p.m. he works his two jobs, sometimes sleeping in his truck to have enough energy to give his best performance every



day. He makes sure everyone around him is always taken care of no matter the need. He is an admirable and respectable man, and I definitely look up to him.

**DAVID MARTINEZ**  
David deserves this honor because of his constant love, sacrifice, and attention to not only our two daughters but to any child that he knows that may need a friend or father-figure in their life. David grew up in a very dysfunctional family. Everything David has become as a man and father is of his own trial and error with guidance from God and other faithful men in his life. David is goofy, sensitive and big-hearted. He loves our daughters deeply and works hard to be the father that he never experienced. David is the kind of man and father that had to work very hard to be who he is today and I am so proud to call him my husband.



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**MICHAEL MAYO**

**Wife Jessica:** Michael has taken on the responsibility of being a phenomenal stepfather and role model to my two kids. He has become an amazing first-time parent to our son and using some free time to coach a community soccer team. He works full-time while also serving his country on some weekends with the National Guard. I want him, and everyone else, to know how grateful I am for him and what he has provided for his family.



can see the love they have for one another. Mario and his lovely wife, Andrea, opened their heart and home to three wonderful kids plus three of their own to make a family of eight. I think he deserves the Best Dad of the Year because he is THE BEST DAD!

**JEREMIE PARKS**

**Wife Nicole:** My husband is the most amazing man ever. He is the greatest father to our three boys; he has taught them to be the best men they can be. He is a retired Marine, active-duty Army National Guard and has a full-time time job with the railroad. Loving your family is what life is all about and to enjoy the little things in life. Me and our three boys – Christian (26), Austin (23) and Jonathan (17) – would love for him to be Best Dad in Maricopa. But if not, he already is in our eyes.



**MARIO NUNO**

**Co-worker Donna Mariotti:** Mario Nuno is an amazing dad. I've worked with him in a classroom for a year and four of his children attend our school. His kids come in to see him when they can to give him a hug or just to talk to him. He has such love and patience, and you



**JEREMY PETERSON**

**Wife Ashlee:** You, my husband, are an exceptional dad to our son, not just during the month of June but every day. You work very hard six days a week, 10-hour days in the heat of Arizona. However, the moment you walk through the front door you fill the house with love, laughter and care, no matter how hard your day is. During the spare time you do have, you teach our son how to fish in the Pacana Park pond and golf at the Ak-Chin Southern Dunes. We love you today and every day. Thank you for being an amazing husband and father.



**MICHAEL PINKSTAFF**

**Son Paxston:** My dad is the best dad out there. He's tough when he needs to be, and he's silly when we need it. He's kind, hardworking, smart and has



the biggest heart you'll find. We appreciate and love him so much; he deserves the world.

**RICHARD POST**

**Wife Samantha Davis:** I am nominating Richard because he ALWAYS finds a way to take care of his four children. When he had little to no money, he still drove down to Ohio to get two of his children from the mother who gave him custody. For years he maintained a minimum wage job and still was able to pay bills and give his kids the best of everything and made sure they had food to eat and made sure they NEVER went without. He is the perfect definition of a father and would give his last dollar to his kids if needed.



**MEDARDO RAMIREZ**

**Son Fernando:** I wholeheartedly believe every dad

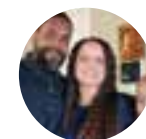


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in Maricopa deserves the title of Best Dad. I've seen it for myself around town (at games, supermarket, doctors' office), dads gently and lovingly caring for their kids. I'd like to tell you why my dad stands out and deserves the acknowledgement and recognition. Recently, my mom fell on terribly difficult health times. There were moments we weren't even sure she'd make it. My dad stepped up in a huge way. Taking extra shifts so we didn't fall behind on rent. He took cooking and health classes to care for us at home. He's amazing.

**TINO ROBINSON**

**Brother Tony Robinson:** Wonderful man and Army veteran! Fantastic father and husband. He will do anything for his houseful of little girls. And a great neighbor always willing to lend a hand!



**TJ RUIZ**

**Children Myles, Rori and Bo-T:** Our Dad is the best dad in Maricopa because he goes to work every day and comes home to coach us. If we don't have practice, he plays with us outside. He makes the best tacos and breakfast. He is so funny and has an awesome mustache. He can build anything he wants and is the strongest guy we know. He loves God, our mom and family more than anything in the world. Everyone should have a dad like ours.



**NEIL RUSSELL**

**Wife Mecca Chaffin:** While I applaud many great dads who sometimes go unappreciated, Neil is ours. Neil is so selfless and so kind-hearted. He puts everyone before himself and always has others in mind. He is admirably genuine and a beautiful role



model. Our children get to see that and model after him and that is the ultimate gift.

**DAVID SCHULTZ**

**Daughter Chelsea:** He put in misters for me.



**ANTHONY SPAULDING**

**Wife Joy Carter:** My children's father is the best dad in Maricopa because he is the BEST. He does dialysis three times a week for five hours, comes home, makes the family breakfast, helps with laundry and always has time for his three — soon to be four — kids. He never gives up, works so hard, does a couple of neighbors' yardwork and treats me like a Queen.



**FRANCISCO TEJEDA**

**Daughter Mia:** He is the best dad in Maricopa because he works so hard for me and my family. Even through the tough times, he pushes through to make me and my sisters happy. I'm so happy he hasn't given up on me or my dream, not one little bit. He supports me and my sisters no matter what big or small decision we make.



**JAMIE WESTMILLER**

**Daughter Brynn:** My dad has always been one of the most dedicated, exciting and fun person I've ever met. I have three siblings who are in sports, and no matter how busy my dad is, he will make time for our games. He has always been a very social, outgoing, funny and an easy person to talk to. He is one of my biggest role models, and the best dad ever!



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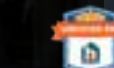


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# Thad Miller a fixture at Maricopa schools

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN



**M**ARICOPA WELLS MIDDLE School principal Thad Miller sets a simple yet challenging goal for his teachers and students.

“One of the lessons I share with the kids every day, and we talk about throughout the year, is the whole point of life, and that is to get better every day,” Miller said. “Are you better today than you were yesterday? Are you better this week than last week?”

“It’s not just the kids, but the adults, too,” Miller said. “I can honestly say that my staff and educators in general, every day, they want to get better. If there’s something they can improve on, they do it. They want to get better every day, and it’s been great to see.”

Miller has been the principal at Maricopa Wells for five years and has been an educator with the Maricopa Unified School District for 25 years.

He has taught or overseen the education of many adults in Maricopa, and now their kids’ education is his chief responsibility.

It’s a safe assumption that some events at the school tend to resemble family reunions when Miller is involved.

“It’s fun. I enjoy it,” Miller said. “That’s the biggest success for me, building relationships and having the students come back and seeing the successes they’re having in life.”

## A Maricopan through and through

Miller, 54, is what you might call old-school Maricopa. He’s lived in Maricopa 49 years and

attended Maricopa High School when it was a K-12 school.

“My family all moved out here when I was 5, which was in the late ‘70s,” Miller said. “I started kindergarten in Maricopa. It was a little different back then. It’s fun to think back to those days and some of the people I went to school with. The first name that comes to mind is Robert Miguel, the chairman of the Ak-Chin



Maricopa Wells Middle School Principal Thad Miller points to a photo of the Maricopa Middle School staff around 1999. The photo brings memories for Miller because that’s when the middle school was still part of the K-12 campus which was all located where Maricopa High School sits.

Indian Community. I went from kindergarten to high school with Robert.”

When Miller’s family moved to Maricopa, it was not yet a city. It’s difficult to nail down a population for that point in time, but it couldn’t have been that many people. In 2000, the population was a tick over 1,000 people.

The differences are stark between now and then, according to Miller.

“When I attended, it was about 700 kids K-12,” he said. “We had a graduating class of 63 kids.”

The graduating class at Maricopa High School in 2022 was nearly 700. And Miller is constantly reminded of the area’s growth every time he arrives at school.

“It’s fun sometimes to think about it,” Miller said. “There are now 900 kids at Maricopa Wells Middle School alone.”

Miller has observed the growth in Maricopa in many ways.

“We were a small town, and we’re growing into a bigger town,” Miller said. “I live here in Maricopa. I built my own house settling out in the farming area. I’ve raised seven kids. They’ve all attended MUSD schools.”

## Changes all around

Maricopa is growing at a significant rate; the City estimates about 6,000 people move here each year. Those changes are enough to be overwhelming. But technology has and will continue to affect education in many ways.

When Miller started his career as a teacher in 1997, the internet was in its infancy. Social media didn’t exist.

“If you look at the whole situation with technology, it can be a blessing for education,” Miller said. “Because when you look at the field from K-12 into higher education, technology is going to play a role. You can’t stop it. You have to embrace it.”

Miller said an understanding of technology and the effects it has on kids — and everyone else for that matter — helps inform the strategies used by teachers to reach students. People have shorter attention spans.

“I think the biggest thing for educators now is adjusting to the generations we have who have been raised in technology. Their abilities are much more advanced than what we were growing up,” Miller said. “So, the strategies and the abilities of our teachers have increased with an understanding of instant gratification and how important it is to kids now, whether online or with games.

“The teachers have had to step up their game and I’m proud to say they have. Not only

are we using an online curriculum, but there are different strategies they use in the classroom to keep the kids’ attention. Those things are key and they’re working.”

The challenges for teachers extend beyond the kids to social media. It used to be that parents’ criticisms and concerns would come to the forefront a few times a year. Now, a teacher’s strategies and methods are questioned on Facebook almost nightly.

Miller said his teachers take the running critiques in stride and try to learn from them whenever possible.

“There’s always been parent participation,” Miller said. “I think probably when you look at technology and the blessing it is for education, sometimes it kind of opens things up for real-time opinions. I’m not going to say it’s all bad because it isn’t. There are a lot of positives, too.”

While teachers work long hours, sometimes taking their work home with them, the changes are here to stay and they understand it, Miller explained.

“They don’t know what’s going to be on social media,” Miller said. “It could be positive. It could be not-so-positive, and teachers deal with this on a daily basis. I know what the teachers are doing, and I know the work they put in and the passion they have. But there are not too many professions that have to deal with that daily.

“It’s part of life, positive and negative, but our educators come back the next day,” he added. “And that’s one thing I’m proud of; they will come back every day, doing the same job, knowing there are different opinions, and it’s OK to have different opinions.”

## Forward thinking saves the day

Maricopa Unified School District has a progressive view on computers and their use in the classroom.

In 2019, before anyone knew COVID-19 was lurking, MUSD committed to ensuring each student had access to a laptop computer.

“You talk about preparing for what was coming,” Miller said. “We really were prepared for that. We had laptops for the kids, whether they were in person or at home. It was such a key to have that, and through several community partnerships, we’re able to do that one-to-one, and I’m proud to say it was great for our district.

“There are a lot of districts doing it now,” he noted. “But MUSD started this before COVID, and we were ahead of the game when it came to that whole technology part of COVID.”

While many school systems across the country were trying to procure laptops during the pandemic and supply chain shortages,



Maricopa Wells Middle School Principal Thad Miller played basketball while attending Maricopa High School in the 1980s. Here, he’s seen in a team photo wearing No. 21.

**“I built my own house settling out in the farming area. I’ve raised seven kids. They’ve all attended MUSD schools.”**

THAD MILLER

Maricopa had the equipment it needed to educate the city’s children.

The only challenge that remained was one of proximity. Teachers had to relate to and educate their students virtually.

“They had to adjust,” Miller said. “But by focusing on keeping students’ attention, and with some of those strategies they used in the classroom, they figured out how to expand those practices to online and keep kids’ attention at home while they were teaching from the classroom or their home was definitely a challenge.”

The result was that when kids came back to in-person learning, the student body was relatively up to date, according to Miller.

“For the most part, they’ve come through with flying colors,” he said. “There are still struggles, but the kids are doing well, and particularly the staff, they still have that student-first attitude and, and yes, some of those adjustments had to be made online, but the staff didn’t give up.

“They just did it. I’m so proud of that.” MUSD’s decision to move forward with technology also is an indicator of the future.

“We’re getting back to regular after COVID, but through those three years of COVID, if there’s any positive, the technology that was used has prepared us for what we’re doing now,” Miller said.

## A personal touch

Technology and computers will always be an important part of the educational process, but for Miller, it will never surpass the importance of personal relationships built with past students and members of the community.

“I see it every year as the kids graduate from high school,” Miller said. “It’s always fun for us regardless of whether those kids came from Maricopa Wells or Desert Wind to look and see our kids, the scholarships they’re achieving, and to see where they’re headed from high school.”

Miller is proud of past students’ education and even more so when they entrust their own children’s education to him.

“And that’s the biggest thing for me,” he said. “I love it when I see the kids end up successful like that. But I have kids I taught in middle school who are now adults, and their kids are coming through our school.

“That’s awesome. For me, that’s how those positive relationships are built, having the kids come back, bringing their kids back to the same school they went to.”

“I’m rooting for all the kids, regardless of what school they go to,” Miller said. “To see them turn into successful high school students and then adults, makes all the effort worthwhile.”

YouTube

Scan to watch the interview.







Tracey Pastor oversees school safety for the district. Along with security guards and school resource officers, physical barriers, as seen at Maricopa High School, are part of the strategy.

# Safety in schools a never-ending effort

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**A** TIDE OF NATIONAL HEADLINES INVOLVING SCHOOL safety has dominated the national conversation the last couple months.

But the leaders at Maricopa Unified School District have been considering such issues for quite some time now.

Tracey Pastor, the district's director of administrative services, oversees the safety and security measures aimed at protecting students and staff.

"Safe schools are an essential part of our strategic plan," Pastor said. "And how we accomplish that is through education, planning and preparation."

The district's focus is broad.

"We look at everything we can to promote the protection of students and staff," Pastor said.

The risks assessed include violence from exposure to threats, bullying, illegal activities and anything related to public safety.

"It could be things that you don't frequently even think of as a safety risk, like a gas leak," Pastor said. "Our emergency response plan addresses all of those things, from an intruder all the way to a bee swarm."

## Partners in safety

Pastor said the Maricopa Police Department plays a crucial role in keeping schools safe.

It's part of the job MPD Chief James Hughes takes seriously.

"Dr. Lopeman and Tracy Pastor, they both have my cellphone number," Hughes said. "So, if there's an incident at school, they call me on my cell, and if I hear something, it's vice versa. So as soon as there's an issue, they have direct access to me and all the resources at the Maricopa Police Department."

"That's imperative, whether it's something small, or whether it's, you know, a bomb threat or a gun threat, or we deal with a lot of situations with the internet and social media."

"Early intervention is the key."

MPD's role during an emergency is important, but just as important is what happens before and after an incident.

Pastor noted a lockdown a few years ago at Pima Butte Elementary that was reported by the media.

"But what might not have been shared is that anytime we have an event like that, we do something called an after-action report," Pastor said. "And that's where you bring (together) the administrator who was responsible and taking care of the emergency at the scene and the police."

After the lockdown, Pastor, the school's principal and Maricopa police discussed what went well in their handling of the incident and what they would have done differently.

"After-action reports are important," Pastor said. "We learn because every emergency is different."

## The physical side of safety

Along with the interpersonal side of handling threats, there's consideration given to physical barriers.

"We look at the physical structure of our buildings," Pastor said. "For example, the front office. Not all our schools have the same layer of protection in terms of walls and doors and glass barriers, so one of our middle schools is getting a remodel of the front lobby this summer so that we can enclose the lobby and add some glass at the front counter."

Over the last year, Pastor oversaw a safety evaluation conducted by Lt. Col. (Ret.) Allen Kirksey, who instructs the Air Force Junior ROTC program at Maricopa High School. He also serves as the district's safety liaison.

Last summer, Kirksey, along with one of the school resource officers (SRO) went to each school and met with the principal to review safety and security measures and look at the physical attributes of the schools. The goal: identify security deficiencies.

Bryan Mordt and file photos

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If one of the schools has a change in structure — a modest remodel, for example — suggestions will be made and implemented to make it more secure.

There weren't any such situations to examine this year, Pastor said. The district's preparation includes ensuring police and fire departments have all the necessary contact information to reach administrators.

"We make sure that all that information is shared and [we] talk about any needs that they have as it relates to their lockdown drills and their fire drills," Pastor said, explaining supplies and equipment are inventoried and updated regularly. In the last year, MUSD installed fresh defibrillator batteries and replaced its radios.

"We're a growing district," Pastor said. "So, it was time to add another receiver and more radios. The batteries don't last forever. And so, those radios were updated this year."

More measures are planned, she said. "Next year, we will be introducing a new emergency alert system, and I'll also be putting together a district safety and prevention team that will meet quarterly, because we are constantly reflecting and collecting feedback. We want to improve on all things related to safety and security."

### Staying proactive

Safety considerations extend beyond physical structures.

"We also think about the social and emotional safety of our staff and students, because we want them to feel comfortable and risk-free in and able to engage in learning," Pastor said.

So, the next question is how to accomplish that goal.

"We invest in people," Pastor said. "We have school resource officers (SRO) and security guards at our secondary schools and then at the district-wide level, we have a safety liaison (Kirksey) I work closely with."

The district also has mental-health counselors at all schools, which may not be the first safety or security measure people consider. But, as Pastor explained, paying attention to those details can sometimes keep smaller problems from ballooning into larger issues.

"It's important to have those people because sometimes staff or students feel more comfortable sharing some tips or information in those counseling sessions, or they just may simply need to process and talk through some bullying or problems that they're having."

### Training plays a role

Over the last year, MUSD administrators went through National Incident Management System (NIMS) training as part of a program managed by the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

According to FEMA.gov, NIMS training was created in 2006 following Hurricane Katrina to develop "a national program" and to facilitate common national standards and personnel qualification.

All kinds of situations were covered by the training.

"This could be an adult with a medical emergency, or it could be an intruder," Pastor said. "It was going through the next steps and talking about, based on our NIMS training, what do we do?"

"The police and fire departments also go through the same training. So, we all have common vocabulary that we use when there are emergencies."



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## EDUCATION

Pastor said emergency training was extended throughout the administrative positions in the system to include additional staff, including counselors.

There's also comprehensive school threat guidance training recommended by the Arizona Department of Education. That training "assists us to understand threats and trains our staff to conduct a series of interviews with a student who might pose a potential threat," Pastor said.

### School resource officers

Most people are under the impression school resource officers are on campus to serve as security guards. SROs are MPD officers assigned to a school or schools.

In MUSD, the high schools and middle schools all have an SRO. The elementary schools are covered by the closest SRO at the closest middle or high school and MPD.

While there is an element of security to their jobs, Pastor said there's a lot more to it than parents may realize.

"I think one of the key purposes of having an SRO is for the safety and security," Pastor said. "But it's also about relationships with the students."

Hughes said the selection process for SROs is unique.

"We choose officers that we believe are proactive," Hughes said. "We look for officers who have compassion and empathy and understand they're dealing with juveniles and understand why they're there."

SROs need to set a positive example and serve as role models for kids, the chief said. They need to be a partner within that school and its educational environment.

"I think that's critical,"

Hughes said. "They fall underneath our community policing sergeants. When schools are not in session, they do community policing. They meet weekly with their community policing sergeant."

Pastor and Hughes believe the relationship goes hand-in-hand. "What we hope to accomplish is to do our part in assisting that people really do see the police as an important partner and a resource for all of us," Pastor said. "And that happens by an SRO casually throwing a football around at recess time so the kids can see they're good people and that they are there to help."

"Those sorts of relationships, in those moments, are really helpful," Pastor said. "There's also law-related education where an SRO goes into the classrooms to teach and talk to students about bullying, talk to them about the importance of regular attendance in our schools."

Pastor said the reaction time by the police has been almost instant. "They're so quick," Pastor said. "Anytime we've ever had an issue, they've been on site in two minutes."



School resource officers are selected for being proactive, according to police Chief James Hughes, above. "We look for officers who have compassion and empathy and understand they're dealing with juveniles," he said.



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## Final thoughts: Advanced Math for elementary students, please

BY MURRAY SIEGEL

**I**N JANUARY 2016, I BEGAN THIS education column with two purposes. First, provide readers with new ideas about teaching and learning through the lens of my 40-plus years of classroom teaching. Second, inform citizens about the improving environment in Maricopa schools.

Now, to simplify life and reduce travel time, I am moving to Sun Lakes. This will be my final column for the magazine.

In 2016, many Maricopans had low regard for their public school district. Scores of parents sent their children on buses to Tempe and Kyrene for a “better” education. New programs, with the goal of providing a superior education for MUSD students, have been initiated and the results are promising. Fewer children are riding those buses as parents realize the improvement and overall quality of today’s education.


I hope, in some way, my writing has added to the public understanding of the elevated quality of learning in MUSD classrooms.

I have written about one topic I feel the need to take this opportunity to write about again. My career has been spent teaching mathematics in all grades and to all ability levels. I continue to be concerned about the need to re-evaluate how math is taught in grades three through five.

Unlike language arts, social studies and science, mathematics is a cumulative subject; students cannot learn new material if they have not mastered the previous topics. Yet, most elementary math classes are taught in a mixed ability grouping, which is counterproductive to advanced, as well as remedial, students.

For the past six years, I have taught, as a volunteer, at Butterfield Elementary School, primarily in fifth grade. Students who did the required work covered what amounted to a little over two years of mathematics, culminating in topics usually introduced in seventh grade. A doctorate in math is required to teach an advanced class, but confidence in one’s ability is needed to learn.

Students who have successfully completed this Advanced Math class can accelerate in middle and high school, taking math courses in 11th and 12th grades for college credit. In the 21st century, mathematical knowledge is required in technology careers and is vital to become a critical consumer of data.

My last words in this column are to ask that every MUSD elementary school have an Advanced Math class. 

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

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



## How to keep our students safe

BY HARRIET PHELPS

**T**HIS MONTH, OUR CHILDREN WILL RETURN TO SCHOOL.

The concerns we have about safety have been heightened recently by more school shootings by mentally ill people. These senseless shootings are not limited to the schoolyard,

however.

As a community, we offer condolences to those who lost loved ones. There are no words to express the magnitude of such a loss.

But the question remains: What do we do? The task of understanding it all seems impossible.

There are always signs.

If you see something, say something. If there are signals of action or of the thought of harm or suicide, get help. Notify a parent or someone at the school. If it proves inaccurate, that’s OK. It’s better to err on the side of safety. Parents shouldn’t ignore their child’s activities or threats of harm. Notify authorities and ask for help. You may save your own life.


Keep an eye out for your kids’ peers if they:

- Make threats, verbally or on social media.
- Brag about guns or weapons to hurt someone.
- Express suicidal thoughts.

No rational person makes these kinds of statements. It seems to be a common thread that perpetrators know they will die as part of their assault. This acknowledgment is incomprehensible. I continue to have faith in the interactions of our police and school administration to ensure the safety of our loved ones.

After such events, people struggle to deal with the aftermath. We all want to protect our children from this level of trauma. If it’s an issue, keep discussions simple, supportive and age-appropriate. Talk to your children about their fears and what they understand is happening. Keep an open mind to the wide range of emotions they might be experiencing. Balance as best you can the reality of our world with positive reminders of the good that happens in school and at home. Make sure they know you and school staff will protect them.

Another good idea is to limit your exposure to national news coverage of shootings. It can be traumatic for some people to watch – over and over again. If you have any family members who can’t seem to shift their focus, keep an eye on them. If you see a problem, get help.

May your families remain safe from danger. 

*Harriet Phelps, Psy.D., is a volunteer with Be Awesome Youth Coalition.*



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HOME

most expensive HOME SOLD

22238 N. O'Sullivan Drive

May 23

\$ 735,000

This two-story home in Rancho El Dorado has a 3-car garage, large RV gate and gated front patio to enjoy in the shade of the two-story columns. Enter through the formal living and dining with two-story ceilings. The kitchen offers plenty of cabinets, a large island, gas cooktop, wall ovens, stone counters and a breakfast nook. The first floor features a bonus room and master bedroom. Upstairs is a large loft with three bedrooms and a guest suite. Out back is an extensive paver patio, outdoor kitchen with bar, fireplace, pool, artificial grass and storage shed. The home sold for \$20,000 over the original list price.

Previously sold: \$385,000 on July 31, 2017

**Community:** Rancho El Dorado  
**Square feet:** 4,287  
**Price per square foot:** \$171.45  
**Days on market:** 49

**Builder:** Hacienda  
**Year built:** 2005  
**Bedrooms:** 5  
**Bathrooms:** 3.5

2. 43303 W. Little Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$724,900

3. 21903 N. Bradford Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$638,000

4. 46203 W. Sky Lane, Maricopa Meadows.....\$625,000

5. 44573 W. Sedona Trail, Cobblestone Farms.....\$612,000

least expensive HOME SOLD

22557 N. Davis Way

May 28

\$ 310,000

This two-story home in Rancho El Dorado has tile flooring throughout the first floor. There are stone countertops and stainless-steel appliances in the kitchen, with a great view of the backyard, which includes a large, covered patio. Upstairs are three bedrooms and a master with a private bathroom. The home sold for \$45,000 under the list price.

Previously sold: \$182,000 on June 4, 2019

**Community:** Rancho El Dorado  
**Square feet:** 1,547  
**Price per square foot:** \$200.38  
**Days on market:** 35

**Builder:** DR Horton  
**Year built:** 2003  
**Bedrooms:** 4  
**Bathrooms:** 2.5

2. 42310 W. Venture Road, Rancho El Dorado.....\$315,000

3. 43316 W. Neely Drive, The Villages.....\$320,000

4. 35443 W. San Ildefonso Ave., Tortosa.....\$320,990

5. 45982 W. Long Way, Maricopa Meadows.....\$325,000

Source: MLS, May 10 - June 9

Brian Petersheim Jr.

HOME

Foreclosures  
not expected to  
change the market

BY DAYV MORGAN

**H**ISTORICALLY SPEAKING, FORECLOSURES have played a role in Maricopa's housing prices.

A foreclosure, in a nutshell, is when a homeowner falls behind on their payments and the lender initiates the legal process to recover the amount owed. Homeowners are given a 90-day notice to bring their payments current. At the end of the 90 days, there's a Trustee's Sale, or an auction, where the lender sets the minimum bid at the amount to satisfy the loan. If that minimum isn't met, the bank takes ownership of

the property and sells it.

During the Great Recession, a wave of foreclosures from 2008-11 sank the market like a stone.

The height of the trend came in 2009 when 1,651 homes were sold that were either lender-owned or HUD homes, meaning the homes were not purchased at the Trustee's Sale, and lenders had taken ownership.

A lot has changed since those days. Most notably, for nearly two years, there wasn't a single foreclosure in Maricopa, or anywhere else for that matter. At the beginning of 2020, the Federal government put a moratorium on foreclosures, which was lifted earlier this year in January.

Logic would hold that after nearly two years of a moratorium, there's a backlog of foreclosures that need to be processed.

So, does that mean there's a flood of cheap houses coming to the market soon?

Not really.

Unlike the Great Recession, housing prices rose during the pandemic, so homeowners who get behind on their payments can usually just sell their homes, avoid foreclosure, and even make a profit.

MLS FORECLOSURE LISTINGS FOR MARICOPA

Year	Count
2008	772
2009	1651
2010	1054
2011	1269
2012	378

LAST 12 MONTHS: 1

And the homes that still make it to auction are being purchased by investors offering more than the minimum bid amount. Those homes are then flipped and sold at market value.

There are currently just 19 "pre-foreclosure" homes in Maricopa, where a Trustee's Sale date has been set. But even if that starts to increase, the number of homes ending up as lender-owned properties will probably remain at or near zero.

All of this means that market is still hot, and the few potential foreclosures that pop up are quickly absorbed and have no effect on prices.

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

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# Chia: not just a fuzzy tchotchke!

BY ALCIA HAYES



The seeds of this little plant of the mint/sage family (Lamiaceae) are a pseudo-cereal, rich in vitamins, minerals, omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants and fiber. Quercetin, an antioxidant found in chia, can reduce the risk of developing heart disease. The high fiber may help reduce insulin resistance and improve blood-sugar levels.

People in Mesoamerica began to transition from food collection to food production 10,000 years ago, first cultivating corn, beans and squash, to be followed by other domesticated and cultivars. Chia appears in the archeological record in the region around 3,400 BC

When the Spanish began their conquest of Mesoamerica in 1519, they documented at least 29 domesticated crops. The most common dietary components of the Aztecs and Mayans were corn, beans, amaranth and chia. The Aztecs believed chia was gifted to them from the goddess *Chicome coatl*, “the creator of life,” making chia not only a food, but a ritual food to be offered to the gods during ceremonies.

Spanish friars documented the importance of chia in the Florentine Codex (1548-1585 C.E.). Chia consumption eventually was repressed by the Spanish and replaced by European crops like wheat and barley. For hundreds of years, chia was no longer a valuable food, found only among small populations in remote areas. Yet, it did not completely disappear. Hints have lingered in the landscape indicating chia’s once revered status as a grain. The Mexican state of Chiapas, in the lands of the ancient Mayans, derives its name from the Nahuatl word *Chiapan*, “River of Chia.”

In the 1980s, chia was grown primarily for the booming chia pet industry with an estimated 500,000 chia pets sold annually at the peak of the craze. Today, with doctors and nutritionists promoting its health benefits, chia has increased in economic value, and new, patented varieties have allowed expansion of crop production for seeds north into cooler climates like the United States.

Chia is making a comeback. Maybe the Aztecs and Mayans were onto something.

*Alicia Hayes is a Master Gardener volunteer working toward full certification with the University of Arizona.*

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# 4 actions to enhance the return on your investment property

BY SHERMAN AND EUPHEMIA WEEKES

**O**WNING RENTAL PROPERTIES should be stress-free, without frustration and sleepless nights. Property Management comes with many responsibilities and when done poorly could lead to lots of legal and financial troubles. Four actions could enhance the return on your investment.

**1 Analyze the market on a regular basis.** Look for trends in rental rates and be prepared to make the changes as required. Landlords are often too busy with life and other activities to properly focus on the market. Some landlords may notice a trend, but they are too personally involved with the tenant to make rational decisions. Professional managers can be more focused on what is happening in the market, therefore making better economic decisions for the investment.

**2 Properly market to attract the best tenant.** When there is a vacancy, it is very important to be effective with marketing. The property marketing should be as widely publicized as possible and should attract the best-qualified tenants. Select websites have proven to be a more effective marketing tool than yard signs and print newspapers. Yard signs can attract professional tenants looking for owner-managed properties. This can be a disaster for the self-managed owner, who may not have the tools to qualify the prospective tenant.

**3 Screen prospective tenants.** It is very important to do a background check irrespective of where the tenant originates. Do not skip this process. Verify the income, verify employment, check IDs, check with past landlords and look for red flags. You can evaluate a person’s ability to pay based on past records. Tenant screening is time-consuming, and it is best to get professional help if you have limited time.



**4 Work within the confines of the Arizona Landlord and Tenant Act.** Many owners do not understand how the Act works. Landlords who are self-

managing should always use an attorney who specializes in landlord representation. There are many advocates who provide free legal advice to “professional tenants”; you cannot afford to be at a disadvantage. Lack of proper legal representation could be very costly.

The cost of professional property management services is low compared to the losses landlords can suffer when self-managing. Contact Crest Premier Property Management Team, and we will be happy to discuss how.

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## Inflation: the explanation of a complex topic

BY JOAN KOCZOR

**H**ERE'S A SIMPLE EXPLANATION OF INFLATION: a general increase in prices and fall in the purchasing value of money. Inflation corresponds to a reduction in purchasing power.

With the costs of gas, food and hundreds of other things on the rise, Americans are rethinking how they read every price tag. Our definition of cheap or expensive has changed. Inflation has turned money into a foreign language.

A recent posting by the Bureau of Labor Statistics stated Americans trimmed spending and adjusted their monthly budgets as the annual inflation rate rose to a four-decade high of 8.5% in March. Financial advisers say this recalibration can't be a one-time effort. Knowing exactly what you are willing to pay for something and examining what is a necessity should be a constant effort.


Scott Rick, associate professor of marketing at the University of Michigan, who studies financial decision-making, said, "You have to update and roll with it. There's no going back to the way things were."

The sudden inability to know how to read price tags is especially disorienting to those under age 40, who have never experienced anything like today's inflation rate. Understanding how we think about prices can help us adapt to inflation, Rick said.

What we judge to be a good, or fair, price is influenced by our individual background, income and our mental transaction histories.

Our understanding of price tags is disproportionately shaped by the items that make up our daily budget. Researchers found when it comes to gauging inflation expectations, shoppers typically look at the usual items they buy. It might be the price at the gas pump, or the cost of milk or eggs.

As a result, consumers are growing savvy to shrinkflation, the practice of downsizing the contents of a product rather than raising prices.

Companies are getting creative, so what must we as consumers do to adjust to inflation? Start by researching the cost of a particular item online or ask someone what they paid for an item and from where they purchased them. Do comparison shopping. Is it less costly to use a store brand? Is the quality the same? 

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

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

Source: The Wall Street Journal




## Heat can be fatal

BY AL BRANDENBURG

**J**UNE HAS BAKED US to a crisp and July isn't going to be any better with temperatures in the triple digits. As bad as it can get for most of us, it's even more dangerous for the elderly. They are at higher risk for hyperthermia because of the normal aging process of decreased autonomic responses for cooling, chronic medical conditions and certain medications.

Symptoms of hyperthermia range from discomfort to more serious conditions like a rapid heart rate or

fainting. The body's reduced ability to regulate temperature can lead to medical problems for the elderly who sometimes see their conditions exacerbated by medications and the environment which affect their ability to maintain a proper body temperature. Sweating cools the body and shivering warms the body.

Although there is variation among individuals, the elderly lose the ability to regulate their body heat, due to a reduced ability to sweat. Circulation problems increase body heat. Decreased thirst awareness affects body temperature as dehydration further reduces the body's ability to maintain temperature. 

Al Brandenburg is a member of Maricopa Community Advocates.

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

Sources: healthfully.com, AARP, cdc.gov, lifespan.org, chgseniorliving.com

## STAY COOL, STAY HYDRATED

### Stay in air conditioning as much as possible.

If your home doesn't have air conditioning, contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned shelter in your area. Identify places in your community where you can get cool such as libraries, casinos and shopping malls.

### Do not rely on a fan as your main cooling source.

Fans create air flow and a false sense of comfort; they do not reduce body temperature or prevent heat-related illnesses.

### Drink plenty of water.

Don't wait until you're thirsty. If your doctor limits your fluids or has

you on water pills, ask how much you should drink during hot weather.

▪ **Don't use the stove or oven to cook.** It will make you and your house hotter.

▪ **Take cool showers** or baths to cool down.

▪ **Check on a friend or neighbor** and have someone do the same for you.

▪ **Use window reflectors** specifically designed to reflect heat back outside.

▪ **Seek medical care immediately** if you have symptoms of heat-related illness like muscle cramps, dizziness, headaches, nausea, weakness or vomiting.

▪ **Educate yourself.** Keep up with the latest temperature and heat index forecasts and current readings.



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THINGS TO DO

4

**Great American 4th**  
7-10 p.m., Copper Sky Regional Park  
44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

7

**City Council Candidate Town Hall**  
6-8 p.m., Redwood Room  
Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive  
Bring your questions to ensure  
you know the personalities, policies  
and priorities of the candidates  
before you cast your ballot. Join  
in-person or online at Facebook.  
com/InMaricopa.

12-15

**Vacation Bible School**  
6 p.m., Community of Hope Church  
45295 W. Honeycutt Ave.

12

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

13

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

16

**AZ Seals Swim Team open tryouts**  
1 p.m., Copper Sky Aquatic Center  
44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

19

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

20

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

23

**Maricopa Taste the Arts**  
6 p.m., Global Water  
22590 N. Powers Parkway

27

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

Sundays

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

Mondays

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

Alcoholics Anonymous

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

Tuesdays

**Maricopa Cruise-in**  
5 p.m., parking lot behind  
Burger King  
20699 N. John Wayne Pkwy.

Alcoholics Anonymous

6:30 p.m., Mountain View  
Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

Celebrate Recovery

**small group meeting**  
5 p.m., Maricopa Community Church  
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

Wednesdays

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Mountain 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.

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., Mountain View  
Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

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

THINGS TO DO



JULY  
23

## Maricopa Taste the Arts to raise funds for local group

Maricopa Friends of the Arts (MFOTA) is celebrating its first fundraising event, Maricopa Taste The Arts, to be held at Global Water July 23. Maricopa Taste The Arts will include samplings of arts in the form of food (Dinner-Dessert-Wine tastings), visual and musical offerings.

Tickets are \$50 per person and available through email at [MaricopaFriendsOfTheArts@gmail.com](mailto:MaricopaFriendsOfTheArts@gmail.com). There are also individual and business sponsorships available.

The goal is to raise \$10,000 to promote the arts in Maricopa including contributing to the purchase of a Piano for Maricopa High School's Performing Arts Center and offer grants to encourage artists in the community.

Participants in Maricopa Taste The Arts will include Roots Eatery, KayLee Pro Desserts, Honeycutt Coffee Wines, three musical entertainers, a theatrical vignette from the Maricopa Community Theatre and a continuous visual arts slide show on multiple screens throughout the venue.

MFOTA began its mission in May 2021. Its purpose as a Patron of the Arts is to foster, promote and financially support art forms in Maricopa and surrounding communities.

The volunteer-run nonprofit recognizes the quality-of-life benefits the creative energy of a variety of art forms provides directly and indirectly to artists and their audiences.

In celebration of the arts, it strives to bring a vast variety of all art forms to its membership and the community.

### IF YOU GO

**Time:** 6-8 p.m.  
**Location:** Global Water  
22590 N. Powers  
Parkway  
**Cost:** \$50  
**Tickets:**



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City breaks ground on Sonoran Desert Parkway

After 17 years, Rick Abel retires from Maricopa schools

City looks to alleviate school traffic on Porter

Another sit-down restaurant on the horizon

Council OKs zoning change for 5-story apartment buildings

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Sonoran Desert Parkway Groundbreaking

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2012

New traffic light installed near Maricopa High School

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Sonoran Desert Parkway Groundbreaking

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An aerial view of the Sonoran Desert Parkway groundbreaking

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Herah's Ak-Chin: A unique advantage

2012

POLL

What do you think of the four-day workweek (Fridays off) for city staff?

Great perk for the few who can get it

City services should be available five days a week

Doesn't affect me, so I don't care

Results

Vote



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- Quality programs
- Caring staff

*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**







Bee still

Taegon Giddings took this photo in late spring in the backyard of a Santa Rosa Springs home. The honey bee rests on a lavender flower collecting pollen. Giddings used an iPhone XR.

Have a great photo of Maricopa?  
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