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Photographer Bryan Mordt captured a crew installing Cox high-speed internet fiber at Cobblestone Farms. Here, Francisco Cruz feeds pipe into a trench. At right is Anthony Griffith and to the left are Jesus Carrasco and Humberto Rodriguez.



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May peace be with you during the holidays

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY-SEASON MEMORY?

Getting a shiny new bike? A pony? Being with family? Maybe just having food on the table.

The season evokes so many memories through life's journey, and we've tried to capture that spirit in the stories and columns of our December edition of InMaricopa.

How about the gift of high-speed internet? The big story is the arrival in Maricopa of Cox Communications. With the added competition comes new internet- and television-viewing options., but now there's a new kid in town, and Justin Griffin has the story for you.

Soon, but just after the holidays, the Maricopa Historical Society will give the community a look back at itself when the refurbished historical California Zephyr Silver Horizon passenger rail car — best known around town as The Zephyr — debuts as a museum and library. Railroads have played a fundamental role in the history of Maricopa and this is a fitting gift to its residents, many of whom are newcomers and eager to learn about the city's history.

A doo-wop era performer. Right here in Maricopa. This guy knew Frank and Elvis and hung

out with luminaries on the ground floor of Las Vegas as an entertainment capital. Word is, they gamble a little there, too, but that's beside the point. Tommy Ronca gives us the gift of amusing tales of the era captured in a great read by Tom Schuman.

We've just been battered for months by nonstop, nasty, political advertising. No matter where you stand, it had to be getting old. But it's over. We think. There are plenty of other stressors in our lives, too. Here at InMaricopa, we've tried to give stress a rest this month. On our pages, you will find a series of what we're calling Holiday Good Cheer stories of the season. They're not hard-hitting news but just feel-good tales about people trying to do good things for other people in the community.

Whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or whatever it is that you celebrate, we are more alike than we are different. Let's try to remember that as we interact with each other. Especially this month.

And regardless of what's celebrated in your home, we hope you get that shiny new bike or pony or whatever you're hoping for this year.

Peace.

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KRISTINA DONNAY

Kristina answers questions on health and wellness. Curious about weight loss strategies or whether a chemical peel is right for you? Or what about that toenail fungus you can't shake? Kristina has answers.



ALYCIA HAYES

It's fall and pumpkin spice is all the rage, just as it is this time every year. In this issue, Alycia takes a deep dive into the history of various gourds and how it relates to Maricopa.



BRYAN MORDT

Bryan took photos as Cox Communications crews were installing fiber internet lines in Cobblestone Farms. He was also at the Relay for Life (p. 29) and snagged photos of Maricopa's own doo-wop sensation (p. 30).

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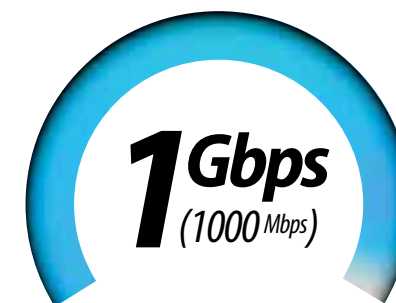
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“Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night, or a fire...”

Fred Cole served as the Maricopa postmaster from 1955 to 1982. The post office was in the Honeycutt Shopping Center until it was destroyed by fire in 1972. That did not stop mail delivery. Cole sorted the mail on his front porch with his staff, and it was delivered the same day. Lost in the fire, however, were historic photos and artifacts that had been given to the postmaster for preservation.

The current post office Maricopans use on Hathaway Avenue was built in 1990. The operation expanded 20 years later to include an annex building on Honeycutt Road, which serves as home base for mail carriers.



THIS MONTH BACK IN...

For these and other historical stories, visit InMaricopa.com.



2007

Despite frustrating delays during the daily commute on State Route 347, an alternative to traveling to the Valley is no longer available due to a lack of interest. Arizona Shuttle Service ceased its Maricopa operation, according to operations manager Bill Poulos. The owner of another company, Udoamaka Obiekea of Maricopa Shuttle Service, said it tried to serve Maricopa commuters, too, but soon realized it wouldn't succeed. "Once someone gets used to driving his or her own car to and from work, it's extremely hard to get them to change," Obiekea said.



2012

Will Maricopa continue as a bedroom community of commuters? Or will it become an independent economic center? Micah Miranda, economic development director for the city, said the goal is an independent municipality with a center of industry. The key is the ability to bring in outside dollars, said Lee McPheters, of Arizona State University's W. P. Carey School of Business. Retail businesses do not spur bedroom communities into economic centers, McPheters said, because "retail recirculates existing dollars. There's no reason to come to Maricopa to go to Walmart."



2017

The most expensive home sold in Maricopa, in the 43900 block of West Scenic Drive, is a 12-year-old Fulton-built home in a Cobblestone Farms cul-de-sac that went for \$369,000, or \$94.47 per square foot, after 98 days on the market. That's a 36% increase since the 6-bedroom, 3-bathroom home last sold in May. One of its six bedrooms is downstairs, and all upstairs bedrooms have walk-in closets. Its pièce de résistance is a pool and spa with a grotto, slide and diving board.

Maricopa Historical Society and InMaricopa file

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Ridden into town on a rail

Historical Zephyr passenger car to debut as museum in just weeks

BY LEE SHAPPELL



THE MAJESTIC, SILVER CAR WITH domed roof evokes memories of the glory days of luxury train service — the 1940s, '50s and '60s — when it whisked passengers cross-country like the gentle melodic breeze for which it is named, the Zephyr.

It has been years now since anyone has ridden into town on a rail aboard the Zephyr. Since being decommissioned more than 35 years ago, the Maricopa landmark has had a bit part in a major motion picture, been altered to serve as a train depot and ticket station, been an awkward, tattered attraction and more recently sat forlorn awaiting transformation on land donated to the city by John and Mary Lou Smith near Maricopa's former swimming pool, next to the city's new museum.

Now a septuagenarian, the Zephyr is about to get new life showing off Maricopa's railroad history.

Early next year, restoration will be complete and it will open to the public as a museum.

Paul Shirk, president of the Maricopa Historical Society, estimates a late January debut.

"We'll have special guests for that," Shirk said. "We'll have a porter's son who rode on that car, a Zephyrette who worked on that car. Wonderful stories."



The California Zephyr Silver Horizon is moved on a truck (bottom) to its final resting place near the Maricopa Historical Society, which sits near the Maricopa Unified School District administration building (top).

The railcar was not in wonderful condition when it became property of the Historical Society, though.

Crews recently replaced its windows. They've removed ceiling panels to rewire the car and install ductwork for a new air-conditioning system. Soon, new carpeting and woodwork will be installed.

"It's been a long time since anything has been done to the inside of that car," Shirk said.

The Historical Society plans displays that can be rotated, a research library and special events at the Zephyr. A partial restoration of its upper deck will give visitors a glimpse into its glory days.

Then-Pinal County Supervisor Anthony

Smith, then-Mayor Christian Price, City Manager Rick Horst and their staffs, determined to preserve the historical car, were instrumental in getting the Zephyr moved in January 2019 from its former home as the rail station to its new home, making way for the State Route 347 overpass.

A rich, colorful past

The California Zephyr Silver Horizon — which has come to be known interchangeably as the Zephyr, which was the train's name, and the Silver Horizon, which was the car's name — was built of 18-8 stainless steel in 1948 by the Budd Company. It was one of seven rear sleeper-observation cars that for 21 years ran on the California Zephyr route from San Francisco to Chicago, operated jointly by three railroads: Chicago, Burlington & Quincy; Denver & Rio Grande Western and Western Pacific.

When the original California Zephyr route ceased operation in 1970, Amtrak bought the car, along with all the similar stainless-steel passenger cars, and used it until 1985. Amtrak ran the Maricopa railcar on its Texas Chief line from Chicago to Texas and on its Sunset Limited from New Orleans to Los Angeles — through Phoenix.

"The railroad said 'We want a special car on our Sunset Limited,' so they occasionally put the Silver Horizon on the end of the Sunset Limited," Shirk said.

After the car was decommissioned in 1985, it spent its retirement years with several owners, making moves back and forth across the country to temporary homes in Texas and Los Angeles, before its arrival in Maricopa.

The railcar was showcased in the movie "Pearl Harbor."

Pinal County bought the Silver Horizon in 1999 for use as the Maricopa Amtrak ticket depot. It was dedicated on Oct. 16, 2001, on a short stretch of track next to the station.

Six years later, Union Pacific wanted the

Continued on page 10



The Zephyr is hoisted by cranes onto a trailer (below) for the short move to its new home. Volunteers (above) spruce up the car, which opens as a museum in early 2023.



InMaricopa file

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Zephyr moved. It took 14 years for that to happen.

Jacque Schell, then-office manager of the Maricopa Community Chamber of Commerce, had visions of it being a visitor center and Chamber office. She launched a "Save Our Train" campaign and opened an account at Bank of America for donations to keep the Zephyr in Maricopa.

Pinal County, which owned the car and leased the right-of-way land from Union Pacific, was swayed and kept it in Maricopa, which has had four names and three locations — all having to do with the railroad.

For five years through 2016, the Zephyr was open only a couple of days a year for public tours by the Historical Society through an agreement with the county.

In September 2015, Austin Long's Eagle Scout project coordinated dozens of volunteers to clean the exterior and help make it ready for tours during cool weather. The Zephyr typically wasn't cleaned, repaired or opened in the summer because the platform was "like a microwave" and visitors couldn't be brought through the scorching car.


In 2017, Pinal County sold the Zephyr to the Maricopa Historical Society for \$1.

In January 2019, cranes finally hoisted the 85-foot, 158,900-pound railcar onto a truck, which transported it to its current home near the Maricopa Unified School District administration building, where cranes lifted and placed it onto newly installed rails.

Electrical and air conditioning components had to be redone and extensive renovations were needed inside.

For "Pearl Harbor," producers painted the Zephyr before it was transported to Maricopa. That paint is now being removed and refreshed by Historical Society member Ron Angwood to restore the classic stainless-steel look. Shirk pointed out that the effort was exhaustive, but paid off.

"When we went in, we had to completely rewire everything, which meant we had to take all the ceiling panels down from 1948," Shirk said.

"The electric work is done, and it works great. We're excited. We're on pace to have everything finished after the first of the year. It's going to be something special that we think the public is really going to love." 



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WWII-era Air Force barracks fitting museum home for city on the move

BY LEE SHAPPELL

MARICOPA REGARDS ITSELF AS a 21st-century city on the move. Actually, it has been on the move since the middle of the 19th century, when its hub settlements made a series of short moves to its current site.

So, perhaps it is fitting its first museum also has covered some ground.

The Maricopa Museum and Visitor Center, operated by the Maricopa Historical Society, opened in October at 44240 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway. It is housed in former barracks that in the 1940s was part of Williams Field, an Air Force installation in Chandler where pilots were trained for World War II.

"We procured the building in 1987 when they were getting ready to close the base, and moved it here," said Paul Shirk, president of the Maricopa Historical Society.

Initially, the building was the city library. It later became a veterans center. Now, it is loaded with information and memorabilia, including a big dose from John Wayne's connection to the area, that tells of Maricopa's journey from Maricopa Wells to Maricopaville to Maricopa Junction, which was the place now known as Maricopa.

The city's past is full of colorful lore. Perry Williams, the first mayor, albeit self-proclaimed long, long before Maricopa was incorporated (in 2003), had a pet bobcat he paraded around town on a leash.

"It's just a joy bringing all this stuff together so people can understand Maricopa was a happenin' place," Shirk said. "We want to continue to tell that story."

Shirk's pride and joy is a scale replica of the Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad Station, from which trains made their first journey to Phoenix in 1887. Fire destroyed it in 1931. Originally a school project, the replica was dilapidated and falling apart when Shirk got his hands on it, he said.

"I got in touch with Southern Pacific and got their book that gave the exact colors and the way the wood was, vertical and horizontal, and I re-created this station," he said. "I did this with all balsa wood and a laser, so it made an exact



The Maricopa Museum and Visitor Center opened in October with a wealth of historical information and displays about the area.

replica of the depot. Just a few days ago, we got these photos of the locomotives that ran from here to Phoenix. These are really rare.

"At the time, Maricopa was even being considered for the state capital, so this depot they built was considerably larger than the one in Phoenix. Isn't that cool?"

It took Shirk and other members of the historical society years to find items for the museum.

"I am a researcher by trade, and I keep going," he said. "Just (in early October), we were not getting a lot of information on Maricopaville because it was only there a few years."

Maricopaville moved after seven years when it was learned the junction of the Southern Pacific and the Maricopa and Phoenix lines was going to be a few miles away, so the settlement moved to what was then called Maricopa Junction, now Maricopa.

"I was interested in the old Maricopaville station, so I dug until I found a Southern Pacific person who gave me a blueprint of it, and then they said, 'Did you know that Maricopaville station was taken apart and moved to Los

Banos, California?' I said, you're kidding," Shirk said. "They moved it on flatcars 750 miles. I contacted the Los Banos Historical Society and got a picture of that reconstructed depot."

It is on display.

When the building was a library, there was "Coffee on the Porch." That's back at 9 a.m. Wednesdays on the front porch.

"We're getting maybe 20 to 25 people every Wednesday," Shirk said. "People who were here for the ribbon cutting are coming in. Even people on bikes or just driving by are dropping in."

Members are available to chat about the city's history.

While the building has history of its own, there's much more inside, with concentration on the three places that have been Maricopa in some form.

"People always ask a lot of questions about that, because even people living in the area don't always know that history, and how that came about," Shirk said.

"But the railroad was the driving force of all of that."

Bryan Mordt

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Drill, baby, drill

Cox laying groundwork to serve the city

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

In order to reduce the need for digging, Cox crew are using angled drilling technology that allows the lines to be dug with minimal disruptions to the right-of-way in front of peoples' yards. Here, Manuel Sonoqui digs an opening where Cox fiber will be placed.

MARICOPANS JUMPED TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE WHEN Cox Communications announced this month it will offer a full complement of internet, TV and streaming, phone and smart-home services to city neighborhoods.

Joshua Johnson, a technical manager with Cox, said the quality of service and the level of technology coming to Maricopa is the best the company has to offer — anywhere.

"It will actually be a little better," Johnson said of Maricopa's service compared to that offered in Phoenix. "This will be state-of-the-art. This is the nicest system we're building right now anywhere in America."

Those words carry a good deal of weight when you consider Cox is the country's third-largest cable and internet provider and serves households in 20 states.

The service being offered to Maricopans is fifth-generation fiber to the home. The network is fully passive, meaning it won't require any electricity to power the lines. Most older systems require a tiny bit of electricity. Instead of copper wires, the fiber consists of hair-like strands of glass covered in a rubber-like material. The lines will consist of 288 of those glass hairs. One hair is powerful enough to supply service to 6,000 homes.

"We'll be able to comfortably offer Maricopa residents service and with our existing lines; we'll be in a prime position to grow with the city," Johnson said.

"The fiber allows us to offer equal upload and download speeds," Johnson said. "Most of the time, when you see commercials, they only talk about download speeds. That's how fast the information is getting to the user. A lot of times the upload speed is significantly slower than the download speed. With our fiber, download and upload speeds match."

Cox started installing service lines in November in Cobblestone Farms. Soon, service will be added to Rancho El Dorado, The Villages at Rancho El Dorado, Maricopa Meadows, Alterra North and South, Desert Cedars, Santa Rosa and Palo Brea.

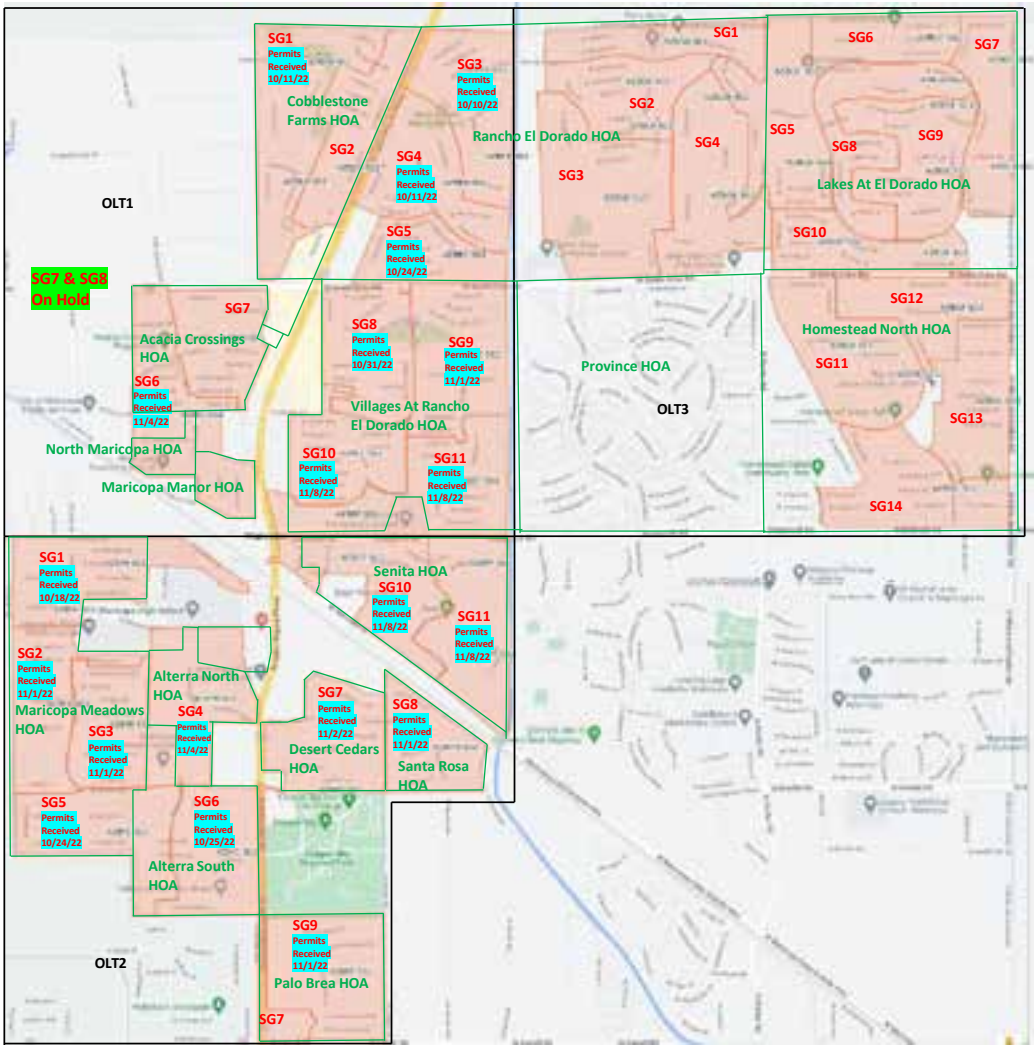


Bryan Mordt



Cox internet fiber is installed as Francisco Cruz directs the lines into the trench. Jesus Carrasco and Humberto Rodriguez help control the tubing as it comes off the spool. In the foreground, Keith Brewer and Anthony Griffith are seen.

The map below details the neighborhoods where Cox will be running high-speed internet fiber. The project started in Cobblestone Farms in November and will soon move to other neighborhoods in the city. The areas highlighted in pink represent areas where the City has either already issued a permit for Cox to install fiber lines in the right-of-way along the streets, or a permit is under consideration.



The road to Maricopa

Before service gets to your home, it’s broadcast from what Johnson referred to as critical facilities.

“We have several critical facilities around the Phoenix area, and they’re all linked in various different ways. One of those critical facilities is in Casa Grande,” Johnson said.

That facility — and improving technology — opened the door for Cox to enter the market in Maricopa. With the other facilities in the area, there were finally enough backups to offer a stable service in the city, Johnson explained.

“We were in the process of building up to Stanfield (from Casa Grande) and that allowed us to catapult and start to look at how we can bring redundancy into Maricopa City,” Johnson said.

Johnson further explained it’s not just enough to have a single line feeding a city the size of Maricopa; you need multiple sources. In the off chance there’s a catastrophic event that shuts one line, there’s a backup.

“Building Stanfield gave us that opportunity to make our way far enough west to have a viable option to come up with a secondary route and keep Maricopa protected — and have a failsafe,” he said.

An undertaking

Cox’s considerable commitment to Maricopa started 11 months ago and will continue for the foreseeable future.

The permitting process with Maricopa began in January. As of November, Cox had permits allowing immediate installations in nine neighborhoods. While signups are beginning this month, the full implementation of service for the entire city isn’t likely to be complete for two years.

The Maricopa project will provide 22,000 homes with the best service Cox has to offer. Todd Niesen, a construction and planning director with Cox, said it’s a monumental buildout.

In most cases, when a neighborhood is being built out, the wet utilities — water and sewer — are installed. Then after power is brought in, communication companies like Cox are given the chance to lay their lines in the already-open trenches, like they are currently doing in the Valley.

“We’re taking advantage of that and taking the opportunity to put our conduits into the ground,” Niesen said.

But as Johnson explained, the project in Maricopa is different. Most of the homes are pre-existing and it’s what they refer to as an “overbuild,” meaning there are no existing trenches.

“Building Stanfield gave us that opportunity to make our way far enough west to have a viable option to come up with a secondary route and keep Maricopa protected — and have a failsafe.”

JOSHUA JOHNSON

“We’ve built hundreds of thousands of feet in communities like this and we haven’t had to close any streets for longer than the time it takes to move the equipment.”

TODD NIESSEN, COX COMMUNICATIONS CONSTRUCTION AND PLANNING DIRECTOR



“It’s the biggest (overbuild) project we’ve done probably in Arizona,” Johnson said. “It’s at least the biggest we’ve done in my 10 years with Cox.”

There are still many permits left to secure from the city, so construction of the fiber lines is not yet 100%, but the manpower needed to get the project over the finish line is considerable.

At the peak, there will be 20 drill crews consisting of 5-7 workers and pothole crews, which will fill in the holes left from the drilling.

“There will probably be one support crew for every three drill crews,” Niesen said. “There could be anywhere from 27-30 crews out there on any given day.”

But not all those crews will be drilling.

Each phase of the installation will require different crews that specialize in a different aspect of the work being performed, which include drilling crews, crews that pull fiber and those who handle splicing and testing.

“I think 30 is a reasonable number,” Niesen said. “But there are also going to be other crews out there doing non-invasive work. They’re going to be handling the technical side of it.”

Minimal impacts

Make no mistake, you will see Cox installation teams laying fiber in your neighborhood, but don’t expect it to be a deluge. Johnson said it will be done in a non-intrusive manner.

“We’re not going to run eight crews in one neighborhood and make it where the people who live there can’t function,” Johnson said. “We’re going to spread it out as much as possible. We may have one crew in the north side of a community and another in the south side.

“It’s very rare that traffic is ever stopped in both ways while we’re installing the lines.”

Cox officials held an open house in November with the heads of homeowners associations to discuss service and

installation plans, and to open a line of communication to alert residents when crews will be in their area.

The biggest inconvenience might come when a crew has to move equipment from one side of the street to another.

“We’ve built hundreds of thousands of feet in communities like this and we haven’t had to close any streets for longer than the time it takes to move the equipment,” Niesen said. “That’s just five minutes.”

As for the trenches, there will be a few, but Cox employs side-drilling technology that will cut down on the digging in the right-of-way areas.

“They’re using directional drills,” Johnson said. “The holes will be minimal. We’re going to be as surgical as possible. It’ll be a little noisy, but it will pass quickly. We’re using the most up-to-date technology.”

When a homeowner signs up for service, a ditch will have to be dug between the service line and home so the two can be connected.

New neighbors

The reception from Maricopa has been positive, according to Johnson.

“The city has been wonderful,” he said. “We’ve formed a good relationship with them while working through the process. Anytime you go into a new place, they’re going to have different ways they want things done in how we get permits. They’ve been fantastic to work with. They’ve bent over backwards to make this a good process for us and for the citizens.”

Johnson said residents have been happy to see Cox come into the city.

“We’ve had positive responses in all the communities. People have been very excited to see us there.”

But there’s a lot of work to do, and Johnson acknowledges the biggest challenges are ahead.

“It’s a massive project.”



Retail space in Maricopa hard to find

Experts: Its youthfulness influences cost of doing business in city

BY JAY TAYLOR

WHAT DO MARICOPANS WANT more than anything?

More shopping and restaurants.

So why aren't they getting them?

Among the reasons is there simply isn't enough retail space, according to experts.

A search on commercial real estate site Loopnet.com in November showed just seven retail spaces available for lease in Maricopa — two of which have yet to be built.

One of the seven is the 2,800-square-foot former Sunrise Diner site in Maricopa Marketplace, which is listed for lease at \$25 per square foot per year. That makes the monthly rent more than \$5,800.

But the lease type is “triple net,” a commercial real estate term denoting three expenses — property insurance, maintenance and taxes — that are added to the lease price by landlords. With the triple-net costs included, the Sunrise Diner space would run more than \$7,000 a month.

Commercial Café, another website specializing in commercial real estate, shows five available retail spots. Three of those are 6,595-square-foot storefronts in Edison Pointe listed at \$35 per square foot. That makes the annual lease payment \$230,825, or \$19,235 per month. With triple-net terms, the rate is more than \$24,000 per month.

Commercial real estate experts say Maricopa is a good market for retail but it's youthfulness influences pricing.

Trent Rustan, vice president of retail sales and leasing for Commercial Properties Inc., has worked the Maricopa retail market for years and was a member of the development team for the Shops at Maricopa Fiesta, which includes McDonalds, Brooklyn Boys Pizzeria and Panda Express.

He agrees Maricopa's youth works against it.

“I try to explain to tenants looking at Maricopa that it is a relatively new community,” Rustan said. “New communities usually have

a higher cost of development because of infrastructure, newer design elements, the cost of bringing water and power to the site. It creates a little bit of a cost-of-development premium.”

Rustan said the same holds true in other newly developed areas like Surprise, Queen Creek and SanTan Village, which are considered comparable to Maricopa.

“When you look at new development in Queen Creek and other comparable areas, like Surprise, or anything relatively new where they had to meet new building codes, construction specs and the like, that cost of development is passed on to the tenants,” he said. “What Maricopa is missing is 40 to 50 years of additional development and infrastructure. There's a lack of competition in that area and demand for retail has been outpacing the supply. That's what is creating that higher cost.”

When Sunrise Café owner Billy Godwin posted on Facebook in July he was closing the restaurant, he wrote it was due to “the decline of

revenue by about 50% and the current landlords unwilling to work on a solution nor use our \$15,000 deposit given at the time of purchase to help in such instances.”

Godwin told InMaricopa that with the triple-net expenses — the lease cost him more than \$7,000 per month, more than a similarly-sized space in Ahwatukee would cost, he said.

“It's unfortunate, but we've lost a lot of mom-and-pop businesses here in town over the years, going all the way back to Ramsey's and Teakwoods and Mama T's Pizza,” Godwin said. “We've lost a lot of good dinner places because they just can't keep up with the rent and the landlords aren't willing to work with us.”

Jason Fessinger, a senior vice president at Western Retail Advisors, who has the listing for Maricopa Fiesta, has watched rents skyrocket over the past four years.

“Maricopa has experienced some of the greatest amount of rent growth of any submarket in Arizona,” Fessinger said. “The opportunities down there are just great for growth. Maricopa was a hidden gem till a few years ago. But after the recession, it has grown at a meteoric pace. It's gotten a lot of attention. A lot of developers are interested in the area and so are a lot of national retailers, as you've seen with some of the new projects coming to town.”

When his client purchased Maricopa Fiesta four years ago, Fessinger said rents were about \$18 to \$20 per square foot. Now they are \$26 to \$28 per foot, an increase of about 40%.

Differing opinions

Some real estate experts, like Nick DeDona, a leasing agent with Phoenix Commercial Advisors, who worked on the lease-up at Sonoran Creek and represents Cobblestone Fiesta, feel that while the retail rental costs have escalated in Maricopa, as they have everywhere, business owners are getting value for those prices.

“You've got a growing city with great incomes, restaurants that are all doing really well. The tenants have mostly been really successful and happy, and are meeting or exceeding projections,” he said. “Vacancy is very low. We just need more retail down there. There is a second-generation restaurant space (Sunrise Diner) for rent in the mid-\$20s. That's unheard of. They will lease that in no time ... It will be leased by the end of the year, and they will have multiple offers, I'm sure.”

DeDona considers unfinished space in the city to be affordable.

“We have a 2,400-square-foot, gray-shell space (essentially four walls and a ceiling with no improvements) in the center where Ace

Hardware is, leasing to an Asian restaurant for similar to the Sunrise Diner price,” he said. “In Ahwatukee or Chandler, that space would be \$28 to \$33 per foot, plus triple-net.”

He agreed with Rustan that Maricopa's youth as a city is a factor, but for a different reason.

“Taxes on new developments are higher simply because they are new,” he said. “The owners don't have 40 years of amortization to bring those costs down.”

DeDona said new space in Sonoran Creek is leasing for about \$35 per square foot. For a site with a drive-through add a premium to that.

Retail wave on horizon

One project that seems destined to spur retail development is the proposed PHX Surf Park at State Route 238 and North Loma Road, according to Rustan.

“I'm really excited about that because it brings in a whole different spectrum of customers, travel consumers, to the city,” Rustan said. “It's a completely different realm of retail, almost along the entertainment spectrum. I think it will allow Maricopa to capture a whole different market segment that doesn't exist yet.”

Rustan said Maricopa could use at least another shopping center or two, but what the city really needs is to shift its growth to other areas.

“All the residential growth on the east side of Maricopa, those citizens are literally starving for more services and businesses to help them,” he said. “They need restaurants, convenience stores, things that take care of their everyday needs, and they also need a lot of things that are not retail.”

“Maricopa doesn't need a lot of anything. It needs a little of everything.”

Despite any issues they see in Maricopa, all three commercial real estate agents say they would tell a business owner they're bullish on the city.

“You've got overall retail occupancy that exceeds 97% and a great community that's well-educated with a median household income north of \$75,000 and a lot of great success stories in Maricopa.”

Fessinger was more succinct with advice he'd give a business looking to expand into the city.

“I'd tell them they should.”

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Maricopa's Homepage Since 2004



Ask Kristina

BY DR. KRISTINA DONNAY DNP, FNP-C

Q Are chemical peels good for your skin? — A.M.

A Some chemical peels can help rejuvenate the skin. But, here at Maricopa Wellness Center, we take it a step further and use laser peels, which offer a safe, more-even treatment and produce superior results. A laser peel by Aerolase offers a non-invasive skin rejuvenation treatment to help improve the tone and texture of the skin, decrease acne and acne scarring, and decrease the appearance of fine lines and acne. The laser peel is painless and with very little down time. Fall is a great time for a laser-peel treatment due to less sun exposure.



Q What's the best way to lose weight? — D.S.

A Weight loss can be a different journey for everyone. At MWC, we first want to make sure the weight gain is not due to any underlining issues, such as thyroid dysfunction or vitamin deficiencies. If there are no underlying issues, Semaglutide may be a good option. Semaglutide is a GLP-1 receptor agonist. It belongs to a class of drugs that's been around for years. These medications mimic GLP-1, a hormone that our body makes. Weekly injection of Semaglutide can help slow gastric emptying, which helps us feel full, and acts on the appetite centers in the brain to decrease hunger. This medication should be used with lifestyle changes to get the full benefits and weight loss.

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Q How can I get rid of my toenail fungus? — R.M.

A At least 10% of Americans have toenail fungus, and these numbers increase with age. About 20% of people in their 60s find themselves dealing with toenail fungus, and at least half of men and women in their 70s show symptoms. Once established, toenail fungus is notoriously difficult to treat because the organisms causing your infection can penetrate deep inside your nail. Not only can they sit on top of your nail or grow beneath it, but they can also get in between the nail layers

themselves and skin. Traditional remedies for toenail fungus focused on oral and topical medications and surgery. But MWC brings the latest innovations in laser treatment to our practice. Aerolase, a gentle yet effective laser-therapy system, penetrates deep into your nail bed and matrix, where it administers targeted levels of heat to kill your fungal infection. This innovative approach creates a uniquely pain-free treatment session with fewer chances of pigmentation changes in the treatment area.

Q I hear a lot about collagen peptides. Are they really needed? — S.F.

A Yes! Collagen is a special type of protein that accounts for as much as 30% of the body's total protein. Compared to other proteins, collagen has a unique amino acid composition. Collagen is an effective choice in supporting strength and flexibility of bones, tendons and cartilage, appearance of skin and nails, and GI-tract health. Many people, the elderly in particular, do not consume enough protein. Those with higher protein intake are still deficient in adequate sources of collagen unless they utilize the richest sources of collagen, such as animal skins, bones and tendons. If a person does decide to supplement their body with collagen, they must look for

one that is hydrolyzed. This means the collagen has been broken down into small peptides that are easy for the body to digest and transport to the cells where they're needed.

Benefits of collagen peptides include:

- Healthy skin elasticity, thickness, hydration and appearance.
- Improved brittle nails, damaged hair and fine lines and wrinkles.

Multiple studies have found that collagen peptides improve the symptoms of osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and rheumatoid arthritis by reducing joint pain. It also improves joint tissue health and function involving cartilage, tendons and ligaments.

Research shows that collagen peptides may improve gut health and reduce symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. They also strengthen the immune system, making a person less likely to suffer from infections or allergies.

Collagen peptides improve recovery time and joint function in athletes.

Here at Maricopa Wellness Center, our collagen peptides contain three highly potent forms of collagen: FORTIGEL®, FORTIBONE®, and VERISOL®. This ensures we get all the various benefits in an easily digestible form. It is non-flavored and can easily be mixed into hot or cold drinks. One scoop provides 12.5 grams of collagen peptides

If you have a question you want answered in the next edition of "Ask Kristina" email it to maricopawellnesscenter@gmail.com

You should always speak with your provider before you start, stop or change any part of your care plan or treatment. This article is not considered medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

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MaricopaWellnessCenter.com
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Business, development around town

An **AT&T** cell site will be added to a light pole at Pacana Park at 19000 N. Porter Road in Glennwilde at a cost of \$125,000. It will be installed by Pacific Network Solutions Construction.

A hay barn and hay cover will be built for **Pinal Feeding Co.** and **Smith & Kelly Feed Co.** at 38251 Cowtown Road. The \$222,900 project will be constructed by Feed Yard Industrial Solutions.

Smith & Kelly Feed Co. will construct a 3,105-square-foot, pre-engineered, metal building at 38351 W. Cowtown Road to house two 750-horsepower boilers and a 535-square-

foot electrical room with separation by a one-hour fire-rated, full-height wall. The \$130,000 project will be done by Feed Yard Industrial Solutions.

The city's second **Auto Zone** store at 17520 N. Porter Road in The Wells will get \$51,000 in storage fixtures. Owner ATZ Retail 14 is having the work done by MC Construction Management.

Firestone Auto Care at 20926 N. John Wayne Pkwy. will spend \$25,000 for a temporary enclosure for used tires at its Maricopa Fiesta Phase 2 shop. BMS Management LLC will do the work.

A pump enclosure will be built for the **Park at the Lakes** in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado Phase 3. The 8-foot CMU block wall will cost \$39,500 and be built by Haydon Building Corp. for the Rancho El Dorado Phase 3 Homeowners Association.

EVR Porter will build six duplexes at its **REV@Porter** community at 17805 N. Porter Road at a cost of \$1.7 million. The project includes seven one-bedroom units of 782 square feet and five two-bedroom units of 1,093 square feet. REV@Porter will also build five two-bedroom, detached, single-family

homes as well as one three-bedroom home for rent at a cost of \$1 million. The two-bedroom units will be 1,106 square feet and the three-bedroom units will be 1,291 square feet. The work will be done by **Sodella Construction Inc.**

A hazardous materials permit was issued for the installation of a generator fuel tank for an **AT&T cell tower** at 38351 W. Cowtown Road. Property owner Smith & Kelly Feed Co. Inc. will have the work done by Velex Inc.

Innovation Villas at West Maricopa Village will begin work on 20 single-family homes for rent at 21055 N. Village Pkwy. Owner Maricopa 35 will pay \$3 million to build the 1,012-square-foot, two-bedroom homes, with the work done by T&K Contracting.

El Dorado Porter will spend \$2.9 million for on-site improvements for the Home@Maricopa Apartments development at 17635 N. Porter Road.

Rondo Pools and Spas will build a heated community swimming pool and spa at The Bungalows on Bowlin, 44900 W. Bowlin Road, at a cost of \$149,500.

GETTING TO know

KERI BERARDINELLI Co-owner, Lotus Evolutions

Hometown: Mentor, OH

Maricopan since: 2019

Reside in: Rancho El Dorado

Family: I live with my life partner Chad Binder, and I'm the proud mom of three grown boys and one beautiful granddaughter.

Pet peeve: Too much access and variety to "fast-foods"

Dream vacation: My dream vacation would be to Tuscany, Italy, or more recently I think it would be amazing to visit the Peruvian Mountains like Machu Picchu.

Like most about Maricopa: I love the small-town feel of Maricopa. My neighborhood is quiet, comfortable and peaceful, which I don't take for granted. I also love to witness the growth of a small town. The people here are very entrepreneurial, ambitious and have drive to contribute their gifts.



FAVORITE ...

Charity: Chad would want me to say Arizona Diamondbacks, Cardinals, Suns

Food: Whole and healthy

Drink: Red wine

Getaway: Sedona

Quote: "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you figure out why."
— Mark Twain

Learn more about Keri at InMaricopa.com/Getting-to-Know.

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Smartscape trained landscape professionals now in Maricopa

BY SHAINA SHAY, CONSERVATION SPECIALIST AT GLOBAL WATER RESOURCES

ON SEPT. 7, NINE LANDSCAPE professionals took their Smartscape training test in Maricopa. These professionals attended 24 hours of comprehensive training in the fundamentals of design, installation, irrigation and maintenance of desert-adapted landscapes.

Smartscape: A Training Program for Landscape Professionals,™ consists of eight workshops taught by University of Arizona faculty and local business professionals. The training provides research-based instruction to educate water users on best practices for developing attractive and water-wise landscapes.

There currently two types of Smartscape classes:

- **Professional classes:** intended to help build capacity within the landscape industry to design, install, and maintain low-water use landscapes.
- **Residential classes:** designed to assist residents and Homeowners Association members in making water-smart choices for their landscapes.

Why is Smartscape so valuable?

Unlike water used indoors, water applied to outdoor landscapes cannot be captured and used again. That is why it is so important that it is used efficiently. In Arizona, approximately 70% of water is used outside. Landscape and irrigation professionals can greatly influence the amount of water used on landscapes through the ways they design, install, irrigate and care for landscapes. As water scarcity continues to increase in Arizona, it is more important than ever to spread this water-saving education across all regions of the state.

Where can I find Smartscape?

Smartscape has provided foundational training for thousands of professionals and influenced landscape choices and outdoor water use in the Phoenix and Tucson areas for more than 25 years. But this year marks the first ever Smartscape training for Pinal County!

Global Water Resources (Global Water), the water utility for Maricopa, was excited to bring this educational platform to Pinal. Global Water




The graduates of the first Pinal County Smartscape course are Chad Whittle, Maricopa Unified School District; Armando Montoya, Maricopa Unified School District; Luis Rodriguez, AZ Yard Doctors; Paul Pence, Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management; Cher Cendejas, Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management; Anthony Solano, Maricopa, Parks and Recreation; Patrick Tallabas, Maricopa, Parks and Recreation; and Steve Jolitz, homeowner.

partnered with the University of Arizona Pinal County Extension program to organize this inaugural class. Anne LeSenne from the UofA taught the Smartscape program. She is a trained horticulturalist and former landscape designer, who is passionate about water-wise landscaping. Shaina Shay, the water-conservation specialist at Global Water, promoted the training program and hosted the class at Global Water's headquarters in Maricopa.

What comes next?

As is the case for most firsts, there were some challenges faced. We had the opportunity to learn about the difficulties landscape professionals face, primarily time commitments. However, this type of education provides the knowledge needed to excel in this industry and offers a real competitive advantage. That is why Global Water decided to fully sponsor the class making it free, providing an added incentive to attend.

We need your help spreading the word about this program so that we can make Smartscape the gold standard training for all landscape professionals. The UofA is excited to further expand this program in Pinal County and is looking to forge additional partnerships to bring this to other communities, such as Apache Junction, San Tan Valley, Florence and Casa Grande. 

Do you want to attend this training or bring Smartscape and water-wise landscaping to your community?
Contact Anne LeSenne annelesenne@arizona.edu to get more information.

 **GWRResources.com**
Conservation@GWRResources.com

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A LOT IN STORE WITH MARSHALLS ARRIVAL

Marshalls recently opened its first Maricopa location and the City is thrilled to see another retailer get in the game! Beyond providing more options for shoppers, the arrival of another department store is significant for Maricopa's progress as a whole.

Each year, it's estimated Maricopa residents spend around 365-million-dollars a year in surrounding communities. That means consumers are paying roughly one million dollars a day for goods and services that don't currently exist in Maricopa. In the world of economic development, that's referred to as retail leakage and the addition of Marshalls and other commercial businesses is a key in plugging the leak.

"Since its beginning, Maricopa has relied heavily on its neighbors to meet the needs of local consumers. In just a few short years, the City has now positioned itself to entice a wide-range of development, generating revenue which benefits our residents. That momentum is building!" - Nathan Steele, Director of Economic Development

Every job created here in Maricopa creates an opportunity for residents to find work locally and avoid commutes, which in turn contributes towards alleviating congestion. Maricopa's investment in workforce housing is allowing the City to court large employers that can offer hundreds of high-paying jobs. Landing those employers produces new opportunities and perpetuates the cycle of retail growth and revenue retention.



"We know residents are eager for more businesses, such as grocery stores, gas stations, schools, medical providers, restaurants and others. These needs are tied to our ability to provide a diverse housing stock that can support the growth. The expansion of retail centers around the city is evidence that our position to accomplish our larger objectives of this has never been stronger." -Mayor Nancy Smith

To stay up to date on other developments around town, check out [WhatsNewMaricopa.com](https://www.whatsnewmaricopa.com)



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-Brant England, Donovan's Landscaping LLC



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BUSINESS

Restaurant inspections



A summary of the Oct. 13-Nov. 10 food inspections by Pinal County Environmental Health Services



Supervision

Person in charge must be Certified Food Protection Manager.

Protection from contamination

Cut melon and tomato held in cooler with expired dates.

EXCELLENT

- Brooklyn Boys Pizzeria & Restaurant
- Denny's
- Dollar General
- Honeycutt Coffee
- Maricopa Head Start
- Maricopa High School
- Neaux Coffee Company
- Shamrock Farms

SATISFACTORY

- F.O.R. Maricopa

EXCELLENT

No violations found.

SATISFACTORY

Violations corrected during inspection.

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

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

UNACCEPTABLE

Gross, unsanitary conditions necessitating the discontinuation of service.



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James Chaston

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A community comes to the fore

Maricopa showed its generosity and compassion with golfers raising funds for scholarships for children of first responders at the Silent Heroes golf tourney. The Nov. 13 event at The Duke included a color guard presentation.



Brian Petersheim Jr.



Holding a candle to it

Families and friends of loved ones who've had cancer took part in the annual Relay for Life fundraiser at Copper Sky Regional Park. Mayor Nancy Smith (on stage) shared her story.

Bryan Mordt

Tommy Ronca enjoyed a 35-year musical career in Las Vegas and beyond, riding the wave of the once-popular doo-wop music craze.



Successful sounds

Tommy Ronca recalls long career in spotlight

BY TOM SCHUMAN

DURING THE LATTER STAGES of a three-year musical stint at The Fabulous Flamingo hotel and casino in Las Vegas in the mid-'60s, Tommy Ronca received a telegram just before his show was to begin.

The message, he says, contained words to this effect: "All entertainment on the Strip will cease until further notice." It was signed simply, "Frank."

"I'm scared," Ronca recalled of the directive. "We were next up and didn't know what to do. The Mills Brothers were also there. Everyone (at venues along the Strip) got the telegram."

A second message a short time later brought relief. Also signed by "Frank," it said: "All is well. Continue with your shows."

The reason for the message, it was learned later, was the Sands Hotel said it would not let Sammy Davis Jr. stay there because he was Black. The person who threatened to shut down all entertainment on the Las Vegas Strip and then gave the all-clear after the hotel backed down was, of course, Frank Sinatra.

That is just one of numerous stories Province resident Ronca enthusiastically shared from a 35-year career in Las Vegas and beyond.

Today, he talks about the memories and changes as Sin City became one of the gambling and entertainment capitals of the world.

"Man, I was there, right in the middle of it all," he reflected.

Musical keys

The story begins, however, in Farmingdale, New

York. Ronca, as second tenor, and four Long Island friends came together to form a doo-wop group known as the Sharptones and later the Fairlanes. One member was a C.W. Post College classmate of Steve Blaine, son of the head of Josie Records, a spin-off label of Jubilee Records. An audition led the record company to rename the group The Chaperones, with an initial recording of "Cruise to the Moon," released in 1960.

The success of what Ronca calls a regional hit led The Chaperones to perform in various New York/New Jersey venues – and as backup singers for other Josie artists.

But the world of music was changing rapidly, and Ronca knew it.

"In 1963, I told the guys in my group that people are coming and playing instruments and singing at the same time," like the Beatles, Rolling Stones and others, Ronca recalled. "Nobody is standing there with five guys just singing. I loved my doo-wop days, but even as a boy I knew doo-wop was going to end."

Ronca learned to play bass guitar and became part of a dance band that played at the Peppermint Lounge on 45th Street in Manhattan, the go-to spot for the stars.

Bryan Mordt

It featured the Joey Dee and the Starlites' version of "The Twist."

Looking to advance his career, Ronca was advised by his agent to go to Las Vegas.

"We said we would do a show similar to the Peppermint Lounge," Ronca said. "We built a group and went and got four dancers. It was a high-energy show, and we were young and wild."

They auditioned in New York for a representative of The Fabulous Flamingo.

"I remember it to this day when he came up to me and said, 'Tommy, I'll see you at the Flamingo on Dec. 27, 1966,'" Ronca recounted.

"We opened up, and they just absolutely loved it. We not only had the girls, but we had the sound. We had something different, and we knew it. Las Vegas had nothing but dry microphones at the time. We had the Echolette machine. It broadened our harmony and gave us that echo sound, that big sound. Every other group came to see it."

Hitting the right notes

The three years at the Flamingo were only the beginning for Ronca. He and partner Donny Lee Moore later produced and starred in a show titled "American Superstars at the Stratosphere." The idea, he said, was singing impressions (in full costume) of a series of artists. The lineup went this way: Ronca as Wolfman Jack, Tom Jones and Little Richard; Moore as Johnny Cash, Buddy Holly and closing as Elvis Presley.

"We had eight dancers. It was the first topless show in Vegas," Ronca said. "It was 1976 and Elvis was playing at The International Hotel. He came in to see the show. He came up on stage, looked at us and said, 'Great show!' The lights were all on and we were a nervous wreck. He asked how we ended the show and we said, 'With your song.' So, he sang ('Can't Help Falling in Love') with us."

Elvis would die the next year.

Despite the stories of the singer's struggles in his later years, Ronca remembered a vibrant entertainer. "Elvis was a really nice guy. He looked great that night. I met a lot of stars, but he was the biggest star along the way, at least of Vegas entertainers."

Ronca related the well-known story of the hotel valet in Las Vegas who once complimented the singer on his beautiful red Cadillac. "Elvis gave him the keys and said, 'It's yours.'"

The list of singers and groups that Ronca met or performed for is seemingly endless.

"All the stars came around. They didn't

"I loved my doo-wop days, but even as a boy I knew doo-wop was going to end."

TOMMY RONCA



Tommy Ronca's Maricopa home is filled with memorabilia from his years as an entertainer as Las Vegas was morphing into one of the gambling and entertainment capitals of the world. "Man, I was there, right in the middle of it all," he reflected.

sit around if they were in town. The bar at the Sahara is where we all hung out together," Ronca said. "Redd Foxx would do shows at 4 a.m. just for the entertainers."

Steve Wynn was part of those Sahara get-togethers and became a good friend of Ronca,

who shared another "only in Vegas" moment.

"We were at the Golden Nugget when Steve bought it (in 1973). We were playing the late show when Steve came behind the curtain and said, 'Tommy, I just bought the place. No matter what happens, keep playing.'"



“Years ago, you had the real acts (in Las Vegas). Now, it’s impersonators. I guess they don’t want to spend the money.”

TOMMY RONCA

Maricopa's Tommy Ronca spins colorful tales from his music career, from doo-wop on the East Coast to the early days of Las Vegas' emergence as an entertainment capital.

Wynn’s purchase was a hostile takeover. The musical performance was a distraction as he shut the place down and fired all the people, Ronca explained, before hiring staff back and reopening.

Wynn had obtained financing for the hotel from a bank, according to Ronca. Previously wary of the risks in the gambling business, the banks’ interest changed everything. “Bankers got involved and they were making money. Vegas went from one level to the next level when that happened.”

A growing Sin City

Wynn, of course, was only beginning a long run. He built The Mirage, Treasure Island and Bellagio before making a later comeback and constructing the Wynn and Encore properties.

“Wynn is the one who made the Fremont Street Experience happen (downtown),” Ronca said. “At the Sahara bar, he would say I’m going to build the biggest hotel in this town, and everyone would say, ‘Aw, come on.’ You’ve got to give him credit. I was happy for him because he wanted it so bad.”

There was no shortage of other Vegas

Bryan Mordt

developments witnessed by Ronca. Among them:

He watched the luxurious Caesar’s Palace be built in the 1960s and saw Evel Knievel unsuccessfully attempt to jump the fountains outside the resort on New Year’s Eve 1967.

“Elvira’s Movie Macabre” was an early 1980s TV show in which actress Cassandra Peterson hosted horror movies and interjected comments and jokes. Ronca and Moore were ahead of the curve, doing a similar program in Las Vegas in the mid-1970s. They added to the movies with appearances from special guests such as Merle Haggard, Barbara Mandrell and Wayne Newton.

After tiring of travel with their musical performances in Reno, Lake Tahoe and Elko, Nevada, Ronca and Moore branched out, forming The Brothers comedy group.

Ronca saw many big-picture changes, too.

“When I first got to Las Vegas, the format was it didn’t cost very much to bring your wife or to go see the show. They wanted you to lose your money at the table. The ideology was that the casino pays for it all,” he said.

When the big banks became involved, however, “Everything had to make its own money. The sportsbook had to make its own money. The steakhouse had to make its own money. As the years went on, it became more corporate and less personal.”

For the people

On the musical side, Ronca is partial to the earlier days.

“Years ago, you had the real acts (in Las Vegas). Now, it’s impersonators,” he said. “I guess they don’t want to spend the money.”

Later in his career, Ronca produced several shows and served as entertainment director at the Tropicana in Atlantic City. He moved to Maricopa in 2005, left for a year in Florida, but returned in 2021.

A previous member of the Maricopa Parks, Recreation & Libraries Commission, he currently is part of the Volunteer in Police Services program.

“There are about 50 of us. We patrol the parks, Copper Sky. We’re there for the people,” he said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

Still one who enjoys various types of music, Ronca said his career was all about providing that musical enjoyment to others.

“In my mind, everybody’s talented. Enjoy it for what it is. I was never one who cared about pats on the back. If I helped you enjoy yourself, that’s enough for me.”

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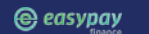
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How to overcome those holiday blues

BY BRIANNA REINHOLD, LPC, CFRC

IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON. WE SHOULD be happy and upbeat and joyful, right?

Well, for many, the holidays bring on bouts of depression, heightened anxiety due to the demands of the season and unattainable expectations. According to the American Psychological Association, 44% of women and 33% of men surveyed feel stressed during the holidays.

Do you ever feel overly stressed about family gatherings and fearful that arguments surrounding politics or other sensitive topics will ensue?

Are you already feeling financially stressed due to inflation and now worry about how to make ends meet for the holidays and give your kids the most magical Christmas?

Do you feel pressured to live up to social media's expectations of what is a perfectly decorated home, or the best baked goods, or to find the perfect holiday gifts?

If you answered yes to any of those, you could be experiencing holiday blues. Don't worry, I've got tips to help you best navigate the holiday season.

Some of the most common symptoms of holiday blues include trouble concentrating, anxiety, irritability, stress, fatigue, sadness and eating or drinking more than usual. Symptoms usually start to pop up around Thanksgiving and carry into the new year. They can manifest differently for each person and from year to year depending on circumstances.

Reasons why individuals may experience holiday blues:

- Memories of loved ones who have passed.
- Unrealistic or unattainable expectations.
- Feeling overwhelmed or stressed.
- Isolation or loneliness.
- Financial difficulties.

Tips for overcoming the holiday blues


- **Coping strategies:** Finding outlets to help manage your emotions can be the most beneficial for you. This may include talking with and sharing your emotions, whether with a friend or a counselor, writing in a journal, listening/dancing to music, creating art, exercising, etc. These can all help to release some of the



emotional buildup that happens while also releasing dopamine and/or oxytocin, the feel-good drugs in our brain.

- **Be realistic:** You will most likely not have the picture-perfect decorated home for the holidays or the best tasting pies and cookies. That is OK. Do what works best for you and your family. There is no set standard for what needs to be done. Put up enough that you all smile and appreciate it without letting it send you into a huge stress tailspin.
- **Volunteer:** This can be a great source of comfort knowing you helped someone else. It can also help reduce some of the anxiety you may be feeling about having the perfect holiday experience when you realize how grateful you are for the more simplistic things in life.
- **Take care of yourself:** Maintain your healthy habits. Exercising, sleeping, eating, etc., will all play a role in your overall health and mental health. If you start not sleeping or providing your body with nutrients it can heighten anxiety, irritability and depression.
- **Don't try to be a superhero:** Everyone has complex family dynamics. If you are unable to avoid certain family members entirely, then try to limit your exposure to them and set firm boundaries. If a discussion starts that you don't want to be

a part of, it is OK to say something and/or excuse yourself. Don't let others impact your mood because they want to have debates about sensitive topics.

- **Feel the grief:** Allow yourself to experience the grief that you are feeling. It is OK to feel grief, especially around the holidays, as we want to spend those memories with people we have lost. Honor them in your celebrations.
- **Focus on the positives:** Start each day with a positive affirmation. Pat yourself on the back when you accomplish something, especially if it was overly stressful. Give yourself acknowledgement for completing your tasks. The holidays can be a lot of work on top of our daily lives and responsibilities, so give yourself some grace. 

Brianna Reinhold is Owner/Clinical Director/ Licensed Professional Counselor at Northern Lights Therapy, PLLC

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Traditions are important to our mental health during the holidays

BY HARRIET PHELPS, PSYD. RETIRED

WHEN A COUPLE FORMS A relationship, they bring together two cultures. We often do not think of our relationship as separate cultures, but it is.

My spouse and I share common ancestral cultures of English and German. Our traditions, while different, share commonalities.

We recognized the differences when we moved from our hometowns to an area removed from most of our family.

On our first holiday alone we discussed what had been taken for granted, from decorating to gifts and the meal.

We realized there were differences and, to help lift the feelings of separation, we picked our favorites and combined them.

I saw the importance of what we accomplished when our youngest adult son said, "Ah, the apple and the orange in our stocking."

Traditions have been significant throughout history. We all celebrate in our own way.

My husband's family did not have stockings, but mine did, and that was what my mother did for us. Something so simple was now a tradition.

We have religious celebrations that are important to any family. Mine is church on Christmas Eve at midnight, the familiar carols and the candle-lighting.

Whether it is Christmas, Hanukkah, Catholic Holy days, Bodhi Day, Kwanzaa, these traditions of our cultures are very important to us individually and as a family.

Traditions are a source of enjoyment and meaning. We feel we belong to our community

or broader society. We believe in something greater than ourselves. They give life meaning.

Celebrations have been shown to reduce stress, increase emotional well-being and, in turn, increase physical well-being.


While being in a happy place, blood pressure reduces, good hormones like endorphins increase, and well-being brings positive solutions and ways of coping through difficult situations.

Traditions provide relief from anxiety we cannot identify through continuity and predictability in our current unpredictable world.

Our sense of inner peace and our acceptance of our strengths or weaknesses build grounding in our identity.

Contributions lead to feeling comfortable, belonging and lowering barriers to connection.

In many ways, we are more alike than we are different. Our values are reinforced in the commonality. They comfort us, give us a sense of belonging and make us feel safe and secure.

We wish you a happy holiday and Merry Christmas. 

Harriet Phelps is a volunteer at Be Awesome and Maricopa Senior Center.

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Christmas campaign targets teens impacted by domestic violence

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

***DOVES NETWORK, A DOMESTIC** violence support group based in Maricopa, will hold its third annual “You Are Not Forgotten Christmas Drive” this year.

Each year, DOVES Network partners with local shelters and families in the community to provide Christmas gifts for teens impacted by domestic violence. The group’s goal is to remove the financial barriers of the holiday season for 200 youngsters and their families.

The program is unique in that it focuses on teens and their needs during the holidays. Donations are collected each year and then organized and displayed in the common areas of shelters, turning them into “Holiday Boutiques,” as Tiffany Mensah, executive director of DOVES, explained.

“Families in shelters can shop safely via the centers to select a gift for their teens,” Mensah said. “This initiative will offer the families some control as they choose gifts in a safe environment. We want to show families and youth impacted by domestic violence that they are not forgotten.”

The concept came about from the reality that families with domestic violence, especially teens, are often left unsupported, most notably during the holidays.

DOVES is an acronym for Daily Overcoming Violence and Embracing Safety.

The organization assists youth who have been exposed to domestic, sexual or childhood violence through support groups.

“Many kids who are living in these conditions don’t have a safe place where they can talk freely or process their feelings,” Mensah said. “We offer youth peer groups where these kids can connect with others.”

DOVES also offers teens a chance to find a positive outlet for their feelings.

“We want to be there to help them learn how to cope and how to reframe negative thoughts and learn how to deal with their emotions,” Mensah said. “The goal is to help them find something they excel at and find their own superpowers, and down the road get a job, write a resume and succeed in life.”



Above, the Hope Women’s Center offers thanks for gifts from DOVES Network. At right, DOVES Network founder Tiffany Mensah and her husband, AJ, hold a proclamation from the City of Maricopa lauding the work of DOVES Network in spreading awareness of those impacted by domestic violence.

Mensah works in agile operations for Rocket Mortgage, a position where she helps divisions of the company quickly adjust to changing trends in the marketplace.

Mensah, a native of Michigan, moved to the Valley nearly 10 years ago and three years after that, moved to Maricopa.

After writing a book about her childhood in a home marred by domestic abuse, and discussions with her husband about her personal story, Mensah wanted to help others. She started by publishing her book, “Forgotten, a Memoir: Living in the Shadow of Domestic Violence,” which originated as a paper in college.

For Mensah, the mission of DOVES is a personal one.

“I started seeing it (abuse) at the age of 9 and I didn’t know a lot of that trauma was going to follow me,” Mensah said. “It wasn’t until I got into corporate America in my early 20s and having to tell myself the truth and deal with the fact of why I was acting out in so many different ways.”

 DovesNetwork.org/christmas2022



Donations to the DOVES Network’s “You Are Not Forgotten Christmas Drive” are accepted in three ways: Individuals can donate through PayPal, mail unwrapped gifts to 20987 N. John Wayne Pkwy. #B104-369, Maricopa, AZ 85139, or purchase from an Amazon gift list. The deadline for submissions is Dec. 10.

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As holidays approach, Maricopa food banks step up special efforts for those in need

BY TOM SCHUMAN

***FOOD MIGHT BE THE PRIMARY** focus of both Maricopa Pantry and F.O.R. Maricopa, but both organizations provide much more to the community and its people in need.

Their founders bring the same passion to the missions they began decades ago.

“I never had any thought it would become this big,” said Maricopa Pantry CEO Jim Shoaf, who with his wife Alice started providing food out of their backyard in 2004.

Maricopa Pantry was formed in 2015.

“We just kept seeing the need and tried to fill it,” Shoaf said.

Wendy Webb was among the founders of F.O.R. Maricopa in 2007 and is its executive director. Through challenges and evolutions, she said, “We want to invest in our kids. It’s where we have a chance to make a difference.”

Both groups do just that, serving nearly a combined 2,000 families a week. The heartbeats of each organization are those who tirelessly, and without accolades, volunteer to get food onto the tables of those who need it.

Maricopa Pantry

The Maricopa Pantry Saturday morning food banks are a model of efficiency. As cars enter in three lanes and wind around the extended Mountain View Community Church parking lot off West Papago Road, southwest of the city, teams of volunteers —as many as 60 in a week —are filling boxes of food in an assembly line.

The number of boxes needed for a particular vehicle is radioed to the two pickup spots. People often pick up food for other family members or neighbors, with no questions asked, Shoaf explained. Drivers are on their way quickly with a much-needed supply of fresh food items.

With some home deliveries and a smaller Monday-morning operation, the Maricopa Pantry serves as many as 1,700 families a week.

“They love us, and we love them,” Shoaf said. “We know most of the people. A family might come up that lost a son or is just trying to make ends meet. We try to take that devastating moment and maybe lift them up a little bit.”



Shoaf and his volunteer team take delivery of more than two semi-trucks of food each week. In 2021, that totaled more than 3 million pounds of food. Sources include St. Mary’s and Midwest food banks, local farmers, private individuals and businesses.

“I’ll deal with anybody who can get me food,” Shoaf said.

He also purchases products to augment donations.

In early November, he was working to buy 1,500 hams.

“The holidays are special,” he said. “Around that time is when we need the money.”

Cash donations go toward gifts, shoes, clothes and other items that are distributed to those in the Saturday-morning food lines.

A potluck Thanksgiving dinner at Copper Sky in 2021 fed more than 300 people. For the last several years, Shoaf has played Santa Claus, including a “Sensory Santa” for children with autism. He said he is booked solid for six weeks in November and December this year.

Tiana Birkeland and colleagues from the Strong House of Healing bring a vanload of eager volunteers to assist each Saturday.

“We were coming out to get food boxes (for

our treatment homes),” Birkeland said, “but everyone saw what was taking place and they wanted to volunteer. It is a great way to meet people and a good chance to get involved in the community.”

For Shoaf, this just presents another opportunity to assist those in need.

“I’ve always helped people my whole life,” he said.


Identifying one of the Strong House volunteers, Shoaf added, “If I can help one young man like that get back on the straight and narrow, this is all worth it.”

F.O.R. Maricopa

The “F” in its title is for “Food,” which comes in Monday morning and Thursday afternoon distributions that serve 150 to 170 families a day.

F.O.R. Maricopa had a number of homes during its 15 years before landing at the Blue Business Building on North Maricopa Road three years ago. That allowed a move to the drive-through concept that became mandatory during COVID.

Food that is near its expiration date is picked up from local stores six days a week. Drop sites around the city, food drives, special fundraising days at local businesses and a variety of grants provide the food and money needed.

During the holidays, F.O.R. includes extra food boxes with turkeys, gifts for children and stocking stuffers. A new, year-round program providing bicycles for young people recently was implemented. 

MARICOPA PANTRY

50881 W. Papago Road
Food distribution: 8-11 a.m.
Saturdays and Mondays
MaricopaPantry.org

F.O.R. MARICOPA

19428 N. Maricopa Road
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Mondays and 4:30-7:30 p.m. Thursdays
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Neighbors helping neighbors at Christmas

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

THIS CHRISTMAS, MARICOPA Neighbors in Need, a community outreach group with more than 2,000 members on Facebook, will hold its annual “Operation Christmas Child.”

The program, which parents had to apply for in November, is for children ages 1-16. The operation will assist 100-125 families.

Renee Oldenbach, the group’s leader, said the effort extends throughout the community.

“Members of the community donate gifts and we sometimes have organizations and businesses that donate gifts, and we match those with the needs and ages of the kids whose parents have applied,” Oldenbach said.

Starting about Dec. 18, Maricopa Neighbors in Need members will arrange for the delivery of the gifts. Sometimes, parents can pick them up at members’ homes and, if needed, deliveries are arranged.

The effort takes a good deal of coordination. Planning for each year’s Christmas giveaway starts around August.

Despite Maricopa’s attractive economic statistics, the need is there for such programs.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median annual household income in Maricopa is \$75,229. While that number may look favorable compared with the national average of \$65,712, the prices of everyday goods are rising at unsustainable rates for many.

A few months ago, a financial website, Wallethub.com, ranked the Phoenix metro area as the worst in the country for runaway inflation.

Oldenbach said it’s something she and her fellow volunteers encounter daily.

“There’s a lot of need in our community this year with the inflation,” Oldenbach said. “I don’t think there’s ever been more need. People are putting everything towards gas and their rent or mortgage.”


Maricopa Neighbors in Need operates year-round. It was founded nearly 10 years ago by Trena Bento, who handed over the reins to Oldenbach when she moved to Coolidge a year ago.

Oldenbach, a Montana native who moved here after retiring in 2013, got to know Bento when the two worked together with Meal Train, a group that identifies people and families going through devastating life situations —like a death in the family, house fire or other emergency — and provides them with meals.

“We find out their preferences and we’ll prepare their meals,” Oldenbach said, explaining that each member of Meal Train would be responsible for one meal. The goal: families going through traumatic events not needing to cook for a few days, or even a few weeks.

It was through those interactions that Oldenbach found out about the grassroots group Maricopa Neighbors in Need.

“The people in this community are so good to one another,” Oldenbach said. “We always have just really good people, that if somebody is looking for specific items or just need food, in general, we, we always have people that will donate.”

Maricopa Neighbors in Need has a similar program that provides Easter baskets in the spring. 

The group can be found on Facebook. Membership is private. The only requirement to become a member is that you must live in Maricopa.



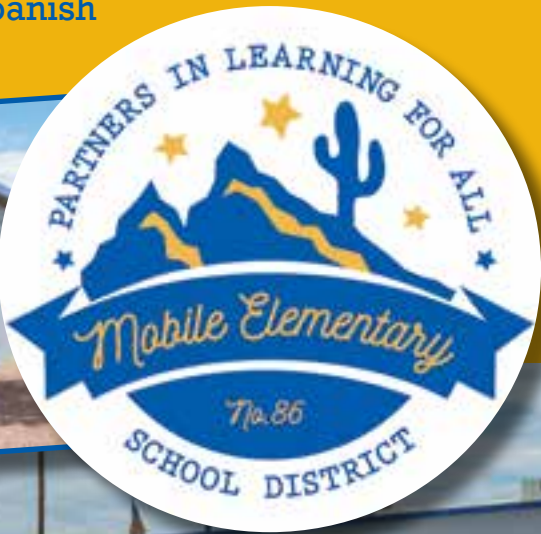
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A red-letter day for MUSD schools

Post-COVID academic grades show much progress

BY LEE SHAPPELL

AMONG THE INSTITUTIONS MOST disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic was education.

Students were out of classrooms for extended periods. Ostensibly, they were being educated remotely on laptops. But were they? Maricopa Unified School District has a student population of a multitude of socio-economic backgrounds. Although the district provided laptops, some homes did not have internet connectivity.

Did students process and retain information remotely to the degree they might in a classroom? If kids were home alone, were they really tuning in to their lessons?

Not only were students out of their element, but so were their teachers as they learned to administer lessons through an online platform.

There were questions and concerns, but the first letter grades released in the post-pandemic era in November by the Arizona Department of Education suggest Maricopa public schools came through the chaos of the pandemic well.

Pima Butte and Santa Rosa elementary schools received grades of “A.” For Santa Rosa, it marked improvement of a full letter grade from 2019, the last time the state gave schools letter grades due to the pandemic.

Elsewhere in the district:

- Maricopa Elementary was less than one point from an A.
- Santa Cruz Elementary was less than one point from an A.
- Maricopa High School improved a full letter grade to a B.

Other MUSD scores:

- Butterfield Elementary School – B
- Saddleback Elementary School – B
- Desert Wind Middle School – C
- Maricopa Wells Middle School – C

“The consistent and purposeful efforts of our students, staff and principals have paid off,” MUSD Superintendent Tracey Lopeman said. “Our focus remains on high expectations and providing our students and staff with the tools they need to achieve their full potential.”

Arizona law requires the Department of Education, subject to final adoption by the State Board of Education, to develop an annual



Santa Rosa Elementary principal Eva Safranek celebrates with school district officials and staff.

Front row, from left: Valerie Wyant, Joy O'Brien, Safranek, Kyla Seabrooks, Yvonne Maestas, and Deborah Kohls. Back row, from left: Superintendent Tracey Lopeman, AnnaMarie Knorr, Torri Anderson, Gary Miller, Robert Downey, Zoe Redfern, Ben Owens and Vanessa Celaya.

achievement profile for every public school in the state based on an A through F scale.

The system measures several factors, including: year-to-year student academic growth, proficiency on English language arts, math and science, the proficiency and academic growth of English-language learners; indicators elementary students are ready for success in high school and high school students are ready to succeed in a career or higher education and high school graduation rates.

Grades are for the 2021-22 academic year and based largely on data collected by the state board last spring. The state's 2022 calculation heavily emphasized student growth and recognized the importance of recovering unfinished learning from the pandemic.

Measures implemented by MUSD to bolster academic performance in the wake of the pandemic may have been a factor.

“When measuring success, there are so many different ways,” said Sheryl Rednor, MUSD assistant superintendent of academic services. “We’re trying to triangulate the data.

“We’ve really strengthened our preschools, starting with our youngest learners. Preschool is now offered on every single campus. We believe in starting them young and coaching them up from a young age.”

MUSD has an elementary-school dual-language program this year.

“We’re also looking at strengthening our families because they are partners in the child’s education. Our Board of Education has



Sheryl Rednor

been very supportive. We’re making sure the programs we offer provide as much support as possible, not only for our teachers but also our families. We’re seeing growth in our students.”

Standardized tests are one measurement of academic proficiency and progress.

“But you want to be very careful with that,” Rednor said. “It’s not always apples-to-apples, and I want to emphasize the importance of looking at other data in our assessments. I have a lot of people sitting around the table with me, and our focus is on teaching and learning through a lot of different lenses.”

Maricopa voters approved a school-district budget override in November 2021, which keeps class sizes smaller and technology up to date. The district also opened its second high school, Desert Sunrise, this school year. It has programs in place to help students who fell behind during the pandemic. MUSD spent more than \$1.5 million last school year to improve the performance of its certified, classified and administrative staff. A significant chunk included \$322,000 for phonetics, linguistics, literacy and writing-skills engagement, according to Rednor.

Rednor and her team go into schools and observe classroom activity.

“Last year was tricky for us because we were just coming back from the pandemic,” she said. “There was learning loss, like everywhere else in the nation. Everyone has a story. Remember, we had students last year, third graders, who were in their first year of a quote-unquote regular year in a classroom. Our youngest learners weren’t in brick-and-mortar schools for a period of time.

“We saw kids who were fine, and kids who weren’t fine. So, I don’t want to make a blanket statement that because they lost those years, they were unsuccessful, because many were.”

The high scores among MUSD’s elementary schools seem to reflect the district’s emphasis on starting with its youngest learners in several initiatives.

“What we looked at last year, our first year back for the most part, with our youngest learners was phonetic instruction, building a solid foundation in K through 2,” Rednor said. “Without that, they can’t read. It’s very structured, pretty intense training in letter recognition, words and sounds. We’re really proud of that.”

K-2 teachers were trained on a program of research-based adapted text, which includes strategies to make traditional text accessible to students with a variety of learning styles.

The district also placed a K-12 focus on

Maricopa Unified School District



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MUSD Strategic Plan



Goal 1: Every student graduates prepared to create, innovate, lead, and succeed.



Goal 2: Every student has access to and equity in excellent educational services, resources, and programs.



Goal 3: Organizational culture that prioritizes people over programs and invests in the support of students and staff.



Goal 4: Community pride through excellent customer service, sound business practices, open and effective communication, and safe and attractive facilities.

Source: Maricopa Unified School District

“The consistent and purposeful efforts of our students, staff and principals have paid off.”

DR. TRACEY LOPEMAN,
MUSD SUPERINTENDENT

writing, which may have contributed to Maricopa High’s letter-grade improvement.

“Reading and writing are super important,” Rednor said. “Consistency, repetition, familiarity are so important. When you compare this past year to 2018, it’s just a whole different story. We’re really proud of the work happening here.”

Post-pandemic, the district found about one-third of students had recovered academically, about one-third who were borderline and needed to make improvement, and about one-third in distress who “we needed to focus on how we could best meet their needs,” Rednor said.


“And then we had to put in a social/emotional piece, as well as academic support,” she said. “There were so many chronic absences. You can’t learn if you’re not there. And it wasn’t just students but also staff. So, we anticipated learning loss.”

Students were at home in distance-learning from March 13, 2020, through the conclusion of the academic year.

The 2020-21 school year saw in-classroom education resume in August 2020 (remote learning still was an option), cease in October and resume in January 2021.

“Districts weren’t ready for this,” Rednor said. “This district worked really hard to obtain technology, get people trained and get them the materials and resources they needed. There was a lot of time spent in many districts not just training teachers but also parents, who’d never done it before, including me, by the way. It took some time.”

MUSD made the decision to bring students back as soon as it was safe to do so. It was among the first in the state to do that.

“And that was a very intentional decision, a very wise decision,” Rednor said. 



Safety is high priority in Heritage Academy Maricopa's growth goal

BY JARED TAYLOR, CHAIRMAN/CEO & KIMBERLY ELLSWORTH, PRINCIPAL

WHEN HERITAGE ACADEMY MARICOPA opened in 2019, we did so with the vision that our school would become an integral part of the Maricopa community.

We strive to bring families the values embodied in our mission statement: dedication to the growth and development of youth as well as a focus on building sound character through strong families, strong communities and a strong nation.

From our first day of classes in 2019, which were temporarily at Ultrastar Multi-tainment Center due to construction delays, we have grown and flourished along with Maricopa. We have a student population of nearly 900.

Heritage Academy is supported by more than 50 highly qualified teachers, administrators and support staff, most of whom are Maricopa residents. We are grateful for the support from so many of the wonderful people in our community and look forward to continuing to be a significant part of Maricopa as it grows toward an abundant future.


An important part of our growth plan focuses on safety at Heritage Academy and in

the community. Our administrators and staff at Heritage Academy Maricopa are committed to the safety and well-being of our scholars, their families and our neighbors. We have made it our highest priority to establish and maintain procedures at our campus that will provide a safe and effective learning environment. We also value the safety concerns of our neighbors in the vicinity of our campus regarding traffic circulation, and we work closely with the leadership in Maricopa to ensure their concerns and goals are considered in our safety planning. Here are elements of Heritage Academy Maricopa's safety plan:

- Conduct monthly fire and safety lockdown training and drills with our scholars and staff, and evaluate the results of each drill to identify and implement any needed improvement.
- Develop and communicate with parents and school staff specific protocols to govern the safety and efficiency of the driveline, or student pick up/drop-off procedures each day.
- Foster meaningful relationships with our neighbors at Our Lady of Grace Parish and

the Board of Directors for the Glennwilde HOA, and respond promptly to any concerns they may have.

- Communicate regularly with Maricopa city leadership to coordinate efforts with regard to our safety protocols.

Heritage Academy Maricopa loves being part of the Maricopa community, where good things are happening and so many wonderful people reside. We express our sincere thanks for the support we have received from Maricopa city leadership, particularly from former Mayor Price and from current Mayor Smith. We express gratitude for the support of our neighbors, and most especially of the Maricopa families who choose Heritage Academy to be a part of their lives. 

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Squash, pumpkins carve out niche in Maricopa-area history

BY ALCIA HAYES



Squash, pumpkins and most gourds originated in the Americas.

The word “squash” is a Native American word, askutasquash, from the Narragansett (Algonquian) word meaning “eaten raw or uncooked.” Today most squash is eaten cooked.

The first squash arrived in Europe in 1591, and a cucurbita was undoubtedly on the Thanksgiving table at that historic feast between the pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe in 1621 in Plymouth, Mass.

Long before the pilgrims set foot on the shores of what would become the United States, cucurbits had been cultivated and grown here for thousands of years.

The earliest evidence of domesticated squash

was found in a cave in Oaxaca, Mexico. Evidence of the cultivation of cucurbits dates to more than 8,000 years ago. A variety of pumpkin is believed to have originated in northeastern Mexico and the southern United States about 7,000 years ago.

Over the next few thousands of years, cucurbits would become the most widespread crop of the Americas, ranging from southern Canada to South America.

Cucurbits were undoubtedly here in the Southwest and central Arizona within at least a few thousand years of cultivation in Mexico. Unfortunately, squash is an elusive plant to find in the archeological record. Squash is soft and does not preserve well unless deposited in a cave.

What is more often found is the presence of cucurbita pollen in dirt samples from cooking and food-processing areas. Pollen is resilient. We also know from Spanish accounts the Native Americans they encountered in southern Arizona grew an abundance of squash, pumpkins and gourds as well as other crops.

Cucurbits are still important crops to Native American groups in the Southwest today. The O’odham peoples near Maricopa (Ak-Chin Indian Community and Gila River Indian Community among them), still traditionally grow squash, pumpkins and gourds. A few favored Tohono O’odham squash varieties include Ha:l and Magdalena Big Cheesehead, the latter a giant pumpkin-like squash with bright-orange interior flesh. The Big Cheesehead is a favorite to slice into strips. Dried, it preserves for months.

Heirloom cucurbit varieties are hardy, preserve well and are adapted to desert conditions. They have been grown in central Arizona and the Americas for a long time — so long they even have their own native bee, Squash Bees (Peponapis and Xenoglossa). These bees specialize in the pollen and nectar of wild gourds and cultivated pumpkins. Their range is nearly identical to the range of wild and cultivated cucurbits. These bees are solitary and do not have a hive to return to at night. Look in your squash blossom early some morning and you might find a Squash Bee taking a snooze.

If you are interested in growing Native American squash, you can find seeds available at NativeSeeds.org.

Alycia Hayes is a University of Arizona Master Gardener volunteer.

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HOME

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📍 42491 W. Bravo Drive Oct. 18 **\$ 685,000**

This two-story home in Rancho El Dorado has a three-car garage, family room and loft. The upstairs master bedroom has a covered balcony facing a golf course. The backyard has a large, heated pool and hot tub, turf, covered patio, built-in barbeque and view of the 18th fairway. The home, which has 20-foot-plus ceilings, sold for list price.

Previously sold for \$306,000 on 7/12/2016
Community: Rancho El Dorado **Builder:** Hacienda
Square feet: 3,954 **Year built:** 2004
Price per square foot: \$173.24 **Bedrooms:** 5
Days on market: 33 **Bathrooms:** 3

2. 21807 N. Greenway Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$645,000
3. 18585 N. Falcon Lane, Glennwilde.....\$635,000
4. 40728 W. Hall Drive, The Lakes.....\$619,000
5. 22057 N. Diamond Drive, The Lakes.....\$600,000

least expensive HOME SOLD

📍 43803 W. Wild Horse Trail Oct. 31 **\$ 252,053**



This single-story home in Senita has a covered patio, solar panels and vaulted ceilings. The master bathroom has dual sinks and a walk-in closet. The home sold with a cash offer in 19 days for \$47,947 below asking price.

Previously sold for \$158,000 on 11/30/2017
Community: Senita **Builder:** D.R. Horton
Square feet: 1,533 **Year built:** 2005
Price per square foot: \$164.42 **Bedrooms:** 4
Days on market: 19 **Bathrooms:** 2

2. 19972 N. Pepka Drive, The Villages.....\$267,500
3. 37001 W. Mediterranean Way, Sorrento.....\$270,000
4. 17839 N. Mughetto Drive, Sorrento.....\$280,000
5. 19308 N. Toledo Ave., Tortosa.....\$286,500

Source: MLS, Oct. 10-Nov. 9

Brian Petersheim Jr.

HOME



Selling a home in December can be difficult

BY DAYV MORGAN

TRYING TO SELL YOUR HOME IN December has its challenges, especially if you are listing around the Christmas season. If you can, it is best to wait until after New Years or even until spring.

Aside from the pandemic-related madness of the last three years, the real estate market in Maricopa has followed a consistent pattern of a Spring and Summer surge, followed by a much slower Fall and Winter.

For example, in December 2018, only 127 homes went under contract, the lowest of any month that year. A few months later in March of 2019, 220 homes went under contract, nearly double the figure from December.

In addition to the low demand, December also brings about some marketing difficulties.

Holiday décor can be a distraction and will look awkward in listing photos if the house remains on the market after December. Buyers will still be viewing pictures of your Christmas tree in January and February, reminding them that it's been on the market for a long time.

To give potential buyers a good view of your floor plan and allow them to imagine what it will look like year-round, you should go with minimal or no decorating, and that does not make for a very cheery Christmas for you and your family.

Even without holiday decorations, the outside of the house may not photograph at its best. Deciduous trees will be bare and look dead, and your

landscaping will likely look a lot less enticing than it will in March. Countering that takes extra time, money and effort.

The days get dark earlier in December, limiting the number of hours available to display your home in full sunlight.

Showings can be a nuisance when you have guests for the holidays, since you typically will leave to accommodate potential buyers.

Holiday can be busy and stressful enough without the added expenses for moving, repairs and demands of packing up your house by a certain date.

If you've already listed your home late in the year, you can take your listing temporarily off the market until after New Year's, and the "days on market" will not increase during this time. 📌

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



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Would you step back in time to relive a special Christmas past?

BY JOAN KOCZOR

CHRISTMAS IS ALMOST HERE.

This magical time of year means so many things as it brings people together. It's a celebration with family and friends, sharing good times and traditions, with holiday decorations throughout the house. And the food. Almost every family has a special recipe or two for Christmas.

Memories are powerful as we reflect.

How many of you would step back in time

to Christmas past? Maybe Christmas as a child, for just one day?

Can you see your parents wrapping presents on Christmas Eve, thinking the kids are asleep? Or putting that bike you wanted together? A freshly cut Christmas tree, dripping with tinsel you put on one at a time? A Christmas stocking with your name on it, hanging on the mantel?

Or friends and family arriving, bringing laughter and memories? Special dishes?

It might be a fond memory of your mother or grandmother in the kitchen finishing those wonderful dishes for Christmas Eve. Oh, the aromas as cookies and pies baked in the oven. Do you remember helping your mom make cookies or other Christmas treats?

Did you sit at the "kids table" wishing you could sit at the "adult table?"

Carolers went door-to-door singing Christmas carols. Your mom may have given them a cup of hot chocolate and some of those homemade cookies.

Your parents may have read to you "The Night Before Christmas", a classic by Clement Moore.

You eagerly awaited the arrival of Santa

Claus, and left cookies for him and carrots for his reindeer.

Waking up early Christmas morning, you found cookies gone, carrots gone. Yes! He was there, and he left a stack of presents under the tree.

Every family has their own traditions of the season, unique to themselves or their culture, which are handed down through the years and become the wonderful things you look forward to every year.

A friend shared the tradition of their parents hiding Christmas presents in a garbage can, thinking the kids wouldn't find them there. The family of another went to the movies on Christmas Eve. Some open one present the night before Christmas.

A Christmas Eve tradition of my family, that I continue to this day, is the Italian feast of the seven fishes. My father would go down to the Fulton Street Market in Chicago and get fresh fish for our Christmas Eve Dinner.

I hope you enjoyed the look back.

A very merry and blessed Christmas, everyone!

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



Remember seniors who might be alone in your holiday plans

BY RON SMITH

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US.

With the chaos of running back and forth getting ready to celebrate, it is important for us to remember our friends, neighbors and relatives, who might be alone or feel alone.

Isolation is a crucial concern for older adults, and the holidays tend to intensify the impact. A 2021 study showed 30% of adults were at an elevated level of loneliness.

Be alert to factors that might foster isolation. Does the senior have family in the area? Have their children moved away? Has a spouse passed away during the past year or two? Do they have transportation options? Do they have factors that might inhibit them from social interaction, such as their appearance or health?

Be creative in methods of outreach. Look for ways of inclusion. Find a way to involve the senior in a family activity or a party through a video chat. Make a call or visit if possible. Send cards, pictures or gifts. Try to engage them in family nostalgia to ignite important memories. Share light-hearted stories, humor and/or movies. Share family activities or find neighbors to visit or bring gifts/food.

Remind your loved ones of their importance, allow them to contribute to your celebrations and show appreciation for all their contributions. It is easy to unintentionally push them aside, thus diminishing their importance and value to the family. Actively engage older family members in your activities, reassuring them they are still valuable contributors. Find time to spend with your loved ones; it will be a special gift for all involved.

Social isolation is a multifaceted problem. Not only does isolation affect one's health, but it may help preclude timely medical interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to isolation by conditioning us to avoid others to protect our own health. In the process, we lost many of the natural social interactions that have been so important in our development as a society.

As we emerge from COVID-induced isolation, think about those who would benefit from a little sharing of our time, compassion or simple companionship, and reach out to them. We need to reprogram our habits and actions to share time again with those who may feel lonely and need to feel valued by others.

Fortunately, human needs transcend politics or physical boundaries when we allow ourselves to be open to them. Let's use the spirit of the holidays to help those suffering from isolation and enrich all our lives.

Ron Smith is a living-in-place advocate, a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Committee, a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist and a Certified Living in Place Professional.

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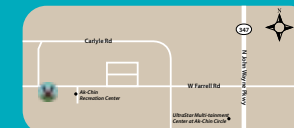
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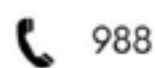


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December

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City of Maricopa Tree Lighting
7:30-8:30 p.m.
44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

3

Merry Copa
Noon
44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

5

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

6

Maricopa City Council
6 p.m., City Hall
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

7

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

12

Friends of the Library
5:15 p.m., Maricopa Library
& Cultural Center
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

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

17

**Concerts in the Park - Soul
Persuasion (Latin)**
2 p.m., Copper Sky
44345 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

20

Maricopa City Council
6 p.m., City Hall
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

Sundays

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

Mondays

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

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**

5 p.m., Maricopa Community Church
44977 W. Hathaway Ave.

Wednesdays

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

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

Narcotics Anonymous
5:30 p.m., Maricopa Library &
Cultural Center
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

Thursdays

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

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

Fridays

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

Narcotics Anonymous
4:30 p.m., Maricopa Library &
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18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

Alcoholics Anonymous
7 p.m., Mountain View
Community Church
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Saturdays

Alcoholics Anonymous
10 a.m., Maricopa Library &
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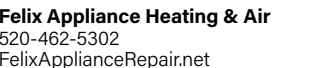


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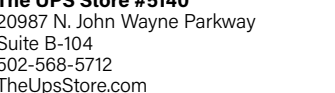
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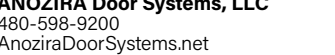


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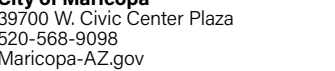
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