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March 2023



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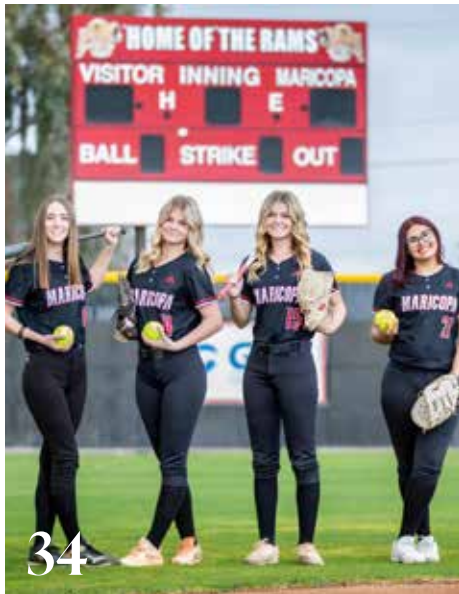
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ON THE COVER

The Etzel twins — Alyssa (left) a left-handed outfielder-infielder, Emma a right-handed pitcher-outfielder. Photo illustration by Victor Moreno.

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## The rest of the story about Brian Simmons

**SOME PEOPLE REGARDED BRIAN SIMMONS** as the town nuisance, and he certainly did have a history of bizarre behavior around Maricopa.

This month, Justin Griffin, our former editor, makes his debut as senior writer with an incredible package telling you the rest of the story.

Griffin's exposure of the backstory about Simmons sheds new light and helps explain how a former All-American boy changes personality, fails to get mental-health help he needs despite 22 contacts in a year-and-a-half with law enforcement, and how a call for service to Maricopa PD on a noise complaint ends with Simmons dead in his side yard on a scorching August morning, his body riddled with six bullets.

There's not much future in firing a weapon at police officers. Simmons got off two rounds with a shotgun before officers returned fire.

Griffin spent the better part of the past three months obtaining police and medical examiner records, and visiting with friends and family members who had a very different story to tell about Simmons than the person known to Maricopa. It's a tale of officers' hands often being tied and a system's failure to help a man obviously in need. A tragedy might have been averted.

There are several other, lighter, stories for you this month.



Tom Schuman, who always seems to find great stories, came across Maricopa resident DJ "Daniel" Giagni, whose lengthy tap dance and choreography career had him working alongside Gene Kelly, Liza Minnelli and Steve Martin. Now 72, Giagni is teaching tap at Province.

High school spring sports receive little coverage. We changed that, putting twin-sister softball players on our cover and featuring them in the first magazine story by our new reporter, Cameron Jobson. The Etzel sisters — Emma and Alyssa — will have foes thinking the Maricopa High Lady Rams are doing it with mirrors.

Words are good, and we're certainly big fans of words, but sometimes just as effective are images. We struck the jackpot with our second new reporter, Monica D. Spencer, who doubles as an outstanding photographer. We sent her over to the Senior Center to see what's going on. Be sure to see her photo gallery this month.

Life is a rollercoaster. We chronicle it. It's the heartbeat of Maricopa.

**LEE SHAPPELL**  
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
Lee@InMaricopa.com

## CONTRIBUTORS



**JUSTIN GRIFFIN**

Our former editor debuts in his new role of senior reporter with an outstanding package after weeks of research examining how authorities deal with people with mental illness, focusing on the late Brian Simmons. A fantastic read.



**CAMERON JOBSON**

We have a couple of newbies this month. We're excited that Cameron, a recent graduate of the UofA, is one of them. She's a former competitive swimmer. We like that streak in her. You'll like it, too.



**MONICA D. SPENCER**

And you don't have to be from UofA — like our Executive Editor — to get a job around here. We offer Monica, an ASU grad, as evidence. After her internships at the state's largest paper, we're thrilled to have her!

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**Advertising**  
MELISSA LUSK  
MICHELLE SORENSEN  
ASHLEY WALLACE

**Writers**  
AL BRANDENBURG  
KRISTINA DONNAY  
JUSTIN GRIFFIN  
CAMERON JOBSON  
JOAN KOZOR  
DAYV MORGAN  
BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.  
HARRIET PHELPS  
TOM SCHUMAN  
RON SMITH  
JAY TAYLOR  
EUPHEMIA WEEKES  
SHERMAN WEEKES

**Photographers**  
BRYAN MORDT  
BRIAN PETERSHEIM JR.  
MONICA D. SPENCER

**Designer**  
CARL BEZUIDENHOUT

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44400 W. Honeycutt Road, Suite 101  
Maricopa, AZ 85138

520-568-0040 Tel  
520-568-0050 Fax  
News@InMaricopa.com  
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## Maricopa history moves over

The State Route 347/John Wayne Parkway railroad overpass was a major step forward in moving traffic through Maricopa. It came at a price, however.

The Maricopa Volunteer Fire Department building (upper left), built in 1980, was razed, as was the Pinal County Sheriff's Office building (two smaller photos). That building, built in the 1950s, became a library and later a food bank after Maricopa formed its own police department. It also is shown in the color photo (lower right) in 2018 before it was demolished to make way for the overpass.



## THIS MONTH BACK IN...

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



## 2008

Mountainside Fitness reversed course and said it was not coming to Maricopa after all despite recently breaking ground on a gym. Hatten Holdings, parent company of Mountainside, purchased land south of Fry's Marketplace in 2006. "We think very highly of ... Maricopa and we absolutely hope to open ... there some day," said Billy Malkovich, vice president of Hatten. He cited delays with the city and developer. Mountainside still is not in Maricopa.



## 2013

After a month of heated exchanges in various public forums, the Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board tabled a decision on shutting down Maricopa Wells Middle School until April. Most board members said they needed more time to make an informed decision. The closure is estimated to save the district \$542,000, which would help make up a projected \$1 million shortfall in the 2013-14 district budget. Maricopa Wells remains open today.



## 2018

The Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board unanimously voted to enter into contract negotiations with Tracey Lopeman, its unanimous choice for superintendent. The board met in executive session to negotiate the contract. MUSD's board voted to offer a contract. The board and Lopeman are expected to deliberate an annual salary range between \$135,000 and \$155,000. Lopeman remains superintendent today.

Brian Petersheim Jr. | file



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# Martinez continues to champion highway funding

BY JAY TAYLOR



**MARICOPA COMMUTERS, TERESA**

Martinez says she has your back. Since Proposition 469’s failure in November — which would have provided funding for improvements to State Routes 347 and 238, as well as other Pinal County highways — Martinez is finding ways at the State Capitol to keep those and other vital transportation projects moving.

The Republican Majority Whip, who represents Maricopa in the Arizona House of Representatives, Martinez has made transportation in Pinal County her top priority. And she is delivering results.

The Legislature in February passed a bill allocating more than \$20 million to the Arizona Rural Transportation Advocacy Council to fund highway projects around the state. It included funding for four improvement projects important to Maricopa drivers:

- Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway, from Burris to Anderson roads.
- Green Road, from SR 347 to McDavid Road.
- Sonoran Desert Parkway, from Porter to Fuqua roads.
- Rancho El Dorado Parkway bridge construction and Santa Rosa Wash improvements in the area.

“

***“The state will fund it, and the city will throw in about \$6 million, and it will be done”***

REP. TERESA MARTINEZ

But Martinez wants more.

She said she is working to get funding to keep the SR 347 widening project moving even in the absence of a funding replacement for Prop. 469.

“I’ve (introduced) a couple of bills personally,” Martinez said. “I support the Rural Transportation Bill, but I wasn’t sure it was going to go forward and not get cut.”

About \$19 million was appropriated in the last Legislative session for SR 347 and SR 248. About \$6 million of it will be used for design and study on SR 347. The remaining \$13 million will be used to finish improvements on SR 238.

“The state will fund it, and the city will throw in about \$6 million, and it will be done,”

Martinez said of SR 238 work.

Martinez has introduced three bills this session to keep progress on local projects, particularly SR 347, moving:

**House Bill 2063** — Passed unanimously in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is pending before the Appropriations Committee. It allocates \$800,000 for design work to improve SR 238 from SR 347 to Green Road; \$6 million for design work for widening lanes along SR 347 from Interstate 10 to Maricopa; and \$15 million to conduct a Tier 2 study for the North-South Corridor in Pinal County.

**HB 2449** — Also passed unanimously in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and pending before the Appropriations Committee. It would allocate \$9.7 million from the state general fund to Pinal County for engineering and design of the Sonoran Desert Parkway.

A separate, yet-unassigned bill proposed by Martinez would bring in still more money for SR 347 improvements.

Mayor Nancy Smith is enthusiastic about how those funds would benefit the city.

“(Martinez’) bills for SR 347 and 238 are critical for improvements in transportation,” Smith said. “The \$6 million will be used for design of 347. This is critical because with the design complete, when funding is available for construction, we’re ready to go immediately. Another \$13 million will be used to ready SR 238 for growth on the west side of our city.”

Even if all of those bills make it through the Legislature fully funded, Martinez said she plans to continue looking for innovative ways to expedite improvements to the primary highway connecting Maricopa with the Valley.

“Now, with (converting the I-10/SR 347 interchange to a diverging diamond), I’m saying, ‘You know what, if I could get another \$20 million for 347, we can get the project up to I-10 going with the preliminaries — fund the surveys, studies, environmental-impact reports. We can start that process with this money.’”

Finally, she has introduced a bill requesting

Bryan Mordt

another \$9 million to complete improvements on Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway.

“If we can get those bills passed and funded, it would be a good interim solution until we can get Prop. 469 back on the ballot and get the full funding,” Martinez said. “If we can do that, and it passes, we would already have all the preliminaries in process, so we won’t have a three- or four-year gap waiting.”

“If (a new funding bill) doesn’t pass, I’ll keep going back until we get the money. I’m going to be a fierce advocate for those roads,” she said. “I will talk to ADOT about what we can do about them in the interim.”

City Councilmember Vincent Manfredi said having strong relationships with state representatives is a boon to Maricopa.

“It’s great to have a Representative Martinez, and Senator (T.J.) Shope along with Representative (Keith) Seaman working for us to ensure that we have part of the funding we need to get transportation infrastructure improvements within our area,” Manfredi said. “We have a lot of work ahead of us and having them on our side will help a ton.”

*Editor’s note: Vincent Manfredi is an owner of InMaricopa.*

**TEMPORARY RELIEF?**

While state, county and city leaders try to find other ways to raise money to widen State Route 347 – which could include putting another proposition on the ballot – Maricopa Mayor Nancy Smith says there are several actions that could make the heavily traveled and often-congested road safer.

- Increasing Department of Public Safety patrols from Interstate 10 to the Maricopa city line.
- Ticketing serious offenders to deliver the message it can be a matter of life or death.
- Encouraging DPS to provide additional

help to move traffic at rerouted intersections, such as Casa Blanca Road, when an incident forces closure.

- Developing crossover opportunities, which would be controlled by ADOT during times of extended closures, to allow stalled traffic to safely turn around.
- Faster cleanup of collisions to mitigate closures, essential for safety and those stuck on the road after an incident.
- Adding a middle concrete barrier for safety.
- Extending the length of lanes for traffic entering and exiting SR 347 at the Queen

Creek/I-10 overpass to mitigate backups.

- Adding lighting or quality reflectors to improve vision at night.
- Restricting trucks to right lane only except to pass.
- Adding signage regarding unlawful slow drivers who remain in the left lane and pull over slower drivers who stay in the left lane.
- Educating drivers with a campaign billboard.
- Improving signage to alert drivers approaching a closed road to help safely reroute them.
- Adding signage with flashing lights to remind drivers SR347 is a “High-accident road.”



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# Batteries Plus gets a charge out of device problem-solving

BY LEE SHAPPELL

**F**OR ABOUT 2 YEARS, BATTERIES Plus searched for space to open a store in Maricopa.

The company wanted something along John Wayne Parkway for its high traffic volume. Accordingly, commercial space is tight along the thoroughfare.

Finally, something came open and the company, which carries not only batteries of every description but also an array of light bulbs and performs technical repairs on items like cellphones and tablets, jumped at it.

The store opened in late January at 20928 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite C9, the 23rd Batteries Plus franchise owned by the Cobblestone Group.

“When we were looking for places to open stores in Arizona, Maricopa came on the radar,” said Steve Mastin, chief operating officer of



Steven Mastin has been with Batteries Plus since 1996, “before cellphones and laptops were a thing,” he quipped.

Cobblestone Group and a Gilbert resident whose family has been in the area for a century. “I had no idea how quickly this place had grown in the last couple of decades. In my opinion, we really lucked out on the location because it used to be a device-repair place.

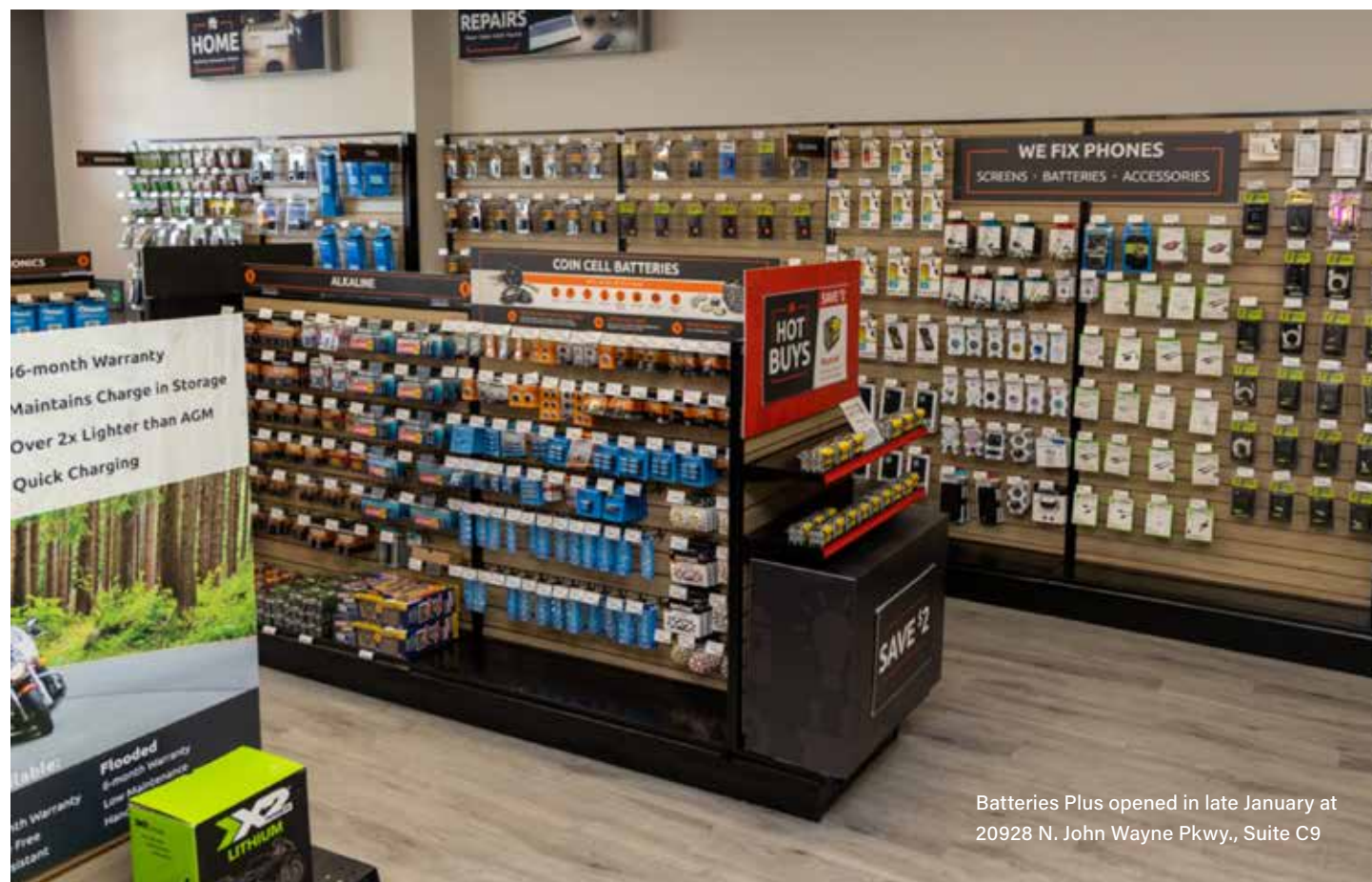
“When I had the keys handed over from the landlady, there were a couple of people there asking when we were going to be reopening. They thought we were just reopening the old device-repair place.”

Mastin, who has been with the company since 1996, “before cellphones and laptops were a thing,” has hired four full-time employees, three from Maricopa and the fourth from the chain’s Casa Grande store.

As it made plans to come to Maricopa, the company encountered two familiar problems: availability of space and pricing.

The traffic on John Wayne Parkway through the city caught the company’s eye. Finding something in that high-demand area and in the size the company sought took some time, according to Mastin.

“We knew we wanted to be somewhere along the 347, that was the big thing,” he said. “Just the few times I’ve been there it was amazing to see all that traffic, and especially just in that center where we are with the Bashas’ and the fast-food restaurants in there, too. It’s very busy.



Batteries Plus opened in late January at 20928 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite C9

Brian Petersheim Jr.

“So, we didn’t want to be too small. We wanted to be able to grow some, but we also don’t need 4,000 square feet.”

The shop is about 1,400 square feet at pricing that is “not too bad,” he said.

“It’s a little higher than some of our other locations but it’s also in a very unique position with the traffic, so it makes sense,” Mastin said. “It would have given us pause if we didn’t see this as a hot market for our specific thing we’re doing.”

Batteries Plus provides automotive services, such as free car-battery testing and installation on most vehicles, as well as techniques to keep cellphone, key fob, laptop and tablet batteries lasting longer and operating more efficiently.

Batteries Plus technicians all are Wireless Industry Service Excellence certified.

Each staff member is trained in top brands and operating systems of devices, including phone repair for broken and cracked screens. They may also be able to repair hearing aids and medical devices like infusion pumps, monitors and carts on wheels. Technicians also provide services for lighting and fixtures.

“We have a lot of techie stuff,” Mastin said. “In the back of the house we have work benches, very specific to your device repair, and safety stuff.”

And, as the name suggests, there are batteries of every imaginable use: automotive, ATV, motorcycle, marine and golf carts, as well as chargers, cell phone batteries, phone essentials, SLA batteries, alkaline batteries and generators.

Beyond the common AA and AAA batteries, the store carries AAAA, a one-third AA, half AA and M batteries, which look like three D batteries put together, that are used in mining equipment. If a customer needs a small battery the size of a quarter, there is a two-foot section full of them in various thicknesses.

“When I started, there was my car battery and AA batteries for my TV remote. That was it,” Mastin said. “We’ve grown into a lot of services. Programming of key fobs for vehicles became a very big thing we got into a few years ago.

“Now, it’s very much a problem-solving thing. I love people coming in with problems. We might have to solder a wire or research a battery. We’ve got welders to make a battery pack if we need to, so it’s a pretty unique, fun thing as an employee. You’ve got to have some of that fix-it, tech knowledge.”

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# Career growth, security and purpose: Find all 3 at CoreCivic

BY CORECIVIC

**I F YOU HAVE TURNED ON THE NEWS** lately, you know the economy seems unclear, and more recently there has been a lot of uncertainty in the job market. Some organizations around the country are making difficult decisions to lay off staff or implement hiring freezes. This can cause unwanted anxiety about what the future holds.

One organization still providing a variety of career opportunities is CoreCivic. We are often seen as a safety company, which is true. But what you may not realize is that we offer a variety of positions that are not in the security space, including education, health care, technology and more. Better yet, we are hiring.

We sat down with a few of CoreCivic's talent acquisition team members and asked what they look for in a candidate and what tips they would give potential applicants.

Patty Cooper is CoreCivic's senior director of Talent Acquisition. She manages the recruiting team responsible for filling open positions across the country. To make an impression, Patty says it is best to get back to the basics.

"I look for a complete resume with work history and education clearly noted. I also look for responsiveness to outreach when screening the candidate and setting up an interview," said Cooper. "The best impressions off the bat are the most important. Review the job postings, tailor your resume to the position's requirements, and be on time for an interview!"

## Health Care

While CoreCivic is known as a safety company, we also have many positions in a variety of fields including health care. Valerie Moreland manages medical talent acquisition and says that a nursing role at CoreCivic is a perfect fit for someone who really wants to make a difference.

"Our employees have a unique opportunity to help change the lives of those in their care," said Moreland. "Our candidates need to be able to jump in and treat a variety of cases and emergencies, so someone with a background in varying clinical settings works great for what we do. In addition, new nursing graduates can be great for this. They are eager to grow their clinical

skills and build a career of growth and learning. CoreCivic will give them that opportunity. Lastly, a candidate with a positive attitude is critical. Each day is different, and someone who can stay positive and is adaptable to change will be a valued addition to our medical teams."

Moreland points to communication and empathy as two of the most important attributes of a successful nurse at CoreCivic. This is due to the special needs of the patients they serve. She also says it pays to do your homework, literally. Nurses at CoreCivic often see pay that is higher than other employers in the market.

"Review the job description and qualifications and ensure that your resume encompasses your nursing experience. This will help



you be sure to get the best possible pay rate. Do your homework and ask questions. Talk about your accomplishments, struggles and ideas. As a recruiter, I love to hear each candidate's 'story.' It helps me build a relationship with that candidate, which builds trust and makes the hiring process easier."

## Corporate Opportunities

In addition to safety and health care, CoreCivic can offer roles in technology, human resources, finance, public relations and more at its Facility Support Center (headquarters). It is not uncommon for a team member to start on the front line at a facility and find their way to the corporate office. **Bob Shealy oversees recruiting** at the FSC. He believes there is a lot of opportunity for candidates from a variety of backgrounds at CoreCivic.

"We are known as a safety and security company, so most people are surprised to

see the variety of roles we fill across the organization," said Shealy. "We work hard to identify candidates in specialty fields like technology, human resources, finance, law and public relations. We are an employer of choice in the Nashville area with many opportunities to grow a career."

## About CoreCivic


CoreCivic has about 10,000 employees nationwide, with a footprint in 21 states. We offer a comprehensive benefits package that includes competitive wages, paid time off, paid holidays, medical/dental/life, 401k retirement plan with a generous company match, CoreCivic scholarship program, instant pay and career growth. Want to be CEO one day? It's possible, just ask our **CEO Damon Hininger** who started as a correctional officer at a CoreCivic facility in Kansas in 1992.

"The one tip I would give anyone considering a career in corrections is to be flexible and open to new experiences," said Hininger. "I was given that advice early in my career and it has taken me from Kansas to Arizona to Tennessee, with stops in between. Focus on walking in integrity and be open to new opportunities, and you'll go far."

While there are a lot of benefits of working at CoreCivic, employees will tell you that one of the biggest is the feeling of making a difference.

"We want to meet people who want to work in a field that makes a difference," said **Rawnak Amedi, recruiter**. "At CoreCivic, you have the opportunity to put your skills and experience to good use and work in a challenging, rewarding environment where no two days are ever the same."

You can learn more about all of our current openings, our company, our benefits and much more at [Jobs.CoreCivic.com](https://Jobs.CoreCivic.com) or by following us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

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# Resources for 2022 tax season

BY CHRIS J. SCOGGIN, CPA

**H**ERE WE ARE, WITH A LITTLE OVER six weeks to go before the tax filing deadline on Tuesday, April 18. Have you prepared and filed your taxes yet?

## The COVID effect

Since COVID-19, the IRS has been way behind processing paper tax returns because it sent all of its workers home in March of 2020. While it tried to maintain some level of customer service, it was the paper correspondence that piled up with no one at the facility. When workers came back, there were literally mountains of unopened returns, communications and documents. It was so bad that in July of 2021, the IRS determined it never was going to catch up and purposefully destroyed 30 million unprocessed informational returns. This entire series of events has caused almost every taxpayer some level of pain.

To keep your return from being caught in this mess, I recommend e-filing your return, especially if you are receiving a refund. As a note, if you owe taxes with your 2022 return, don't make the mistake of thinking that the IRS won't process your payment for the 6-9 months it is taking them to process the return. If there is one thing that the IRS is good at, it is collecting money! They will open your return, extract the tax payment and then send the return to processing.

## Tax-return status

One of the questions that we get most frequently in our office is: "How can I check on the status of my tax return?" To do this, you can go to [IRS.gov](https://irs.gov) to create an account using the ID.ME system to verify your identity. On this website, you can view your return(s) for the past several years, make a tax payment, create a payment plan or view your outstanding balance. Be forewarned though: The ID.ME system is notoriously difficult to establish your identity. They will ask questions about past returns and other questions about items specific to you. If you can't prove your identity on this system, here is the next step.

My preferred way of working with the IRS is to pick up the phone and call them. Their



phone number is 1 800-829-1040. Be prepared to wait, though. It can take 30 minutes or more for them to pick up once you are in the queue. However, once they do pick up, you can speak with someone knowledgeable about the best way to provide the information or solve the problem that you are experiencing. They will be able to direct you as to the next step in the process.


## Checking on your refund

On the front page of [IRS.gov](https://irs.gov) is the ability to check the status of your refund. To do this, you will need the taxpayer's Social Security number, the filing status and the exact amount of the refund. For most e-filed returns, you should receive your refund within 4 to 5 weeks. However, there are times when the IRS needs to verify certain information. This causes the return to be taken out of the normal process and the refund can then take three months or more to be issued. We always recommend that you have the refund direct deposited to your bank account.

## Returns from 2021 and earlier

We still have returns filed during the 2021 tax season that have yet to be processed. If you

are waiting for a very old return or refund, DO NOT just refile the return. This will cause even more confusion and delays. You should call the IRS at 800-829-1040 to determine if they have received the return. Most likely they have and just haven't processed it. If they have received it, just be patient. They will get to it. If the IRS does not have a copy of receiving the return, then you can mail it in again. Of course, you did keep a copy of the certified mail receipt from the first time you mailed it in, correct? You will want to include a letter explaining that the return had been filed on time, and that you have proof of this filing.

If you need help with more-complex tax issues, our team at CS CPA Group is always ready to assist. 

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## Annual leak inspection time!

BY SHAINA SHAY, WATER RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION SPECIALIST AT GLOBAL WATER RESOURCES

**D**ID YOU KNOW THE AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD LEAKS NEARLY 10,000 gallons of water per year, or the amount of water it takes to wash 300 loads of laundry? Water-wasting leaks include running toilets, faulty irrigation, dripping faucets and other leaking pipes around your home.

In just 10 minutes, you can search your home for leaks and crack down on water waste. Many common household leaks are quick to find and easy to fix. Before you can fix leaks, you must find them.

Luckily Global Water Resources has made that easy! We invested in our community by installing smart water metering, also known as Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). All residential customers in Maricopa have an AMI meter that is linked to the Global Water customer portal.

Use this QR code to sign up if you haven't done so already:

The customer portal allows you to pay your bill online, monitor your water use, set water budgets for your household and sign-up for notifications. What is most amazing about AMI is that Global Water will automatically send you a notification via email, text, or call if a possible leak is detected!



Be a water-wise detective this month during Fix-a-Leak Week, March 20-26.

Here are some tips for finding leaks in and around your home:

- Walk through your house listening for running toilets and looking for drips. Drips usually mean leaks.
- Place a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If color shows up in the toilet bowl after a few minutes without flushing, you have a leak. Many toilet leaks are caused because the "flapper" is decayed or broken.
- Timed irrigation systems often water your landscape when you aren't around. Turn on your irrigation system every few months and take a walk around your yard looking for puddles and broken drip emitters. This simple practice can save loads of wasted water.

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## Board-certified physician gives you the best foot, ankle care

BY DR. ALEX M. STEWART DPM, FACFAS



**D**R. ALEX M. STEWART OF MARICOPA Foot and Ankle Center is Board Certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery. He received his Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree from Midwestern University and completed his residency at The University of Texas Health Science Center-San Antonio in the Department of Orthopedics.

His extensive training and current practice focus on foot and ankle trauma, diabetic care, reconstructive surgery and sports medicine. As a former collegiate baseball player and avid golfer, Dr. Stewart can relate to athletes of any age and performance level. Dr. Stewart has been at Maricopa Foot and Ankle for the past 10 years and has experience in treating everything from minor ailments to major trauma.



### Do you have pain from playing golf?

Golf may seem like a leisurely game, but it can be strenuous on your feet. There are a lot of balance and rotational forces at work. Proper support is imperative to keeping your feet feeling good and improving your golf game.

### How do you treat these common injuries?

Most injuries that arise from golf can be

treated conservatively in our office. Simple R.I.C.E. (rest, ice, compression, elevation) can help with minor injuries. If your pain is not going away you may have sprained your foot or aggravated your arthritis, and it is important to get it evaluated and properly treated. Orthotics can help to provide proper support and reduce your pain. There are other conservative and surgical treatments that can be performed, depending on your injuries.

We at Maricopa Foot and Ankle understand that even a small foot issue can be very painful and debilitating, so give us a call and let us help get you back to your activities pain free! 📞

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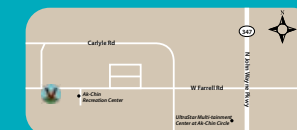
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## The Arts: The messy business of creativity

BY LAURA OLIVIERI

**F**INE ARTS ARE A FUNNY THING. THEY'RE OFTEN THE first on the chopping block where funding is concerned, yet the movie you just watched had orchestral music — and wouldn't be *nearly* as great without it. Children begin their lives with crayons and finger paints, which is lovely, as long as they don't color on walls.

Kids play and pretend all day, but they better have a college degree and not go into acting. We pay for years of classes for our cute ballerinas, musicians and gymnasts to have a rich childhood, without the expectation of a lifelong career.

It's a human condition, arts. Music plays behind everything we do. And here in Maricopa, the arts scene grows every year. Theatre, music, dance and art are the founders of Maricopa Arts Council and arts in all their forms, by people who are your neighbors, support all that makes a city rich — in diversity and in content.

Artist Gary Zaimont, who retired to Maricopa in 2005, started his artistic endeavors in music — trumpet, in New York, 1950s-60s — and later taught junior high kids. He plays many instruments now, and arranges music for Maricopa Music Circle and Maricopa Chorus, as well as playing with the Province Ensemble.

His studio, the Rainbow House, is an amazing and *messy* place. "All creativity is problem solving," he said. "We say 'creative' as if there's a difference between a plumber solving a problem and a poet solving a problem."

"I don't like any of that nonsense because what that does is takes the arts and removes it from society. It puts it all *over there*. It's not over there."

His storytelling is nearly as fascinating as the art itself.

He's been working on an incredible self-portrait since 2018, mainly because no other subject would hold still that long. He describes painters and their styles to describe the process of creating a portrait that stands nearly twice as tall as he does.

And it's not perfect.


"My ears don't match because my ears don't match," he said. "The eyes don't match, either, and the mouth is crooked, because my mouth is crooked."

It looks like a painting of an ordinary person, on a magnificent scale.

Maricopa's arts scene is blooming this spring. We are the kids who drew on the walls, who screeched on our violins and pretended all day. We practice in our living rooms, paint in



Gary Zaimont, who retired to Maricopa in 2005, has been working on an self portrait since 2018.

our spare rooms and create in our garages. Our mouths are crooked, and our ears don't match. We're messy, ordinary and marvelous. Maricopa's arts aren't *over there* somewhere. They're here. Come see them. 

*Laura Olivieri is a violist with Maricopa Music Circle, a published children's book author, research technician in agriculture and has been a resident of Maricopa since 1998.*

### MARCH 2023 MARICOPA ARTS CALENDAR

March 1-4	"Never Eat a Talking Lobster," as presented by the Maricopa Community Youth Theatre.
March 4	MAC Inside the Creative Mind lecture at the Library: Jack Jackson, Art Photographer.
March 11	MAC presents All-AZ Poetry Slam Championship — \$1,000 in prizes.
March 19	Province Chorus and Province Ensemble "Spring Toons."
March 20-24	MHS Fine Arts Week.
March 31-April 1	Maricopa HS band in Winter Guard Arizona Championships at Millennium High School.

Submitted

## From farming to gaming to the Super Bowl

Vice Chair Lemuel Vincent watches Ak-Chin grow up

BY LEE SHAPPELL



Lemuel Vincent is seen outside of the AK Chin Entertainment complex.

**A**S LEMUEL VINCENT SITS IN his office, reflecting, he still is astounded by the growth and reach of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, of which he is vice chairman.

Last week, the community was among four major partners with the Arizona Super Bowl Host Committee, gaining incalculable exposure from the game in Glendale and from several ancillary activities. Ak-Chin believes that will be beneficial to its economic development. It bases its belief on partnering with two previous Super Bowls hosted in the Valley.

Host Committee officials, in turn, say the partnership elevated the Super Bowl because Ak-Chin shares its vision of delivering a premiere experience and creating lasting social and economic impact across local communities.

"Sitting in my office at times, thinking of everything in my past to now — starting in farming in a cotton field, to where I am as vice chairman of our community — I would never envision this," Vincent said.

"The same is true of the community itself, how far we have come. We're not a large

community, but we've done large things, great things. It's just a process instilled by past leaders of our community, that paved the way for what we have today. Now we pave it for the next generation that's going to run the community. It's a process."

The community has a rich agrarian history. Vincent's family was farmers. He worked in the fields as a boy and later farmed himself.

"Ak-Chin" is an O'odham word that means "mouth of the wash" or "place where the wash loses itself in the sand or ground," the Vekol

Wash being vital to irrigating fields in the community's early days. Ak-Chin is among the smallest of the 22 tribal nations in Arizona, with a population of 1,123 on 22,000 acres. Of that land, 16,000 acres remain farmland today.

"So, I know what it's like to work out there," Vincent said. "I was probably 12 years old in the eighth grade when I learned how to drive a tractor. When I was younger, I'd go out in the fields with my mom to pick weeds off the cotton. It was a way to earn money."

Vincent, 53, is the youngest of 10 kids. One brother designed the Ak-Chin Community seal. Another designed the logo for Ak-Chin's annual birthday celebration, Masik Tas. Multiple siblings have served on the Tribal Council and held other leadership positions in the community.

"Being a small community, most of us are related in one way or another. It was special being part of that community growing up," Vincent said. "We're still a farming community. We still identify ourselves with agriculture."


The community's partnership with Lay's Potato Chips to grow potatoes reflects how farming pays off. Ak-Chin also grows pecans, hay, barley, alfalfa and corn that are shipped all over the world. That generates resources for the community.

But, as Vincent said, Ak-Chin has grown in other ways economically.

Gaming compacts with the state spurred the arrival of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino Resort, changing the face of the community and opening more economic doors.

Ak-Chin's continuing connection with the Super Bowl gives the community exposure on a much larger stage.

"To me, personally, us being native indigenous people, I never thought we'd have the things we have now as far as economic development that make the community grow," Vincent said.

"It makes me proud to be a member of this community because of the hard work we have put in to make it come this far." 



Lemuel Vincent has risen to the level of vice chairman of the Ak-Chin Indian Community, but hasn't forgotten his agricultural roots. Here, one of the many fields on Ak-Chin land receives water from an irrigation ditch.

Bryan Mordt; file





## Maricopa Wellness receives 1st head-to-toe body contouring specialist in state

BY DR. KRISTINA DONNAY DNP, FNP-C

**M**ARICOPA WELLNESS CENTER was awarded InMode's first head-to-toe body contouring specialist in Arizona in 2020. This has ensured that Maricopa Wellness is not just a leader for body contouring in Maricopa but the entire state.

Body contouring continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in aesthetics. This, combined with ongoing innovations in non-surgical treatment options, means it is an exciting time for patients to achieve long-lasting, full-body sculpting results with little to no discomfort or downtime. Evolve and Evoke by InMode offers non-surgical body contouring through its hands-free devices to sculpt your body, tone your muscles and smooth your skin from head to toe.

### What is Evolve or Evoke Technology?

Evolve is for the body and Evoke is used on the face. The Evolve and Evoke technology use radiofrequency (RF) energy to provide targeted skin tightening, cellulite reduction, and fat reduction. Evolve is effective for refining skin and reducing fat in the abdomen, flank, buttock, arms, hips and thighs. Evolve uses an innovative solution to increase muscle strength in difficult to tone areas. Evoke can be used to diminish wrinkles, increase elasticity and decrease skin "sagging" in the face and neck. Radiofrequency treatments (such as Evolve and Evoke) work wonders on loose skin from head to toe.

Treatments are customized for a more defined appearance without incisions, scarring or downtime. Evolve body uses electromagnetic energy stimulating involuntary muscle contractions to tone muscles and improve your natural physique. The Evolve System employs multiple technologies to target fat tissue, tone muscles, and remodel skin and tissue. Both Evolve and Evoke can be customized and tailored to fit your specific needs without the need for surgery.

All the procedures under the umbrella of the Evolve and Evoke Systems require no incisions, pain or down time. As a non-invasive treatment, both are proven to be safe and effective for all skin types. Clinical studies show



that Evolve reduces more fat per treatment than either CoolSculpting or SculpSure. But, Evolve body also has the added benefit of tightening the skin and smoothing out the appearance of the treatment area.

Patients generally find treatments with Evolve and Evoke to be extremely comfortable. You will experience a warm sensation of the skin as the applicator technology identifies the optimal temperature for the thermal energy. You will not feel any pain or discomfort. Additionally, Evolve and Evoke were designed with the ultimate in application safety and patient comfort in mind. The technology utilizes built-in thermal sensors that allow us to monitor the temperature of the skin's surface throughout treatment. If any discomfort is felt, patients can push a button that will pause the treatment and let their provider make any necessary adjustments.

There is no recovery period after your Evolve or Evoke treatment. Sessions last 45 minutes to 60 minutes, depending on the treatment and treatment area. After treatment you can immediately get back to your day. Patients typically see results with Evolve or Evoke within three to eight visits, when treatments are done once a week. Because Evolve and Evoke are non-invasive, it's much

less expensive than procedures like liposuction, face lifts, tummy tucks or skin lifts.

Maricopa Wellness Center is proud to be one of the first practices not only in Arizona but the entire country to provide non-surgical body contouring with Evolve and Evoke by InMode. Are you ready to take a step toward a more youthful appearance? Tighten up, smooth it out and tone it up with treatments at Maricopa Wellness Center. No matter whether you choose Evolve or Evoke, we can provide a customized treatment plan to help you reach your aesthetic goals. All procedures are available at Maricopa Wellness Center. Learn more about this exciting non-invasive, thermal skin and body treatment. We offer free consultations.

Call us at 520-464-6193 to discuss how you can achieve optimal health with our licensed staff of professionals today!

Text MWC to 520-464-6193 to join our texting list where we share our special pricing and events.

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## Balance physical, mental well-being to live safe, secure life

BY HARRIET PHELPS, PSYD, RETIRED

**H**EADLINES TODAY ARE DEEPLY TROUBLING AND alarming. After I read about a 6-year-old taking a weapon to class and shooting his teacher, a young man's death at the hands of those who protect our communities, or the number of shootings in one month in our nation, I am beyond distressed. Are we missing something?

If we are misguided or not guided at all, we will not reach our full potential or mental wellness or well-being. Who makes the rules? Who sets the boundaries? Respecting life and property is a boundary.

From The State Of Mental Health In America, the 2023 key findings are:

From 2019 to 2020, 21% of adults were experiencing a mental illness. That is more than 50 million Americans. More than half (55%) of adults with mental illness do not receive treatment.

More than one in 10 youth in the U.S. are experiencing depression that is severely impairing their ability to function at school, at work, at home, with family or in their social life. Youth ages 12-17 (16%) report suffering from at least one major depressive episode. More than 27 million youth (12%) are experiencing severe major depression. Nationally, 28% of youth with severe depression do not receive consistent treatment. Most, 57%, with severe depression do not receive any care. They do not know what to do.

In the U.S., there are an estimated 350 individuals for every mental health provider. The number is comparable to the number of individuals per social worker.

Awareness and understanding reduce stigma through education and training. Parents can play an important role in promoting mental health and support to their children by:

- Helping children recognize and celebrate their strengths.
- Providing a safe place where children and adults can talk about things that concern them.
- Teaching and helping children problem-solve and develop plans of action to address difficult situations.
- Encouraging children to be active in a variety of school and social events.
- Teaching quiet, calm and unwind time during the day.
- Teaching how good physical and mental health is important in a balanced life.
- Helping children learn skills and empowering them to make good decisions.

- Talking about balance and choice with children. Adults can be mindful of the same.

All development is a process throughout life. When we learn to balance physical well-being and mental well-being, we live safe and secure lives.

Erik Erickson developed stages of psycho-social development that lends insight into what children must learn as they mature into adulthood. His interest was in how social interaction and relationships played a role in the development and growth of the individual.

Life has conflicts. When successful in dealing with them, we emerge with strengths and skills that serve us with a strong sense of self. Erickson believed a sense of competence motivates behaviors and actions. A sense of mastery, also referred to as ego strength or quality, provides self-worth, dignity, belonging, problem-solving, self-determination, tolerance and acceptance and respect for others.

We are a series of building blocks. We can always learn and strengthen who we are. The first classroom of our life is at home. If some blocks were missing, we can learn how any time.

It is time to find the space to teach and protect our children the best we can. My condolences go out to the many families that have lost a loved one. We must be diligent.

*Harriet Phelps is a retired psychologist and a volunteer at Be Awesome Youth Coalition and Maricopa Senior Center.*



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# ‘We were trying to get him some help’

How Arizona’s mental-health system failed Brian Simmons

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

**BRIAN SIMMONS DIED AT HIS VILLAGES AT RANCHO EL DORADO** home on Aug. 29 during an interaction with Maricopa police that started as a noise complaint and ended in a shootout.

Brian was 38. He spent the last 20 months of his life as a resident of Maricopa, battling mental-health issues that likely stemmed from an exposure to weapons-grade plutonium more than a decade earlier, an event many in his family regard as the day Brian really was killed.

From that point, Brian found trouble at each step in his life. After radiation exposure at the Idaho National Laboratory, his mental health seemed to decline.

He moved to Maricopa from Idaho Falls to build a business selling solar panels only to have his partners leave with all the money he’d put into it, according to his father, Hal.

A man with mental-health problems, Brian moved to one of the states least capable of giving him the help he needed.

According to the United Health Foundation and Mental Health America, the Grand Canyon State is ranked 46th in the United States for access to mental-health providers.

The final blow came on that hot August day when Brian’s lifeless body lie in the side yard of his home with wounds from six gunshots and more from fierce bites by a K-9 unit.

So, you might ask, how does Brian’s story end in such a horrid manner? It’s best to start at the beginning.

## An All-American boy

Growing up in Idaho Falls, Brian played multiple sports and was the prototype of an All-American boy. He was athletic, attractive, witty, intelligent.

Brian excelled in basketball. When his high school team, the Hillcrest Knights, played, it was an event not only for the Simmons family but for the entire community. They all wanted to see the next feat Brian had up his sleeve. He was the kind of player who could put the team on his back and take over a game. He also enjoyed baseball, golf, riding snowmobiles, along with hunting and fishing.

He was a prankster, who came up with nicknames for everyone, his father, Hal, explained.

“He was a friend to everybody,” Hal said. “I mean, he always teased everyone. Him and his brother Justin would come up with nicknames for everyone. They called my wife Cheryl, ‘Hernando Helmetron.’ They had all sorts of names. They’d call me ‘Bean’ and it was all goodness. It was never belittling anyone, just good fun.”

Hal remembered a time Brian got in a little hit of good-natured trouble.

“Cory (Brian’s older brother) had some of his friends over for a sleepover and they were all a few years older than Brian. They were walking through the neighborhood and found a dead squirrel someone had hit with a car,” Hal said. “So, Cory and his friends put the dead squirrel in a pizza box and told Brian that the only way they’ll let him hang out with them is for him to put on his Cub Scout uniform and go and sell that pizza to some woman down the street.”

Brian obliged, telling the woman the sale would help with his troop’s programs. He couldn’t close the sale on the first try, so Cory and his friends egged Brian on to just give the pizza to the woman.

After the woman opened the box, Hal said he and his wife heard about it.

“That woman called us screaming all these obscenities,” Hal said. “I couldn’t let Brian see it but I couldn’t stop laughing. It was so funny. It was just kids being kids.”

There was a softer side to Brian that he hid from people, as Hal explained.

“Every Christmas, he’d give presents to families in need,” Hal said. “He wasn’t ever big on talking about it, though. It was always more important to him that those families had a good Christmas than him getting credit for it.”

Soon after graduating high school and returning from a mission in Tallahassee, Fla., for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Brian was hired at the Idaho National Laboratory in 2004, which at the time, provided some of the best-paying jobs to be found in Idaho Falls.



Brian Simmons, shown here through all stages of his life, enjoyed spending time with his nieces and nephews, hunting, fishing and snowmobiling. All that changed for Brian after being exposed to weapons-grade plutonium in 2011. Thereafter, family members started to notice drastic changes in Brian’s personality, which became more pronounced up until the day he was killed in a shootout with Maricopa Police.



Submitted



Brian Simmons talks to Maricopa police officers during a call due to a noise complaint, which later escalated into a shootout where he was killed.



UNDERSTANDING HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act was signed into law in 1996 to modernize the flow of health-care information. The main thrust of HIPAA is to stipulate how personally identifiable information maintained by health-care providers and insurance companies should be protected against fraud and the limitations of how that information can be shared with anyone other than the patient and their authorized representatives.

The exposure

Brian met Ralph Stanton when they were hired as security guards at INL and the two became fast friends. Three years later, they moved up the ladder at the facility, owned by the Department of Energy and operated by Battelle Energy Alliance, and were hired as Nuclear Facility Operators at the plant's Zero Power Physics Reactor Facility.

Years down the road, they would take a trip to hell and back together. As Stanton recalls, it started on Nov. 8, 2011, when Brian and Stanton were exposed to weapons-grade Plutonium 239 and Americium 241, both highly radioactive substances.

This would be the date that family members believe Brian was handed a death sentence. Video of the moment of Brian and Stanton's exposure can be found online.

Brian and Stanton were part of a 16-member crew, which was to repackage a Plutonium 239 stainless-steel-clad plate from a clamshell container, place it in a can and repackage it in a drum to be sent to another Department of Energy site.

Looking at the container, Stanton had doubts about whether it should even be opened and took his concern to management. Word came down from the site manager, "Open it or go home without a job," Stanton recalled.

As Stanton and Brian expected, disaster struck. The clamshell containing the radioactive plate was compromised. When Stanton opened it, the appearance of black powder, a result of oxidation of the plate, meant that everyone in the room that day was exposed to differing levels that could cause radiation poisoning.

"When I opened it, Brian said, 'We've got powder. I hope that wasn't what I thought it was,'" Stanton said.

Unfortunately, Brian was right.

His and Stanton's lives were never the same.

Living with a new reality

According to the Mayo Clinic, the physical symptoms of Acute Radiation Sickness include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, headache, fever, dizziness and disorientation, weakness and fatigue, hair loss, bloody vomit and stools from internal bleeding, infections and low blood pressure — many of which Brian and Stanton experienced.

"It seemed like we'd take turns," Stanton said. "We'd drive to work and one of us would get sick. We'd pull over and have to run out into the desert and vomit."

Stanton said they had extreme fits of bloody diarrhea and vomited blood.

"You could tell that the radiation was killing us from the inside," Stanton said.

As the years passed, mental symptoms from the exposure also became apparent.

In 2019, Stanton was diagnosed with severe depression.

"It's a lot more than one day you wake up and you have the blues," Stanton said. "It's debilitating. It was a lot worse than I would have ever imagined."

A few months before his untimely death, Brian reached out to Stanton.

"He wanted me and my wife to come down to Maricopa and help him put on a show," Stanton said. "He offered to put us up and pay us \$10,000 each. But we couldn't make sense of it. Brian had a quick wit, but he wasn't a comedian, and we knew that there wasn't a show planned."

"I'd talked to Brian, but it wasn't Brian. It was his voice, but he wasn't there."

Stanton had spent countless hours educating himself on radiation exposure and reached out to a doctor he'd been seeing to ask about Brian.

"I'm not an expert, but I think Brian had schizophrenia when I talked to him," Stanton said. "I asked a doctor who

Submitted

“I’d talked to Brian, but it wasn’t Brian. It was his voice, but he wasn’t there.”

RALPH STANTON

specialized in it, and he told me that was happening with Chernobyl victims.”

In 1986, two massive explosions at Chernobyl, a Russian nuclear power plant, killed 28 people and left thousands sickened from cancer and other conditions from the fallout.

As the years passed, mental illness from the disaster also became a concern. In fact, the Chernobyl Forum, a conglomeration of United Nations agencies founded in 2003 to scientifically assess the environmental consequences of the disaster, concluded that mental health was the largest public-health problem unleashed by the accident.

In 2000, Ukrainian researchers Dr. Konstantin N. Loganovsky and Dr. Tatiana K. Loganovskaja conducted a study of workers who performed cleanup duties at the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone from 1986 to 1991. They found those people were five times more likely to have schizophrenia disorders than the public in Ukraine.

Additional studies show those exposed at Chernobyl also were at a significantly higher risk of developing other psychological conditions, including anxiety or depression.

A LOOK AT IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY

The Idaho National Laboratory is primarily a research facility in Idaho Falls, which is owned by the United States Department of Energy and managed by Battelle Energy Alliance.

Historically, most research done at INL has concerned how nuclear reactors behave.

More than 50 reactors have been built at the site, including the world's first nuclear submarine.

While most have been decommissioned, INL has the largest concentration of reactors in the world.

INL employs about 4,000 people and sits on an 890-square-mile complex in the high desert of eastern Idaho.

INL began its life as a U.S. government artillery test range in the 1940s after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. In 1949, the federal research facility was established as the National Reactor Testing Station.

During its lifetime, INL has been involved in three accidents that made national headlines:

■ In 1961, the only fatal nuclear-reactor incident to occur in the United States happened when a control rod was pulled too far out of a reactor, effectively destroying it and leading to a power excursion and steam explosion. The blast killed three men working on the reactor. Due to the excessive contamination, all three were buried in lead-lined coffins.

■ On Nov. 8, 2011, Brian Simmons and Ralph Stanton were exposed to Plutonium-239. Both sued BEA in the coming years and both settled out of court. Terms of the settlements were not disclosed.

■ In April 2018, four canisters of depleted uranium sludge exploded, ejecting their lids at INL. The waste originated from the decommissioned Rocky Flats weapons plutonium-production plant. Vincent Ialenti researched the drum breaches and attributed them to “systemic incentives to speed up waste cleanup projects beyond their organizational capacity, without commensurately expanding their safety or oversight mechanisms.”

**A downward spiral**

Was Brian, in fact, schizophrenic at the time of his death? The answer to that question will never be known.

Brian was a strong-willed man determined to live life on his terms. As his father, Hal, explained, those terms were becoming more and more difficult for those close to him to embrace with each passing day.

Hal made the trip down to Maricopa in February of 2022 to visit his son, and while the two were talking, Brian started fighting with Hal. A family member stepped in to pull Brian off his father.

Hal was upset at Brian's actions, but he had no desire to file charges.

"We were in the truck together and I said something that Brian didn't like, and he jumped over the console and started beating on me," Hal said. "It was a scene, and a passerby called the law and before we could get out of there, they were onsite."

Being that Hal was Brian's father, it was a domestic violence incident, which meant the officer could press charges. Brian went to jail for 10 days. Hal filed for a Title 36, or a 72-hour hold for a psychiatric evaluation for his son. It's an involuntary process for care and treatment of those with a mental disorder. It was a father's attempt to get help for his son.

"I told everyone who would listen that Brian needed a brain scan or something," Hal said.

While Brian was in jail, Hal saw Brian's living conditions at home.

"His house was awful," Hal said. "The Brian I knew was obsessed with being clean and organized. Before he'd moved to Maricopa, he'd get in my truck and ask me, 'Dad, why do you have all that crap in here? Clean it up!' He didn't like any kind of mess in his house or in his vehicle."

Hal said he arranged to get Brian's home cleaned. For two days, four professional cleaners and a friend of Brian's worked on the inside and outside of the home.

The effort was massive, but once Brian got back in the home, he wasted little time getting it back to a disorganized, cluttered state.

When Hal was back in Maricopa six months later to take care of Brian's final affairs after his death, he couldn't tell that the house had ever been cleaned.

"It was worse than it was ... the first time," Hal said.

**Coming to Maricopa**

Brian moved to Maricopa in January 2021.

"He told me that he met a couple, and they were all going to move to Arizona to sell solar panels," Hal said. "The couple had moved down there a few months earlier."

It didn't take long for life to start falling apart for Brian in the desert.

Hal said that after six months, the couple vanished and left Brian high and dry. Hal believes they may have taken Brian for as much as \$200,000.

"I've got a cousin that's a lawyer who is working to get all of Brian's bank statements from Chase and we're trying to figure out what happened there," Hal said.



## MANAGING MENTAL-HEALTH CARE: FINDING HELP

Brianna Reinhold, a licensed counselor in Maricopa and owner of Northern Lights Therapy, explains persistence is key to helping a loved one experiencing a mental-health crisis.

“Don’t take no for an answer,” Reinhold said. “You’re going to get pushback.”

Reinhold said when the pushback comes, don’t give in to it.

“Keep pushing. If you don’t like that answer, go to the next one,” she said. “Find somebody that will sit there and walk you through it, and don’t be afraid to ask questions if you don’t understand.”

Here’s a list of resources in Maricopa and Pinal County.

**MARICOPA**  
**Northern Lights**  
**Therapy, PLLC,**  
623-243-2774

**Wells Counseling**  
**Services,** 520-709-6476

**LaFrontera-Empact,**  
520-316-6068 or  
480-317-2212

**CASA GRANDE**  
**Community Bridges,**  
877-931-9142

**Corazon Behavioral**  
**Health Services,**  
520-836-4278 or  
520-836-1786

**Horizon Health and**  
**Wellness,** 833-431-4449

Brian became a familiar face around Maricopa — and especially with the Maricopa Police Department.

In 20 months, Brian had 22 documented interactions with MPD, according to documents obtained by InMaricopa. Among them was Brian trying to file charges alleging his property had been stolen.

His first brush with the law came in March, 2021 at a routine traffic stop, where he was found to be driving on a suspended license.

The next was in January of 2022 — meaning his final 21 episodes with police were compressed within an eight-month period. There was an arrest in February of 2022 by the Chandler Police Department, where they found Brian driving a borrowed car with 13 guns and rifles. There was no additional information available about who owned the firearms.

On one call, Brian wanted to file a report that his car had been stolen. The officer on duty told Brian that his car was impounded and gave him the lot where it could be found. The report pointed out that Brian’s car had been abandoned alongside the road prior to being impounded by DPS.

Another time, Brian was charged with a misdemeanor on electronic communication of threats. In that investigation, Brian told officers he’d been robbed of \$100,000 in goods and cash while trying to help people he’d met.

There were also a couple of calls involving Brian making threats, trying to get people to return goods he’d gifted them. On one call, he said he’d given away \$1 million in gold, cash and Michael Jordan sneakers and wanted them back.

During one incident at Desert Financial inside Fry’s grocery store, reports state he tried to jump over the desk and assault a bank teller but was thwarted by a plexiglass barrier.

In the final month of Brian’s life, there were six calls leading up to the day of his death.

One involved a noise complaint in which he claimed he was working on a movie and gave the police the gift of a pair of cowboy boots made for UFC fighter Connor McGregor along with a box of bullets.

In another incident, he took off his shirt at the intersection of John Wayne Parkway and Honeycutt and threw it into oncoming traffic. When officers arrived, he ran from them, giving them the finger and running to his house. There was a criminal trespass charge for crossing Union Pacific Railroad tracks in an unauthorized area. The same report states that police officers watched Brian run into his house, but opted not to confront him that night, “due to Brian’s history of violence and his agitated state.”

### Cries for help

It was clear to Maricopa Police officers Brian had mental health issues. Many of their reports obtained by InMaricopa noted that.

In addition, Hal and Cory, Brian’s brother, say they communicated those concerns to MPD officers. Both saw disaster on the horizon and were trying to do whatever they could to avert it.

On Aug. 13, about two weeks before his death, a call was made to Brian’s residence after he posted images of firearms tied with shoelaces on Facebook. At the behest of Brian’s brother, Cory, a crisis worker came by Brian’s residence with four officers. Brian refused to talk with the worker about mental-health issues. Instead, he gave pairs of shoes to each police officer and the crisis worker.

“I actually called the cops to help me get a crisis team there on the 13th of August,” Cory said. “And it was a completely wasted effort for what went on that night. We asked for the cops’ help. We pleaded with them to try to get us some help. We didn’t know what to do. He’s an adult.”

The police also saw trouble coming.

“Two days before they shot and killed him, they called me and said, ‘Your brother says you’re coming to get him. Are you coming to get him?’” Cory recalled. “And I said I’d been talking to him. He would answer the phone and then he wouldn’t. It was really sporadic to be able to talk to him and I said, ‘Whatever you do, please don’t kill my brother. We’re trying to get him help.’ They kept telling us the wrong officer would shoot him if he got too aggressive.”

Even when it’s apparent to everyone else that someone is dealing with mental-health problems, it’s difficult to get that person help if they don’t want it, as in Brian’s case, according to family members.

Making it more difficult is that Arizona ranks at the bottom of the country when it comes to mental health providers. Mental Health America, in its 2022 report, ranked Arizona 46th in access to mental-health providers. Another part of the same study that examined the overall population in need of mental-health care, patients with unmet needs and the size of the mental health workforce, ranked Arizona 49th.

Brianna Reinhold, the owner of Northern Lights Therapy in Maricopa and a licensed professional counselor, put it this way:

“My experience with Arizona mental health systems? They suck. I don’t know how else to put it in better terms,” she said.

Reinhold pointed out that there’s an intersection between personal freedoms and getting people help that must be balanced.

“If you have anybody over the age of 18 that needs services, most providers are going to say that person needs to reach out to us directly because they’re a legal adult,” Reinhold said. “So, you’re going to start to get push back as it is, if you can get them into a facility.”

Months earlier, Hal made the effort to get Brian help when he had him committed for 72 hours, but Brian learned from the situation and effectively cut his family off afterward.

“I was out to dinner one night with some people, and I got a phone call, and I didn’t recognize the number, so

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### A LOOK AT TITLE 36

If an individual suffers a mental-health crisis and is unwilling to get voluntary help, an involuntary commitment process is available under Title 36. A.R.S. § 36-520(A), which states, “Any responsible individual may apply for a court-ordered evaluation of a person who is alleged to be, as a result of a mental disorder, a danger to self or to others, persistently or acutely disabled, or gravely disabled and who is unwilling or unable to undergo a voluntary evaluation.”

Screening: Applications for involuntary evaluation and emergency admission are submitted to a screening agency, which has 24 hours to observe the patient. If after 24 hours, further evaluation is warranted, the individual is then transferred to a contracted evaluation agency and has 72 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) to complete the Court Ordered Evaluation. If the evaluation finds treatment is required, and the patient remains unwilling to get treatment voluntarily, a Petition for Court-Ordered Treatment is completed by one of the two evaluating doctors.

I answered it and it was Brian and he says, what are you doing Dad? I said, ‘Well, I’m in Texas Roadhouse,’” said Hal, who was eating with five other family members.

“And he says, ‘Oh, well, real good. I’m in here with all these crazy people,’” Hal recalled. “And anyway, he just went off on me and said, ‘I’ll never talk to you again,’ ... that’s how bad he was. And, I just had to hang up on him because everybody at the table could hear and the phone wasn’t on speaker. That’s really the last time I talked to him. He did text me back and say that I love you. But that’s all I got back from him. He was not in a good place.”

Sometimes, as Reinhold explained, people who need help but don’t want to face that fact figure out how to game the system.

It creates a situation where mental health professionals must try to hit a moving target.

“All they have to go off of is what’s happening in front of them in the moment,” Reinhold said. “This is where our system is going to fail people, because those that need it, if they know how to play the game well enough or they’re intelligent enough, they’re going to say the right things and are going to get themselves out.”

Brian had figured out the system. If he didn’t say anything, they couldn’t do anything.

When the police and the crisis team got back to Cory after that visit with Brian on Aug. 13, there wasn’t a lot to report.

“They called me back and said, ‘We can’t really tell you a lot because of HIPAA, but he didn’t display anything that could allow us to arrest him to get him in to get him some help,’” Cory said.

Families trying to help their adult children are going to face difficulty. Being out of state compounds that difficulty.

“If I had to help a grown child in another state, I wouldn’t even know where to start,” Reinhold said. “The laws are different everywhere and I know the laws in Arizona, but I’d be at a disadvantage in another state.”

### The day it all ended

Brian’s mental-health issues put him and the Maricopa Police Department on a collision course for a tragic ending.

In a copy of the final investigation by the Pinal County Sheriff’s office obtained by InMaricopa, Brian told officers the day of his shooting – an interaction that started as a noise complaint – that he’d been up all night crying and started the interaction with smiles, fist bumps and hugs with the responding officers, who knew him by name.

But as the officers asserted themselves and asked Brian to turn his music down, the temperature of the interaction changed. Brian went from friendly to hostile.

Officers’ body-worn cameras of the incident show it all change in an instant.

Brian sat down in a lawn chair in his driveway and produced two handguns, which he later put down and followed up by brandishing a hatchet.

In the video footage, police can be heard yelling at Brian to put down the guns, then the hatchet and later shouting commands at him to get on the ground.

He responded with multiple obscene hand gestures and can later be heard telling officers, “I’ve got a bigger voice than you.”

After the police fired a shot of non-lethal force, essentially a bean bag, to get Brian to comply with their commands, the interaction got worse. Brian started walking to the carport and back into his house.

Then, according to the investigation report and video footage, said, “You’re —ing done mother——-,” which led to another shot of less lethal force.

Brian walked backward into his house where officers feared he had more weapons and ammunition, which the PCSO’s investigation confirmed.

Brian retrieved a 12-gauge shotgun from his house, sought cover from behind a cinderblock wall in his side yard and fired two rounds of birdshot at police officers. Officers returned fire, killing Brian. The investigation showed that Brian’s shotgun had been reloaded.

According to the Pinal County Medical Examiner’s report, Brian was shot six times. He suffered two bullet wounds to the chest cavity that damaged multiple vital organs and another to the back. He also suffered multiple dog-bite wounds from a K9 unit.

### Looking for answers

The shootout, a block from Butterfield Elementary School, demonstrates the dangers of untreated mental illness.

Brian’s 21 prior interactions with police highlight the inadequacies of Arizona’s mental health and legal systems that left Brian’s family helpless.

Brian’s story, unfortunately, isn’t all that unique. The Washington Post curates a database of police-involved shootings that dates back to 2015. Nationally, there have been 1,695 shooting deaths by police during interactions with mentally ill people, which accounts for roughly 21 percent of all police-involved shooting deaths.

Arizona is fifth on the list with 63. California leads the way with 234.

The issue of mental illness and policing is of growing concern. Studies done as recently as 10 years ago estimated that 1 in 10 police interactions were with mentally ill subjects.

Michael Scott, director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and a clinical professor in the School of Criminology & Criminal Justice at Arizona State University, recently analyzed data with the Phoenix Police Department concerning mental illness.

“The frequency with which police officers are encountering people with mental illness does appear to be on the rise,” Scott said. “I recently did some work with the Phoenix Police Department in reviewing some of their data and we estimated that mental illness may play a factor in as many as one call in every eight. And that’s a lot of interactions.

“Most of those interactions are going to be resolved peacefully. The mental disorder may not be acute: It’s not serious, it’s not dangerous. It’s just a person having some difficulty. But it does necessarily increase the probability that at least some of those encounters and more of them will be high risk.”

In a September interview with InMaricopa during his final days as Maricopa’s police chief, James Hughes wouldn’t speak directly about the situation with Brian, but Hughes said he believes that dealing with all people effectively — including those mentally-ill – is part of their job.

“They are social problems, mental illness and homelessness,” Hughes said. “Often those calls happen during hours when the city is closed. So, who gets the call? The police.”

Hughes pointed out that many times, the police know these people and can offer important background.

“I think the police should still be involved in some of those people-related things,” Hughes said. “If you’ve engaged with the community, you know who Joe is and what his problems are. He may be a veteran who maybe served his country and was injured and is having some problems.

“Yet when you have a 25-year-old police officer who is trained in compliance with patrol and he’s saying, ‘Get your hands out of your pocket! What are you doing here? No, you can’t go to the bathroom,’ it’s not going to end well.”

Scott agreed that tone, when dealing with someone with mental illness is important.

“Once the police officers have the sense of whether this person has some kind of a mental disorder, then it’s usually advised that police officers not resort to barking, or shouting commands, which they normally would do if the person was completely mentally fit,” Scott said.

“The police might use aggressive language, assertively giving commands in a very loud and authoritative voice. But that often is counter-productive in dealing with a person who may be suffering some form of mental disorder. It can be disorienting to the person. They may not be able to follow the commands, it can be intimidating, they could actually escalate the tensions rather than de-escalate them.”

Hughes said that whenever possible, it’s a good idea to keep the situation light.

“We’ve done a good job teaching officers that if you ask these people to do the same thing six times, the seventh time is not going to be the magical response,” Hughes said. “Re-evaluate what you’re doing. Inject a little humor or take a different approach. That’s how you de-escalate.”

Prior to becoming a counselor, Reinhold served in the criminal-justice system as a detention officer and worked with the Glendale Police Department as a volunteer, offering peer support for officers in officer-involved shootings and deaths in the line of duty. She believes that for the most part police officers are often thrust into an impossible situation.



Brian Simmons enjoyed fishing in Idaho and worked out regularly after moving to Maricopa in 2021. He was killed during a shootout with the Maricopa Police Department in August.

“They’re the attacked ones,” Reinhold said. “When things don’t go perfectly, they take all the blame. But if we’re gonna send the police as the first response, we need them to be better trained in mental-health first aid and know how to deal with that type of population.

“And then, we need a secondary source for callouts once they’ve identified that it’s a mental-health issue. How can we include local resources or their own team, that’s staffed with mental-health providers to help in those situations? That’s really what every agency needs.”

Monica Williams, public information officer for Maricopa’s police, fire, and emergency management, said training for Maricopa’s police officers is ongoing.

“The city of Maricopa Police Department’s officers participate in de-escalation and crisis intervention training prior to their initial field duty and repeat the training annually,” Williams said. “Those trainings ensure our officers understand how to approach a range of dynamic scenarios and begin a dialog with individuals in crisis. The primary goal is to ensure the public and our officers are safe, while de-escalating situations.

“Our department has designated Crisis Intervention Specialists, who are officers who have elected to participate in further training beyond the annual requirement for all officers.”



“He was everything under the sun and then some — and absolutely taken down in his prime.”  
CORY SIMMONS,  
BRIAN'S BROTHER

Those officers are liaisons with community partners that provide resources, such as mental-health counseling, substance-abuse treatment and shelter space to those in crisis. While the Police Department does not directly provide the resources, according to Williams, officers are equipped to connect individuals with mental-health resources or other resources they need, including Community Bridges Inc., Horizon Health & Wellness, La Frontera Impact & Maricopa Behavioral Health Services.

### Remembering Brian

It will take years for the Simmons family to recover from losing Brian twice, first to radiation poisoning and later to the exchange of gunfire.

“I feel like I lost my best friend,” Cory, Brian’s brother, said. “We did everything together. But after the exposure, Brian changed. He cut himself off from the family. I couldn’t understand it. He loved snowmobiling and then he’s telling me that he can’t stand the cold and wants to move to Arizona? I didn’t know what to think.”

Cory said that prior to the exposure, Brian had the world at his feet.

“He could get any girl,” Cory said. “He could play any sport. He was smart and funny. He was talented in

every way, shape, or form. He was everything under the sun and then some — and absolutely taken down in his prime.”

Cheri, Brian’s sister, said he became an older brother to her sons. She was 10 years older than Brian.

“I got married kind of young and started having kids and my boys were really close with him,” Cheri said. “They liked to hang out with him, and he was really good to my kids. He would play basketball with them, take them places or he would play video games with them. He’d always buy the newest game. So, they love going to play with him. He would take them out to eat and just go do things with them because they were kind of, like, his little brothers in a way.”

Cheri saw the change after the radiation exposure and during Brian’s lawsuit against BEA, from which Brian received an undisclosed settlement.

“He just changed,” Cheri said. “He struggled with things, he started pulling away from people and kind of isolating himself. He didn’t want to be around everybody as much and he was stressed out because he was going through a court case, and he just changed.”

“He started worrying about things that he never worried about before.”

That, in turn, caused Cheri to worry about him.

“I always kept trying to call him,” she said. “We were trying to get him some help, but we didn’t realize all of the effects that had happened to him, the schizophrenia from the radiation. We didn’t realize that’s what it was.”

Hal put it more succinctly.

“I was plumb stupid about the effects of the radiation poisoning and mental health,” Hal said. “I didn’t realize what was going on until I talked to Ralph. When we started talking, everything started making sense.”

Hal and Stanton hadn’t talked that often before Brian’s death, but curiosity and a hunch led the two to see if Brian had any other answers to share from the great beyond.

Brian was cremated and his ashes were at the wake held the night before the funeral. Stanton and his wife, Jodi, were on hand.

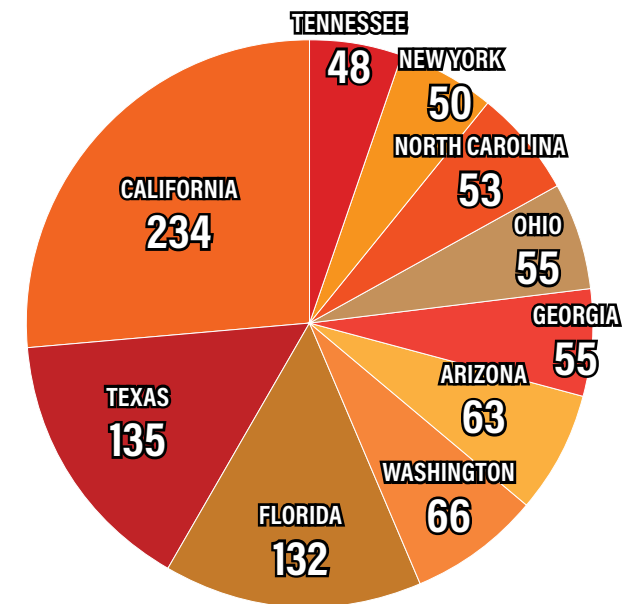
“An hour before that started, I got a radiological device from one of my friends,” Stanton said. “And I talked Hal into taking Brian’s ashes into one of the back rooms. I took a scoop like, you know, like laundry-detergent scoop, off the top of his ashes, put it on a piece of paper.”

The device perked up as Stanton took a radioactivity reading.

“And his ashes were still (radioactive) hot.”

## Deaths in police interactions with mentally ill people

Top 10 by State since 2015



Source: Washington Post

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## Education Notes



### Region champ MHS girls' soccer headed to state

The region champion Maricopa High girls soccer team beat Basha, 2-1, on Feb. 9 in a state-tournament play-in game and made the 16-team Class 6A state playoff field as the No. 11 seed. The Lady Rams opened tourney play at sixth-seeded Pinnacle.



### MUSD job fair

District human-resources staff hosted more than 60 prospective employees interested in joining the MUSD family. Fourteen offers were made to fill teaching and classified positions and more than 70 additional applications were received within days of the event. Nathaly Montano, MUSD recruitment and retention specialist, plans to attend five more recruitment events in the coming weeks.



### Maricopa Friends of the Arts make grand donation

A stunning grand piano arrived at Maricopa High, a generous donation from the Maricopa Friends of the Arts. Choir director Kelsey Snyder and her students were the first to play the magnificent piano.

### Teachers earn national certification

Five MUSD teachers have attained National Board Certified Teacher status, the gold standard in the profession. New NBCT teachers are Tyler Jump (Maricopa Wells) and Lindsey Sulik (Maricopa Elementary). NBCT teachers whose certification was renewed are Katherine Persitz (Maricopa High), Jacqueline Hahn (Maricopa Wells) and Jennifer Cameron (Maricopa Wells).



### AFJROTC incentive flight

MHS Air Force Junior ROTC cadets Jacob Vonderheide, Minnie Jones, Irabella Morales and Arianna Cox flew approximately 80 miles round trip from Chandler Municipal Airport to Ak-Chin Airport. Maricopa High partners with the Civil Air Patrol annually to provide incentive flights for cadets with a passion for aviation.



Victor Moreno and Submitted photos



### Marketing students taking care of business

Maricopa High marketing students earned 13 first-place awards and 43 total medals at the Southern Region District Career Development Conference. Visit [InMaricopa.com](http://InMaricopa.com) to learn how the students fared at the Arizona DECA State Career Development Conference Feb. 23-25.

### Butterfield STEAM event

Students and parents researched robotics, explored astronomy and built catapults at the Butterfield Elementary STEAM event. It was the highlight of parent-teacher conferences and reinforced science, technology, engineering, arts and math concepts students have learned.



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# There's a certain look of sameness on Lady Rams' softball team

BY CAMERON JOBSON



captions here

**W**HEN MARICOPA HIGH SOFTBALL coach Tom Dugan turns to his right-hand girl, it's an Etzel sister. But then, his left-hand girl also is an Etzel twin.

Emma and Alyssa Etzel are seniors taking their last run for the Lady Rams, excited to make even more memories together with their team.

Although twins, they're not identical, they say. In fact, their dominant hands are opposite. Emma is a right-handed pitcher and outfielder, Alyssa a left-handed outfielder and infielder.

"I love being teammates, it's hard to imagine not being teammates," Emma said.

The sisters decided to stay together through college and will be headed to Wayland Baptist University in Texas, to further their athletic and academic careers this fall.

**"We had the idea of going to different colleges because it would be a different experience, since we are always together. But later on, we decided we would rather stick together."**

EMMA ETZEL

"We've always done everything together," Alyssa said. "We're even each other's throwing partners."

"We had the idea of going to different colleges because it would be a different experience, since we are always together," Emma added. "But later on, we decided we would rather stick together."

Ari Cox is another senior to keep an eye on this season. Aside from being a Lady Rams star, Cox is an outstanding student and member of the ROTC.

She recently received two congressional nominations and the J-100 Scholarship, granting her a 100% paid tuition at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

"They're just great young ladies," Dugan said. "I might have opened some doors, gave some words of wisdom, but look, they did it all on their own."

Victor Moreno

Dugan is anticipating another momentous year for the Lady Rams' varsity with 18 strong players. Dugan's goal is to make the top 16 and the 6A playoff field. Last year, Maricopa was 19th.

"We're really trying to pitch better," Dugan said. "We can teach a lot of things, but pitching is another animal."


Dugan sometimes dedicates entire practices to pitching — filming the throw and perfecting the nit-picky mechanics of the ball's trajectory. So come game time, it should be like target practice.

Fostering a sense of family builds the base for success, he said.

"Softball is a difficult sport," Dugan added. "You fail about 70% of the time, so we have to figure out how to deal with that."

Spending time with each other outside of the diamond is just as important. The Lady Rams get together once a week for a team dinner, allowing the girls to sit down, socialize and get to know each other.

Dugan wants the girls to lean on each other and create bonds that transfer onto the field.

"I try to teach them to be focused inside the gates and have fun on the outside," Dugan said. 

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## Central Arizona College's Maricopa campus — celebrating 10 years

BY ANGELA ASKEY, CAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

**F**OR MORE THAN 50 YEARS, CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE HAS been serving and educating the diverse communities of Pinal County. With five campuses located strategically throughout the county, CAC provides accessible, educational, economic, cultural and personal growth opportunities for those of all ages.

Since the opening of the Signal Peak Campus in Coolidge in the fall of 1969, CAC has extended its accessibility throughout Pinal County, becoming an important community-building entity. The goal of the college is to create a world-class learner experience.

During the 1972-73 academic year, the state board for community colleges authorized a 48-bed addition to the dormitories at the Signal Peak Campus and approved preliminary construction plans for the Arizona College of Technology, now known as the Aravaipa Campus.

In 1982, CAC began offering classes in Apache Junction, using portable classrooms at Apache Junction High School. From 1985-1987, CAC held classes for students from the East Valley at the Grand Hotel. During the summer of 1987, the Superstition Mountain Campus opened at its current location.



On August 10, 2006, a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially opened the new Maricopa Center in the heart of this thriving community.

Voters of Pinal County authorized the college to expand educational opportunities and accessibility throughout the county by approving a nearly \$99 million general-obligation bond in November 2008. This stamp of approval allowed CAC to begin the process of building new campuses in the San Tan Valley area and in Maricopa, while also upgrading facilities at the Signal Peak, Superstition Mountain and Aravaipa campuses.

Central Arizona College's San Tan Center in The Shops at Copper Basin opened for business along the Hunt Highway Corridor in 2009.

Two years later, CAC conducted groundbreaking ceremonies for its campus in Maricopa at 17945 N. Regent Drive, giving the college the ability to extend services to the growing community. The evidence of a need to build a campus in Maricopa was reflected in its enrollment growth. The Maricopa Campus opened on Jan. 2, 2013.

In December of that year, a ribbon cutting was held at the new San Tan Valley Campus and classes started in January 2014.

As CAC marks a decade at the beautiful Maricopa Campus, we celebrate its unique features, including state-of-the art culinary and nursing-assistance classrooms, an E-sports gaming room, student lounge, makerspace lab, and community rooms available for the public to rent. Many classes that meet the general education requirements for all CAC certificates and degrees are offered at the Maricopa Campus.

In the years to come, the college looks forward to increased community engagement and expanded events that meet the needs of residents in Maricopa.

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MUSD Spring Sports Schedule

BASEBALL

*Coach Brad Vericker*  
**Game times:** 3:45 p.m.  
2/23: at Maryvale; 2/24: North; 2/27: at Camelback.  
3/1: Dobson; 3/8: Gila Ridge; 3/15: at San Luis; 3/20: Skyline; 3/22: at Carl Hayden; 3/28: at Cesar Chavez; 3/31: Cesar Chavez.  
4/4: at West Point; 4/6: West Point; 4/10: at Valley Vista; 4/12: Valley Vista; 4/13: Tolleson; 4/18: at Tolleson; 4/21: Shadow Ridge; 4/24: at Shadow Ridge.

SOFTBALL

*Coach Tom Dugan*  
**Game times:** 3:45 p.m.  
2/23: Maryvale; 2/24: at North; 2/27: Camelback.  
3/1: at Dobson; 3/8: at Gila Ridge; 3/15: San Luis; 3/20: at Skyline; 3/22: Carl Hayden; 3/28: Cesar Chavez; 3/31: at Cesar Chavez.  
4/4: West Point; 4/6: at West Point; 4/10: Valley Vista; 4/12: at Valley Vista; 4/13: at Tolleson; 4/18: Tolleson; 4/21: at Shadow Ridge; 4/24: Shadow Ridge.

GIRLS TENNIS

*Coach Kevin Struble*  
**Match times:** 3:30 p.m.  
2/23: at Gilbert; 2/28: Dobson. 3/2: at Basha; 3/7: Skyline; 3/8: at Williams Field; 3/9: Desert Ridge; 3/21: Campo Verde; 3/23: at Cibola; 3/28: at Gila Ridge; 3/30: San Luis. 4/4: at Shadow Ridge; 4/6: Higley; 4/11: at Mountain Pointe; 4/13: Queen Creek.

BOYS VOLLEYBALL

*Coach Tia Kannapel*  
**Match times:** 6 p.m.  
2/28: Westwood.  
3/3: at Queen Creek; 3/7: North; 3/21: at Camelback; 3/23: at Corona del Sol; 3/24: Carl Hayden; 3/28: at Skyline; 3/30: Shadow Ridge.  
4/4: Cesar Chavez; 4/6: at Valley Vista; 4/11: Dobson; 4/13: Basha; 4/18: at Shadow Ridge; 4/20: at Cesar Chavez; 4/21: Chandler; 4/25: at Mountain Ridge; 4/27: Valley Vista.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

*Coach Tia Kannapel*  
**Match times:** 4 p.m.  
Homes matches played at Copper Sky Recreation Club (Tucson Racquet Club); 2/27: Youngkers.  
3/3: Amphitheater; 3/6: Sequoia Pathway; 3/8: Chaparral; 3/20: Cienega; 3/22: at Mountain Pointe (Tempe Kiwanis Park); 3/27: at Desert Vista; 3/29: Corona del Sol. 4/3: at Marana; 4/5: at Ironwood Ridge; 4/10: Marana Mountain View.

TRACK AND FIELD

*Coach Victor Rodriguez*  
**Meet times:** 2 p.m.  
2/22: Multi events.  
3/1: at Tempe; 3/29: at Higley.

BOYS TENNIS

*Coach Tyler Miller*  
**Match times:** 3:30 p.m.  
2/23: Gilbert; 2/28: at Dobson. 3/2: Basha; 3/7: at Skyline; 3/8: Williams Field; 3/9: at Desert Ridge; 3/21: at Campo Verde; 3/23: Cibola; 3/28: Gila Ridge; 3/30: at San Luis. 4/4: Shadow Ridge; 4/6: at Higley; 4/11: Mountain Pointe; 4/13: Queen Creek.

Source: Maricopa Unified School District

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# Build green-thumb skills with container-gardening

BY HARRIET PHELPS



Starting plants in black pots provides more heat. Planting in containers with standardized potting soil eliminates concerns about adverse soil conditions or in-ground pests like nematodes.

Account for seasonal changes. I killed most of my plants because I thought like a Midwesterner about soil, geography, weather and growing schedules.

What can be grown in containers? Anything and in any quantity. Propagators and breeders developed varieties that grow fast and are suitable for containers. The more desirable plants are those that fruit over a period of time, such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, melons, leafy lettuce, Swiss chard, green onions and herbs. The outer leaves are picked for consumption and the centers are left for growth.

Different species can be grown in the same container: onions, lettuce, corn, tomatoes. Some are tall, some short and some cascade over the edges. Larger containers, such as whiskey barrels, can hold dwarf trees. Small vegetables can then be grown under the canopy of the foliage.

Containers include pots or bowls, recycled buckets, cans, boxes, plastic bags, Styrofoam coolers and bushel baskets.

What to plant in a container? That's easy: Remember thriller, spiller and filler. Thriller is the tall, expressive plant that commands attention. Spiller is the plant that spills over the edges, flowing and colorful. Filler is the smaller plant for vacant areas.

When filling the container, remember to use lightweight mix, such as indoor plant mix or potting soil that drains well. You can use a homemade substitute of equal parts sharp-coarse sand, soil and compost or peat moss. Include a slow-release balanced fertilizer such as Osmocote 14-14-14.

Do not fill the container to the top. Leave 1-2 inches of space for watering the plant.

Do not pack the space tight. Plants need space for water penetration and oxygen. This allows for good root development, aeration and growth. Perlite is a good additive to keep the soil loose.

Give it a try. Container gardening is fun, easy and rewarding.

Harriet Phelps has been a Master Gardener with the University of Arizona for 17 years.

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



**VEGETABLES AND FLOWERS GROWING IN CONTAINERS.** This style of gardening is fun and accommodates lifestyles that do not require large spaces.

And there are few limitations on what you can grow in containers when space is tight, or you want to grow only a few favorites.

For protection from critters, pots may prohibit gophers, squirrels and rabbits from munching on your plants.

Plants in pots are mobile and provide accommodation for weather and pleasing arrangements among other plants, depending on what you are planting, your need and space. Flowers and vegetables may be grown in the same pot.

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## most expensive HOME SOLD



Address	Feb. 9	560,000
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This lakeside single-story home in the Lakes at Rancho El Dorado is brand new, with three bedrooms and a study. The kitchen features quartz countertops. The master bedroom has a large walk-in closet and a private bathroom with two sinks. The home has a three-car garage and a brick driveway. It also has a large, covered patio.

<b>Community:</b> The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado	<b>Builder:</b> Richmond American Homes
<b>Square feet:</b> 2,220	<b>Year built:</b> 2022
<b>Price per square foot:</b> \$252.25	<b>Bedrooms:</b> 3
<b>Days on market:</b> 42	<b>Bathrooms:</b> 2

- 2. 42566 W. Bravo Drive, Rancho El Dorado ..... \$550,000
- 3. 41917 W. Granada Drive, Glennwilde ..... \$535,000
- 4. 41862 W. Granada Drive, Glennwilde ..... \$505,000
- 5. 41598 W. Laramie Road, Glennwilde ..... \$495,000

## least expensive HOME SOLD

19528 N. Kari Lane.	Feb. 9	232,500
---------------------	--------	---------



This single-story home in Maricopa Meadows offers 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The home is on a corner lot, with back and northern side surrounded by a greenbelt, and is just a short distance from schools and parks. The home sold for a cash offer in 174 days, for \$107,500 below original asking price.

<b>Community:</b> Maricopa Meadows	<b>Builder:</b> Richmond America
<b>Square feet:</b> 1,528	<b>Year built:</b> 2006
<b>Price per square foot:</b> \$152.16	<b>Bedrooms:</b> 3
<b>Days on market:</b> 174	<b>Bathrooms:</b> 2

- 2. 43766 W. Elm Drive, Rancho El Dorado.....\$250,000
- 3. 44063 W. Neely Drive, The Villages at Rancho El Dorado .....\$255,000
- 4. 18495 N. Celis Street, Desert Passage.....\$270,000
- 5. 35988 W. Santa Clara Avenue, Tortosa.....\$274,000

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Source: MLS, Jan. 10-Feb. 9



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# Late or non-payment suggestions on reducing tenant problems

BY SHERMAN AND EUPHEMIA WEEKES

**A** LANDLORD'S GREATEST PROBLEM is lateness and non-payment of rent. The absence of rental income can cause financial hardship for the landlord. Let us look at what can be done to minimize this issue.



Proper tenant screening is the first and best defense. If you continuously have challenges with your tenant paying rent, it is possible that your screening process is not rigorous enough and you need to make some changes. Review the lease with the tenant before

they sign, highlighting the amount of the monthly rent, when and how it should be paid. A penalty for paying late with an incremental fee for additional days late should be part of any lease and the tenant should understand that you will enforce the policy. Late fees discourage the tenant from paying late.

If lateness continues, it may be best to not renew the lease and find a new tenant. Always remember to serve that five-day notice because lateness unavoidably evolves into non-payment. Be ready. If the tenant will not voluntarily leave you may just have to start the eviction process.

Collecting rents and fees from tenants could be difficult regardless of how hard you try. Getting the help of a professional reduces stress and gives you more leisure time.

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# Know the CC&Rs before you buy your house

BY DAYV MORGAN

**O**VER 90% OF THE HOMES IN MARICOPA are governed by a homeowners' association. An important document to review before buying one of these homes is the "Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions" (CC&Rs).

It explains rights and obligations of the homeowners and the HOA. The association usually has policies on color palettes, landscaping, use of RV gates, street parking, and additions like

ramadas. The CC&Rs are legally binding rules filed with the state.

Homebuyers usually receive their CC&Rs from the escrow company, and have five days to review them. Even if final inspections have been made, the homebuyer can still back out at this time if they find something in the CC&Rs that is objectionable.

Read the CC&Rs carefully. There is usually an "architectural standards" section, which pretty much applies to anything on your property that can be seen from the road. Understand what is your responsibility and what the HOA is supposed to maintain. If the CC&Rs are not clear, contact the community manager.

Homeowners who rent their homes will receive notices of violations of which their tenants are accused. Lease agreements can include a stipulation holding the tenant responsible for CC&R violations. Renters should ask for a copy of the CC&Rs.

HOA residents should understand the details of the CC&Rs and be on top of any updates. I had a client who repainted his house the exact same color it already was, only to be told he should have received approval from the HOA first, because they had changed the accepted color palette. He had to paint the entire home again.

CC&Rs may also detail the minimum and maximum number of plants and shrubs. One client bought his house only to find out a few weeks later that he had to install more bushes in the front yard.

Can you install a shed in my backyard? How long can your trash container sit on the sidewalk? How long can you keep your holiday decorations up? The answers may surprise you.

Some HOAs prohibit overnight parking on the street. If you are seeking a home with an "RV gate" so you can park your RV on the side of your house, prepare to be told by every HOA that this is not allowed.

Understanding and abiding by the CC&R rules covering these details will make HOA life a little easier. The early discovery of rules that would directly conflict with your lifestyle and budget will save you from making an investment you regret.

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

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Tom Rein tosses a toy football in hopes of winning a prize during a “Get in the Game” party at Maricopa Community Center on Feb. 10.



Vonnie John completes an activity packet while enjoying a snack with other seniors during a “Get in the Game” party at Maricopa Community Center on Feb. 10.



Recreation aide Denyce Rose joins Alta Coit and Emily Davila during a “Get in the Game” party at Maricopa Community Center on Feb. 10.



Mary Davis picks a series of cards during a game of canasta at Maricopa Community Center on Feb. 10.

Monica D. Spencer

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# Dancing with the stars

Retired entertainer crossed paths with entertainment luminaries

BY TOM SCHUMAN

**I**T DOESN'T TAKE MUCH TO TAP DJ "Daniel" Giagni's memory. Get him started recalling his show-business adventures and the stories roll off his tongue like the rat-a-tap-tap of a flawless tap-dance performance, of which he had many.

The famous names and historic places flow easily from his life onstage and behind the camera for both he and his famous father.

Giagni, who moved to Province two years ago, is the son of Tony Award-winning choreographer Danny Daniels. Giagni talks of working alongside and becoming friends with Gene Kelly and Liza Minelli. He taught Steve Martin (1981 movie *Pennies from Heaven*) and Mark Hamill (for an off Broadway show at the Goodspeed Opera House) how to tap dance.

Despite the lifetime of mostly pleasant memories, Giagni was disappointed to never have a successful show on Broadway. By 40, he said he hadn't really made any money.

"I left show business, rented a truck and drove out to Los Angeles," he said. "My sister



DJ Giagni teaches advanced classes for the Province Town Hall Tappers and is an instructor for three weekly classes at Desert Sun Performing Arts.

Bryan Mordt

was building a house. I helped out on that and learned a lot about construction. I got my contractor's license and did that for 27 years."

Upon his retirement, Giagni and his wife moved to Portland, where their daughter lived. It was too rainy. Pamela heard about Province, and soon they were on their way to their new home.

Giagni is teaching advanced classes for the Province Town Hall Tappers and is an instructor for three weekly classes at Desert Sun Performing Arts. Daughter Annie is working as a nurse at Exceptional Community Hospital. Son Dylan is shutting down the construction business in California, with father and son to build a log cabin in the Forest Lakes area in northern Arizona.

"That will be the best, when everybody (including their two grandchildren) is together."

Very few of the Province dancers come with previous experience. What they do possess is tremendous enthusiasm, he said.

"They really want to do it," Giagni said. "It's so rewarding to work with them. I started piano at age 6 and I still play. And I write music, which is relaxing. We're going to do a show at Province, and I will choreograph a number for a piece I wrote."

The story, however, begins much earlier.

## Family tree

Giagni, 72, explains his Italian grandfather came to America through Ellis Island at age 7. A musician who played the mandolin and banjo, his grandfather also became a barber and found a client he asked to teach Daniels to tap dance.

"My father started at age 5. They would go to beer halls during Prohibition and make as much money in one night as my grandfather earned all week," Giagni said. "When Dad was 12 or 13, my grandfather went to California with three dollars in his pocket. He was a fast talker and made things happen while he looked for auditions for his son."

Daniels ended up with a solo performance as a 14-year-old tap dancer in the movie *The Star Maker* featuring Bing Crosby.

The family later returned to the Bronx with Daniels beginning his Broadway career at age 16 when Kelly selected him as a chorus member in the show *Best Foot Forward*. He was nominated for two Tony Awards as a dancer and four as a choreographer, winning in 1984 for his work on *The Tap Dance Kid*. Daniels also earned two Emmys in his career.

## Getting started

Despite his own success, Daniels was not a fan of his son following his career path. That changed

## STAR-STUDED MEMORIES

Working with the stars During DJ "Daniel" Giagni's show-business career, he has worked with several big-name stars:



**Of Steve Martin and Pennies from Heaven in 1981:** "I had never seen him on Saturday Night Live. I didn't have a TV at the time. I was always building stuff out in the garage.

Dad had said to Steve, 'You can show up and we can fake the tapping, or you can put in the work and learn how to do it.' He was a musician, played the banjo, had good rhythm and was coordinated. We worked four months before the shooting even started. He got to be really good and was a terrific person. I was an assistant for all the filming, which took a year. That was quite an experience."



**Of Mark Hamill, best known as Luke Skywalker of Star Wars fame:** "I started doing choreography on my own.



For this new show, Hamill had to learn to tap. He was very conscientious and got to be very good. We became good friends. We did the show, got terrific reviews, moved it on to Broadway — and got killed. We had done four weeks of previews. We lasted five days."

**Of Liza Minelli:** Daniels was doing choreography for one of her films. She wanted to see the Stephen Sondheim musical production *Assassins*, where Giagni was the choreographer. "She came and saw the show and we went to the coffee house next door for drinks." A promised invitation to Minelli's birthday party a few weeks later resulted in Giagni and his wife riding in a limo to the event with the star and actor/producer Harvey Keitel. "Liza is very gregarious, makes everybody feel comfortable. I could see the look on Harvey's face as he thought, 'Who the heck are these people?' When Minelli was doing a stage show in New York, Giagni met her at the Capezio dancewear store to purchase tap shoes. He had his 3-year-old daughter, Annie, with him. The young girl pointed to a costume that caught her attention in the store before Dad

reminded her why they were there that day. "Two days later, a package arrived with that costume for my daughter. Liza had noticed and had it picked up and sent to her. She was so effervescent, always up, always on and talking."



**Of Gene Kelly,** well known for his energetic and athletic dancing style, had given Daniels his start on Broadway as a dancer years earlier. In 1978, father and son were working a Kelly television special *An American in Pasadena* (playing off Kelly's 1951 film *An American in Paris*). The show included Frank Sinatra, Cyd Charisse, Minelli, Lucille Ball, Gloria DeHaven and Janet Leigh. "There was a military number ('Anchors Aweigh') I was teaching to eight little boys," Giagni said. "When it came time to prerecord it, Gene said, 'DJ, you do it.' So, on the TV show, those are my taps people are listening to. Gene was a real prince."



after Giagni became a high-school gymnast.

"I got to be pretty good and went to the state championships," Giagni said. "After Dad saw me compete, he said, 'Maybe you should try dancing.' I tried ballet. In the late 1960s, any male that could walk into a dancing school could get a scholarship. I went to the New York Theatre Ballet, took classes there for many years and got to be an apprentice with the company."

All the hard work paid off a short time later.

Actor-singer-comedian Zero Mostel was on his last tour playing Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*. When the lead dancer broke his leg, the choreographer, who remembered Giagni from the ballet school, said to send him out.

"That day, I learned three numbers and opened the show that night," Giagni said. "I was very excited and got my Equity card." (In general terms, an Equity card equates to union membership.)

The next steps included:

A year with the San Francisco Ballet Company before a new director instituted a height requirement of 5-foot-8 for male dancers (Giagni is 5-6). "But I had a contract and I forced them to pay me. They said I had to come in every day and not take class. So, I



DJ Giagni offers instruction during one of the weekly dance classes he teaches.

did, for two weeks. They got tired of seeing me and paid me off."

He danced in France at the Ballet of Leon. "I had taken French in high school but was not very good at it. In the company, everyone spoke English to me because they wanted to practice their English. I had a great time in France. When you're in a company, you're in a family and everybody treats you well."

A return to New York and two years on tour with the popular Lotte Goslar Pantomime Circus.

### Working with the stars

His father, who was starting a dance school in Santa Monica, Calif., invited his son to teach ballet while Daniels handled the tap.

"That's when I started to learn to tap. (Daniels) said, 'You are going to have a hard time being a good tap dancer because you have to do tap first, then ballet.' I did the opposite. But I worked hard."


Giagni's dedication led to new experiences as father and son worked together for 10 years doing choreography on television shows.

That's where Giagni really met the stars.

Working with the stars typically involved two hours a day, Giagni said.

"That's a lot for concentrated tap dancing," he said. "If you do any more, it goes in one ear and out the other. It has to get into the body gradually."

While his work spanned both coasts and even went international, he looks back fondly on his time in his native New York.

"It was a very exciting time, working on Broadway and being married to my wife, Pamela. We had a lot of fun," Giagni said. "New York was a very exciting place in the 1980s." 



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# A Continuing Care Retirement Community might be worth a look

BY RON SMITH

**C** CRC MEANS CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT Community. More than 2,000 exist nationally. They include all possible phases of senior living: independent, assisted, memory care and skilled nursing, packaged into a single location or campus.

These communities, sometimes called life-plan communities, provide flexibility for spouses or partners who need differing levels of care to live in the same community for the rest of their life, remaining in the place they call home.

Most of us are familiar with the traditional combination of independent living, assisted living and memory care. That’s how the

proposed Season’s Living facility at Copper Sky has been structured. Caliche Senior Living in Casa Grande has assisted living, memory care and short-term living options. But only a CCRC will provide the full spectrum of lifestyles from independent living to skilled nursing. They work under the concept of “life care.”

### A CCRC community offers benefits:

- The independent living component often offers greater housing choices.
- Access to onsite advanced health-care options is available.
- The levels of health-care options support a couple with different health-care needs.
- Staying on the same campus as needs change increases social interaction and preserves friendships.
- A maintenance-free lifestyle is provided.
- Tax benefits are possible.
- Aging-in-place in this consistent and predictable environment eliminates the uncertainty of where to go next.
- Peace of mind is provided for residents and their families.

### There are unique characteristics of a CCRC to consider:

- Substantial entrance and monthly fees.
- Contracts requiring the advice of a financial planner and/or an attorney.
- Possibly suffering financial loss if a for-profit CCRC goes bankrupt or is sold.
- Potential long wait lists or limited choices because of high demand.
- Possible cognitive or physical health requirements to be eligible.

### What questions must you ask if you are considering a CCRC?

- Do you have the financial resources to “buy into” a CCRC?
- Are you ready to spend the rest of your life in this location with these people?
- Would maintenance-free living improve the quality of your life?
- Does this CCRC have the amenities you desire?

### How do I evaluate a CCRC community?

- What services are included or are available in the contract?
- Are you able to add the services you desire at an optional cost?
- Is there occupancy capacity at each of the various levels of care?
- Have there been any major fee increases over the past years? What’s the pattern?
- Is the ownership a nonprofit or a for-profit organization?
- Do they provide assurance that care will be available even if you outlive your financial resources? This scenario is often referred to as benevolence care.
- Can any portion of your entrance fee be refunded in the case of death or relocation?
- Is the CCRC’s skilled-nursing unit a Medicare-certified facility?
- How safe is the community?

### What kind of costs can I expect?

- An average CCRC entrance fee, according to CBRE Group, is about \$329,000. They can range from \$100,000 to \$1 million.
- Monthly charges can range from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per person depending on the contract. They are likely to change over time as health-care services change.

- The cost of a CCRC can be a bit complex. For example:
  - There are six types of monthly contracts.
  - Selection of contract type depends on specific needs of the resident.
  - Contracts can be adjusted to best support care needs of residents drawing upon all CCRC resources.
  - Additional fees to plan for include, but are not limited to, pet deposits, maintenance, phone and utilities, TV and internet, wellness programs, parking and storage.
  - Factors that can affect overall costs include whether you rent or own your unit, size and location of your unit, your insurance coverage and type of contract you sign.

### How does buy-in benefit me?

- Buy-in and monthly fees can be used to guarantee housing and medical care throughout your life.
- Locking in low monthly fees seems prudent in a world of rapidly escalating medical expenses.
- If you choose to age-in-place in your own home, there is no guarantee you won’t experience an unexpected medical or living cost. Choosing a CCRC is a method to reduce or contain uncertainty in trying to age-in-place in your own home.


### Are there different types of CCRCs?

Yes. There are traditionally structured CCRCs that look like a resort. I recently visited The Terraces of Phoenix in the heart of Phoenix. It

is among seven CCRCs nationwide to be recognized by U.S. News as a “Best Continuing Care Retirement Community.” If you prefer a more academic environment, you may want to look at Mirabella on the ASU campus. At Mirabella you can be immersed in a lifelong learning partnership with ASU.

### Should I consider a CCRC? Is it right for me?

Given the wonderful climate of the Phoenix area, there are many more excellent CCRCs spread throughout the Valley. Therein lies one of the problems if you currently live in the Maricopa area. CCRCs are expensive and typically located in more-established and upscale communities. If you have a cadre of friends and activities that you have established here, uprooting yourself to a new area may disrupt your lifestyle. You may be unwilling to do that. However, if you are a relatively new retiree and have the financial resources, moving to a CCRC may be a good choice.

It can provide the peace of mind and lifestyle that you may desire in your retirement years. 

*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.*

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







## Maricopa has many worthy candidates for honor during Women’s History Month

BY JOAN KOCZOR

**T**HIS YEAR’S WOMEN’S HISTORY Month theme of Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories encourages the recognition of women, past and present, who have been active in all forms of media and storytelling, including print, radio, TV, stage, screen, blogs, podcasts, news and social media.

This timely theme honors women in every community who have devoted their lives and talents to producing art and news, pursuing truth and reflecting society decade after decade.

Right here in Maricopa, we’ve had many notable female luminaries telling the city’s story.

Atop the list is longtime historian and schoolteacher Pat Brock, who passed away last year. Brock documented the city’s history in her books, “Reflections of a Desert Town” and “Images of America: Maricopa.” She was raised in Maricopa with 11 siblings.

Shirley Ann Hartman, longtime Maricopa teacher, coach and farmer, is a former Tucson Rodeo Queen and the first Stagecoach Days Queen in Maricopa. An avid horse rider, she started the Quadrille de Mujeres, a ladies’ horseback specialty act in 1965. The group rode at all the top rodeos in Arizona and appeared in the Rose Bowl Parade. She came to Maricopa in 1960 to teach second grade and educated thousands of Maricopans.

Former InMaricopa editors Joyce Hollis and Raquel Hendrickson both are Maricopa residents, volunteers in the community and wrote untold numbers of stories chronicling the community.

And, of course, Nancy Smith, Maricopa’s first female mayor, tells Maricopa’s story everywhere she goes at every meeting she attends.

These are but a few. There no doubt are many more worthy of honor. Take time this month to recognize the hard work and accomplishments of so many women in Maricopa and across the globe throughout history. Let’s remind ourselves and those around us how strong, resilient, brave, gracious and intelligent women have been in the past and continue to be today.

The month-long commemoration started with Women’s History Day in 1978, organized by the school district of Sonoma, Calif. Hundreds of students participated in essay competitions, presentations were given and a parade was held.

Interest spread to communities, school districts and organizations across the country. And in 1980, the National Women’s History Alliance championed for the holiday to be observed as a national week. It was backed by President Jimmy Carter, who issued the first proclamation declaring the week of March 8 as National Women’s History Week. The following year, Congress forwarded a resolution establishing a national observance. Six years later, the expansion of the event to the entire month of March was successfully petitioned by the National Women’s History Project.

For many years, women weren’t acknowledged enough in historical texts. This isn’t because they weren’t in the midst of important discoveries or helping with important conquests. It’s mainly because men wrote most historical documents for thousands of years.

Women always have been present in the military, temporarily and voluntarily in the Army Nurse Corps created in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps created in 1908.

The progressive 1900s allowed married women to own property in their own name and keep their own wages in the 1900s.

More than 30% of all businesses today are owned by women. We all have the power to influence the direction our world is headed, and National Women’s History Month reminds us of all the major accomplishments by women each and every day. From domestic chores and carrying babies to fighting wars and governing countries.

We women are pretty darn amazing. There is nothing we can’t do if we set our minds to it. Don’t believe me—check out History.com or many other articles and publications about women who shattered barriers and changed the world. 🗣

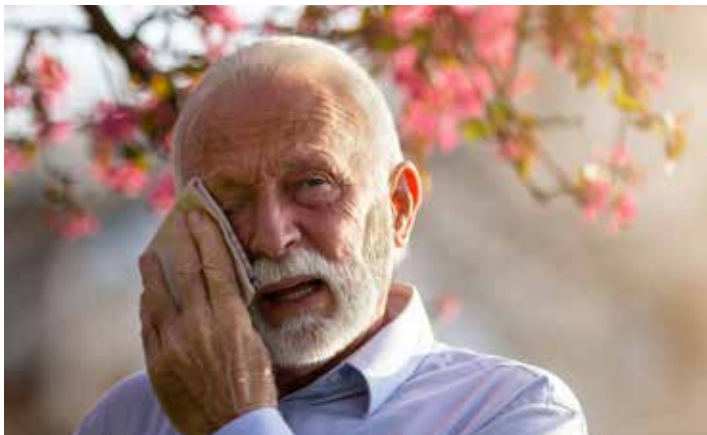
*Joan Koczor is a senior advocate and a member of the Age-Friendly Maricopa Advisory Board.*

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



## Changes in the weather can affect senior health

BY AL BRANDENBURG



**I**N THEORY, EVERYONE WELCOMES SPRING. WE LOVE THE warmer days and budding greenery. But spring is a time of extreme weather change that can cause health issues, especially among the elderly.

First, this time of year often is marked by swings from chilly, to mild, to back to freezing temperatures, and cold weather can be problematic for older people. Arthritic problems worsen, and there is a much higher injury rate from falling.

Serious conditions, such as heart attacks and pneumonia, peak during the winter. This past winter, we had a flu epidemic that hit the elderly particularly hard. The immediate immune response is delayed in an older person, causing a higher likelihood for pneumonia to develop after the flu.

So, what can older adults do to stave off the effects of winter’s last gasp? One answer (tongue in cheek), according to some folks, is move to Florida.

Changes in weather patterns often are accompanied by shifts in barometric pressure, the force exerted on a surface by the weight of air above that surface.

Some people who claim they can feel weather changes in their bones are correct. Barometric pressure often drops before bad weather sets in. This lower pressure pushes less against the body, causing tissues to expand. This can put more pressure on joints, causing them to flare up.

Once spring truly arrives, a new annoyance occurs: allergies. The elderly may not cope as well with seasonal allergies as younger people. Temperature and humidity play a major role in seasonal allergies, asthma exacerbation and other airway diseases. With weaker immune systems, seniors are more prone.

As the weather changes, most doctors advise older adults to keep an extra layer of clothing, such as a sweater or waterproof jacket, available. In addition, one always should have a list of their medications and allergies on them.

Avoid being outside with weather extremes. Stay hydrated, eat a well-balanced diet, including fruits and vegetables, exercise moderately and stay up-to-date on immunizations, such as influenza and pneumonia vaccines.

Seniors with Alzheimer’s disease also are affected by fluctuations in their regular routines, and they can experience issues when seasons change. This is a common concern during the onset of winter, which can greatly exacerbate sundowning, an increase in restlessness and confusion caused by decreased sunlight that upsets the body’s circadian rhythm.

Then there is valley fever, a fungal infection caused by fungus cocci that gets into the body through inhalation. The fungus is endemic to the hot, dry soils of the Southwest. According to studies, 97% of all U.S. cases of Valley Fever are reported in Arizona and California. The fungi are in the soil and are picked up by strong winds.

Valley fever symptoms include fever, cough, chest pain, cold, rashes, night sweats and weakness or fatigue.

This past fall and winter, many area farmers let their fields go fallow due to limited water availability. In addition, we also experienced high winds that picked up a dust and fungus mix that could affect you, whether you were in the backyard gardening, playing golf or doing any other outdoor activities.

Some people who get valley fever see the infection go away in a few weeks. For seniors, the condition can last for months and require anti-fungal medication that has side effects. At least it can’t be spread from person to person.

Bottom line, don’t delay in seeking medical advice if you or your loved ones develop any of these medical issues. Stay safe and be vigilant as to any arising symptoms. 🗣

*Al Brandenburg is a member of Maricopa Community Advocates.*

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GETTING TO know

**BRYAN MORDT**  
Multimedia specialist, InMaricopa

**Hometown:** Belvidere, Ill.

**Reside in:** Glennwilde Groves

**Maricopan since:** 2013

**Family:** Happily married with two daughters, two stepsons, and I became a grandpa last March!

**Pet peeve:** Gaslighting of any kind

**Dream vacation:** Van life trip around the country

**Like most about Maricopa:** Living close to the desert

**Like least about Maricopa:** Left-lane drivers on the 347

**Restaurant:** 347 Grill

**Getaway:** Nature, nature, nature

**Website:** mordt.photography

**Quote:** “I will follow my instincts and be myself for good or ill.” – John Muir

**FAVORITE ...**

**Book:** A Stranger in a Strange Land

**Team:** America

**Athlete:** My wife Jenece

**Meal:** Roast beef, mash potatoes, sweet corn and gravy

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

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## THINGS TO DO

### March

2

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

4

**Monthly Meeting for Maricopa Amateur Radio Association**  
9 – 11:30 a.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N Maya Angelou Drive.

**"Inside the Creative Mind" with photographer Jack Jackson**  
3 – 6 p.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N Maya Angelou Dr.

**Century Communities Grand Opening**  
11 a.m. – 2 p.m. The Trails at Tortosa  
35320 W. Mallorca Ave.

6

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

8

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

11

**All-AZ Poetry Slam Championship**  
5 – 9 p.m., Honeycutt Coffee  
44400 W. Honeycutt Rd Ste 109

14

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

16

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

25

**Dancing for Our Stars**  
5 – 10 p.m., Harrah's Ak-Chin  
15406 N. Maricopa Road

### Sundays

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
7 p.m., Maricopa Meadows Community Park  
45511 W. Honeycutt Ave.

### Mondays

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

### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

### Tuesdays

**Maricopa Cruise-in**  
5 – 9 p.m., Parking lot behind Burger King  
20699 N. John Wayne Pkwy.

### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

**Celebrate Recovery Large and Small Group Meeting**  
7 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

12 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

### Narcotics Anonymous

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

### Thursdays

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

### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

### Fridays

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

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

### Alcoholics Anonymous

7 p.m., Mtn. View Community Church  
50881 W. Papago Road

### Saturdays

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
10 a.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

ALL EVENTS ARE TENTATIVE



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



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


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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
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
**PHOTOGRAPHY**

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
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
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