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ON THE COVER

Victor Moreno photographed four of the 16 seniors selected for InMaricopa's Senior Spotlight in April at Central Arizona College's Maricopa campus. Seated are: Maricopa High School's Diana Harris and Heritage Academy's Cienna West. Standing are: A+ Charter School's Elijah Raines and Michael Luna-Fruit of Sequoia Pathway Academy.

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Life's a challenge — you'll get through it

JUNE 6, IN A YEAR BEFORE MOST OF YOU WERE born: My high school graduation day. It seemed like such an unobtainable goal for so many years, and now, here we were, about to be unleashed on the world.

I spent most of the day at the pool and arrived at the ceremony with a big-time sunburn. No sun block. Didn't know any better. Eleven-time skin-cancer patient now.

Others were in worse shape that evening. Take, for example, our valedictorian. Smart as a whip. Wanted to be a medical doctor. He would wind up in the medical field, but not as an MD. Had a lot of hippie in him. And let's just say he was several decades ahead of his time regarding use of recreational marijuana.

We couldn't wait to hear his speech. He got through it.

And that's an important message to the Class of 2023. A whole new world awaits, you might find it daunting, but you'll get through it.

If you can think critically, express yourself well and you're not afraid of hard work, you'll be fine.

In our graduation package this month — prepared by our Justin Griffin — I am so impressed

by the scholars in our Senior Spotlight. Yet it's not necessary to be in the top 5 of your academic class to make your mark in life. People, who today you wouldn't give a nickel for their chances of success, shock you. You'll see it at your 10-year and 20-year reunions.

School discipline. It's a hot-button issue. It's easy to rip Maricopa Unified School District on social media, but where are those folks when it's time to speak at a Governing Board meeting or hop on a task force to find solutions?

My guess is the problem isn't as big as some try to make it, yet it is big enough that the Governing Board president directed the superintendent to study it, and discussions have been ongoing at board meetings the past several months.

Our Cameron Jobson takes an in-depth look at classroom discipline and campus safety for you this month. Don't miss it!

Graduates, good luck to you all! And moms of Maricopa, Happy Mother's Day!



LEE SHAPPELL
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CAMERON JOBSON

Cameron got here in February. A couple of weeks later, we told her she was covering education. Since then, she's upgraded our ed reporting, especially with her continuing coverage of the classroom discipline-campus safety issue.



JUSTIN GRIFFIN

Corralling people, compiling stories and coordinating photos for our graduation package is a month-long job. Justin has shown repeatedly he's the equal of a big task, whether an exhaustive, in-depth look at an issue or a keepsake.



MONICA D. SPENCER

In February, Monica brought her reputation for excellent photography and fine reporting to us. She recently won two photography awards, which tells us we've got to get her clicking shutter buttons more. Check her Senior Prom gallery.



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A look back at education in Maricopa

Above: The Maricopa eighth-grade class of 1955. In the fall, 28 students would enter as freshmen in the new Maricopa High School. Left: In 1912, Laura Parson taught 10 first-grade through eighth-grade students in a small house north of the railroad tracks, where Headquarters restaurant is located, until 1914. The unknown tall girl in the center (left photo) is believed to be the first graduate from a Maricopa school.

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THIS MONTH BACK IN...

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2008

On May 12, a triple stabbing took Maricopa Meadows by storm, this after several reported fights and assaults in the area during the month. Three teens were stabbed with what witnesses said was a machete. Two were transported by air to Phoenix hospitals, one by ground ambulance. Perry Patterson, 21, was arrested in the incident.



2013

On May 31, Maricopa came together to give Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Rice a hero's welcome home. He was returning to his Acacia Crossings home from a nine-month combat tour in Afghanistan. Rice was stunned. "Wow, this is amazing," he said. "The support here blew me away."



2018

Edison Pointe shopping plaza gained a key tenant when Dollar Tree opened on May 10. The store planned to employ 12-20 people to work in the 10,000-square-foot space. Dollar Tree's debut followed the opening of neighboring stores Goodwill and Planet Fitness. Other businesses, including Brakes Plus and IHOP, soon began applying to open in the plaza.

Maricopa Historical Society

Bringing kindness back to the classroom

MUSD addressing discipline issues, safety on campus

BY CAMERON JOBSON



MUSD students advocate for school safety after an incident in Nashville.

MEETING AFTER MEETING, MONTH after month, they've stepped to the podium and described in sometimes graphic and horrifying detail their experiences, or those of their children, in the classrooms, on the campuses or on the buses of Maricopa Unified School District.

One former teacher described the day a student picked up a chair and came toward her in a threatening manner. Some tell of "F-bombs" regularly hurled by students toward teachers. Others tell how their kids come home crying from being physically or mentally bullied, and how the kids don't want to go back to school because of it.

According to MUSD statistics, about one in six K-12 students have had one or more discipline incidents in the past year in the district.

Those problems are not exclusive to MUSD, of course. Nearly every school district faces them.

But those accounts by parents and teachers during MUSD Governing Board meetings touched a nerve, and the district is responding.

During a call to the public in February, several people spoke of their outrage over behavior in the classroom. Governing Board President Robert Downey directed Superintendent Tracey Lopeman to come back with a report.

Since then, discussion on how best to address the issues has been ongoing. Since

March, board meetings have included discussions on classroom discipline — bullying being prominent — and campus safety, and those conversations do not have an end in sight.

Board members urge everyone to get involved — students to administrative staff.

"This situation didn't happen overnight and it's not going to be fixed overnight," Governing Board member Patti Coutré said. "I'm glad that we are making the efforts to address this."

On March 23, the district held its first meeting of the Student-Discipline and Campus-Safety Task Force.

Sixty-eight people — consisting of deans, parents, students, teachers, staff — were divided into four subcommittees to emphasize various



Talithia Martin speaks at the MUSD Governing Board meeting.

areas of concern. They focused on bullying prevention and counseling, policy continuity across the district, parent engagement and restorative practices.

"Feedback has been positive thus far," said Tracey Pastor, MUSD assistant superintendent of administrative services. "Moving forward, we want to ensure voices are heard while contributing to meaningful discussions that will lead to improvements."

Board members are looking forward to seeing the organization get stronger, and bigger.

Among the problems identified are uneven interpretation and enforcement of district discipline policies from one campus to the next.

"I think it would be good to have the students' input on how they would like to implement (discipline policies)," Coutré said. "Students know their peers better than I know them up here."

Lopeman, Pastor and two MUSD principals gave a work-study presentation at a board meeting detailing data and response to classroom behavioral issues district wide.

There are bright spots, some reality and a lot of available information, Lopeman said. The work study is for future administration action.

Terra Gallagher, an educator with 15 years of experience who once was threatened by a kid who picked up a chair, attributed some of this problem to large class sizes. She previously taught at Desert Wind Middle School, and quickly witnessed behavior problems first-hand.

"I was really excited to work with these kids," Gallagher said.

"Then class sizes kept growing," she added. "When you're pushing 40 kids, it's a huge deal. It's real hard to maintain classroom discipline."

Darla Hyche, a single mom of seven, has spoken at board meetings and reached out to board members to address this issue head-on.

Cameron Jobson

Brian Petersheim Jr.

What is the district's plan?

So, how is MUSD getting to the root of the problems?

Predicting behavioral problems daily is nearly impossible. MUSD board members and administrators continue reviewing policies monthly to sharpen focus and clarity.

"We've committed to regular board-meeting updates regarding information, training, policy analysis and so forth," Lopeman said.

Board member Torri Anderson appreciates the initiative but is concerned about the pace as well as uneven enforcement of policies.

"If a policy is broken, a policy is broken, period," Anderson said.

She adds some policies are archaic.

Anderson suggested discussing one discipline policy each month and homing in on definitions to ensure there is no misinterpretation.

During two board meetings, Pastor analyzed definitions of infractions, code of conduct and range of consequences for infractions.

Pastor met with principals district-wide to review a sampling of discipline referrals.

Daily, Pastor receives every referral that results in a suspension and reviews them with the corresponding principal.

MUSD schools use Synergy, a student information system, to document referrals. Pastor updated the data that must be included — such as time, location and perceived motivation — to improve continuity.

She has also begun discussing systems for students with multiple discipline incidents.

Administrators will consider the number of days of suspension, if the child's family has acknowledged the student handbook, type of infraction, if the student is receiving counseling and other factors.

"We want to prepare for every scenario," Pastor said. Anderson said it requires continuing vigilance.

"You've got to constantly reteach," she said. "So, I think it's a great discussion moving forward because it will be to the benefit of our community and the success of our students."

"I think it would be good to have the students' input on how they would like to implement (discipline policies)."

PATTI COUTRÉ,
MUSD GOVERNING
BOARD MEMBER

Torri Anderson speaks at the MUSD Governing Board meeting.



“I know they say, ‘Thank you for talking,’ but, I mean, something has to be done,” Hyche said.

Hyche is known for her colorful truck — decked out with autism-awareness stickers, paint and magnets. Her son attends Saddleback Elementary School and faces bullying on a regular basis, she said.

“He’s not wanting to be at school,” Hyche said. “(He’s) wanting to be alone. He’s ashamed.”

Ongoing bullying and behavioral issues go beyond the classroom, impacting not only students’ education but also their mental health, behavioral experts say.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42% of high school students surveyed had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the last 30 days. In the same study, 22% seriously considered suicide and 29% experienced poor mental health.

Bridgette Woods, another parent at Saddleback, said her son has been made fun of, hit, smacked and scratched.

“I can barely get him to come to school,” Woods said. “He’s 7; he shouldn’t have to worry about this.”

Coutré empathizes with the students and believes compassion and goodwill can go a long way toward improving the problem.

“I think we need to recognize when kids are having a bad day,” she said. “We need to recognize that, but we also need to show human kindness, a smile.”

Talitha Martin, a parent and English teacher at Maricopa High, is working with the MUSD board to develop a long-term solution. She advocates for quality staff and retention to ensure better relationships among teachers, students and parents.

In the meantime, she said, the district is moving in the right direction.

“I believe that people care deeply and want it to be better,” Martin said. “It’s important that we meet the challenge and come up with solutions.”

Downey recognized that opening the floor for feedback is going to end in a lot of criticism, and perhaps deservedly.

“We all want it resolved tomorrow,” Downey said. “But at some point soon, we might need to set a goal — like by next school year — we will have these changes in place.”

“

But at some point soon, we might need to set a goal — like by next school year — we will have these changes in place.

ROBERT DOWNEY,

MUSD GOVERNING BOARD

PRESIDENT

What about problems outside of school?

In previous board meetings, parents expressed concern about safety and discipline outside of school walls, such as on school buses or walking home from the bus stop.

It is difficult for one bus driver to be responsible for keeping eyes on the road and on the students.

Pastor and Mishell Terry, MUSD communications and social-media coordinator, said students are still on “school property” on buses and the student handbook is clear when it comes to disciplinary actions.

The handbook states: “Disciplinary action may result for code of conduct violations which occur outside the school day and on school grounds, on school property, school buses, at school-bus stops, at school-sponsored events or activities, field trips, through the use of technology, or when such an act interferes with the authority of the school system to maintain order.”

Students who fail to abide by expectations will be subject to appropriate discipline.

Pastor mentioned students who have serious disciplinary problems or multiple infractions may have their riding privileges suspended.



Board members Patti Coutré and AnnaMarie Knorr.

Brian Petersheim Jr.

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How is MUSD prioritizing mental health and behavioral development?

Staff and administration are prioritizing mental-health resources for their youth.

On March 30, MUSD partnered with Brianna Reinhold's Northern Lights on a suicide-prevention presentation for MUSD students.

Jelani Elliot, founder of Safe House, which was created to give Maricopa youths a place to safely express themselves in an open and free environment without judgment, gave a testimonial about his son, who recently lost his battle to mental health. Elliot offered tips for parents and students about how to talk about suicide, and how to look for symptoms.

Reinhold also offered tips for parents and students on how to talk about suicide,

mental health and what symptoms to look for.

Coutre said it was an emotional event with great information but lamented that many lost an opportunity by not attending.

"I hope that in the future we are going to continue having these partnerships and having these discussions and that more people will be able to attend," she said.

In the middle schools, MUSD uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports to teach students appropriate behaviors. PBIS gives positive reinforcement for good behavior and supports students who may need more individualized attention. The program has been implemented in more than 23,000 school across the country and has been

shown to reduce problem behavior and improve academic achievement.

Maricopa Wells Middle School Principal Thad Miller said his students love it. He rewards students' good behavior or attendance with 'Panther paws,' and reads the names on the morning announcements.



Maricopa Wells Middle School Principal Thad Miller

Since the program's start, Miller has seen a decrease in discipline issues. When students are recognized and acknowledged, it makes a world of difference, he said.

"It's a rollercoaster," Miller said. "This quarter in particular, we have had a huge drop in negative behaviors."

Miller added that it has great potential in the future.

"It's a program that shows some benefits," Miller said. "Me, as principal, I want to push the program forward."

MUSD Governing Board Member AnnaMarie Knorr is an advocate for PBIS and applauds Miller and other administrators for their work with students beyond academics.

"Investing in our kids is so important," Knorr said. "This is life-changing for these kids. Middle school is so crucial. And getting them up to speed, and that somebody cares that they're learning, cares that they're capable of doing the work expected of them, is changing their lives, truly."

At Maricopa Elementary School, Leader-In-Me is a life-skills program to help students develop in goal setting, time management, teamwork, communication and leadership.

It fosters personal responsibility and accountability. MUSD board members agree its impact on students and school communities is positive.



"This is life-changing for these kids. Middle school is so crucial. And getting them up to speed, and that somebody cares that they're learning, cares that they're capable of doing the work expected of them, is changing their lives, truly."

ANNAMARIE KNORR
MUSD GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER

Lee Shappell



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How much has COVID-19 impacted students' mental health, behavior?

The COVID-19 pandemic touched almost every part of our lives, and education was no exception. With schools closed, classes moving online and parents taking the roles of teachers, it took a toll on students' mental health and behavior.

For many students, school was not just a place to learn. It was a place to socialize and form connections with peers.

Reinhold, owner of Northern Lights Therapy, believes the lockdown in 2020 greatly contributed to behavioral issues the district is now facing.

"The COVID solution to schooling was not a traditional setup by any means," Reinhold said. "Many people feel like they lost literal years off their lives."

Reinhold's practice has clinicians who treat children as young as 6. She believes

they missed a huge developmental piece when they were forced to do online school.

The lack of face-to-face interaction with classmates and teachers left many young students feeling disconnected and alone, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression and stress.

"When the kids came back to school after the shutdown, they weren't used to being around other people," Reinhold said. "They didn't even know how to 'play with' other kids."

A third-grader, for example, who was at home during first and second grades, was in a classroom for the first time.

Students returning to the classroom had to learn to communicate and conduct themselves while managing their grades.

During the two years of the pandemic, there was lack of routine and structure, Reinhold said. Students had more free time. It highlighted how some kids and teens

may have had underlying mental-health issues, she said.

Now, many students are experiencing a range of emotions — irritability, agitation and impulsivity — which can lead to an increase in defiance, noncompliance and aggression, according to Reinhold.

Although there might not be a clear-cut solution, Reinhold suggests the district take a step back to the basics.

"I just think we need to make sure all of the kids truly get caught up instead of pushing them through," Reinhold said. "It's not their fault that they are struggling to catch up. We're still holding

them to pre-COVID standards."

Moving forward, Reinhold and the district will work together to raise awareness of mental-health concerns and coordinate with school counselors.

"There are a lot of good things coming in the next year," Reinhold said.



Brianna Reinhold



Butterfield Code—STEAM students learn how to code.

Can academic intervention improve behavior?

Board members also believe academic intervention can reduce discipline problems.

Downey emphasizes student-teacher relationships foster a student's positive feelings inside and outside the classroom.

Maricopa Wells Middle School is implementing after-school tutoring and Saturday school for students to spend one-on-one time with teachers for additional guidance.

Miller said the goal is to increase those students receiving support and show them someone cares about their learning.

Butterfield Elementary School is becoming an official STEAM school — creating a curriculum that emphasizes science, technology, engineering, arts and math to prepare students for their future careers.

Butterfield Principal Janel Hildick hopes to connect with educators around the world to increase teacher training and provide coaching for her staff.

"It's an inter-disciplinary approach," Hildick said. "It's important to build these STEAM skills at an early age — in pre-K and kindergarten — to set that strong foundation to help students more effectively collaborate, regulate emotions and engage in tasks and projects."

High-quality professional development will help teachers become more comfortable and provide a strong foundation for rapid acceleration, especially post-pandemic, she added.

"It takes more than just money; it takes people with a vision," Downey, the Governing Board president, said. "It takes people that are prepared to plan, prepared to work and leadership to implement them."



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How is MUSD emphasizing campus safety?

MUSD says it wants to do more than decrease discipline issues and behavioral infractions. It wants to provide a safe space on its campuses.

In March, the district worked with Arizona School Risk Retention Trust to conduct a free, in-person safety and security audit.

Principals, administrators and Trust staff toured Desert Sunrise High School and Maricopa Wells Middle School.

Pastor said the feedback was constructive, and TRUST applauded the district for investing resources and taking measures to ensure safety for employees and students.

Pastor plans to use the general feedback to replicate audits on a smaller scale at other schools in the district. Some of the criticisms can be applied to every school, she explained.

Already in the works is a \$400,000 project to renovate entrances and main offices at Maricopa Wells Middle School and Maricopa Elementary



School. Barriers in the lobby and more security will be added.

"Visitors won't be able to go anywhere past the initial lobby," Coutre said. "You would have to be buzzed in."

Campus safety is a hot-button issue for the Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board.

Bryan Norcut



As a parent or teacher, how can you help?

As the district continues its work study and policy analysis, MUSD staff encourage parents and teachers to get involved.

The district hopes to provide an open line of communication for everyone involved. Board presentations highlight work that occurs regularly throughout the district to address student discipline, campus safety and security. Public attendance is encouraged.

"Any feedback helps us grow as an organization," Terry, the district communications coordinator, said. "We agree that there is a high sense of urgency in providing a safe and secure learning environment for all students and safe workplace for employees." 🗨️

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Education Notes



MHS dance company earns highest distinction at state

The Maricopa High Dance Company received overall superior, the highest distinction in performance, at the AZDEO state dance festival. MHS dancers spent a day taking master classes in a multitude of styles, and performed a lyrical piece, on which they were adjudicated on technique, choreography and performance.



Flag raising marks half-century since Vietnam

The Maricopa High AFJROTC Color Guard observed the 50th anniversary of national Vietnam War Veterans Day. Cadets were guests of the Maricopa American Legion Post at a flag-raising ceremony to commemorate the half-century since the last American troops departed Vietnam. The ceremony held special significance to several members of the Maricopa American Legion, who served in Vietnam.

Students shine at MHS Life Skills Prom

Students stole the show at the Maricopa High Life Skills Prom. Culinary students catered the luau-theme event, tech-theater students provided music and lights, Student Council provided décor, and life-skills students provided dance moves at the gathering attended not only by students but also by families and guests. The event was arranged by teachers and paraprofessionals.



Formal clothing donated to Copa Closet

Nearly 50 formal dresses and suits were donated to Copa Closet during its recent prom drive. Maricopa High marketing and DECA students, who manage Copa Closet, were tasked with turning it into a retail-inspired fashion boutique. For weeks, they worked preparing the space, sorting and organizing garments, cleaning, shining shoes, and improving sensory marketing with scent and visuals. The new boutique-like establishment upcycled more than 300 garments. DECA will continue to volunteer and manage merchandise. Supervision of the closet started eight years ago by counselor Amber Liermann and has grown into a resource for students.



MHS Gems take Winterguard title

The Maricopa Gems Winterguard took the Independent regional championships, capping an outstanding season. They celebrated with a season showcase in the MHS gym.



Desert Sunrise dean taking on new roles

Jim Bradford becomes an assistant principal and athletic director at Desert Sunrise beginning next school year. Bradford currently is dean of students at the school.



eSports rocks at Desert Sunrise High

Desert Sunrise High's CTE eSports class offers junior-varsity and varsity-level sports gaming online. Establishing CTE esports at the school provided opportunities for students to earn recognition while developing critical thinking and interpersonal skills.

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Desert Sunrise students top staff in volleyball

Desert Sunrise High, in its first year and having only freshmen and sophomores, has not yet developed rivalries in sports, but the energy in the gym at the staff vs. students volleyball game felt like a major rivalry. In a hard-fought game full of crunch-time plays, the students prevailed. Competitors vow to continue the games moving forward.



eSports comes to CAC-Maricopa

eSports has found its way to Central Arizona College's Maricopa campus. All students who enroll gain access to the innovative gaming space. Between classes, students can game with friends, participate in tournaments and even join a club to meet new friends.



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Entering the dance of life

Best of the class of 2023 ready to take the lead

BY JUSTIN GRIFFIN

AT FIRST, THE PHOTO SHOOT for this year's Senior Spotlight, at Central Arizona College's Maricopa campus, felt a bit like that first high school dance, where the kids were standing along the wall.

While the 16 students chosen for InMaricopa's Senior Spotlight all have excellence in common, they come from four schools and have diverse backgrounds.

It wasn't long, however, until photographer Victor Moreno started to break the tension, asking some students to jump. Then he got them to take steps to the left and right, while he got just the right angle for his pictures.

As the prospective graduates patiently followed Moreno's direction, you could hear giggles and fits of laughter erupt as the nervous energy dissipated.

In many ways, the process these students went through during this photo shoot will mimic life itself as they and their 2023 classmates leave the protective nest of high school and enter the real world this month.

There's trepidation about the next step. Soon, they will all realize the dance is ongoing and it's best to simply get out there on the floor and bust a move.

What will that look like for these 16 seniors?

The process

Before we look at this year's collection of Maricopa's top graduates, let's take a moment to explain the selection process.

This spring, InMaricopa reached out to area high school officials for nominations.

Students were selected on excellence in academics, athletics, the arts and public service.

Maricopa High, with the largest graduating class in the city, numbering more than 500 this year, had 10 selections. A+ Charter, Heritage and Sequoia Pathway each had two selections.

Each student completed a survey about their life as a student and a look at what they hope to accomplish in the world.

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Victor Moreno



The Senior Spotlight



Lealani Escalade graduated last year as a junior — and by herself, comprising A+ Charter's first graduating class. This year's class of 22 represents the first full graduating class at the school.

Representing A+ Charter in the Senior Spotlight this year are Ariana Fierro and Elijah Raines.

Ariana plans to enter the legal profession and become a lawyer. To do that, she'll complete the coursework she's already started at Central Arizona College and transfer to Arizona State University as a pre-law student.

Elijah, a graduating junior, was accepted to Dartmouth, Claremont McKenna College and Carleton College. He will select one and then pursue coursework to enter the medical field with an eye on bringing innovation to underserved communities.



ARIANA FIERRO

"My favorite activities include digital art, painting, writing short stories and volunteering. I have

proudly served on the Student Council and on the City of Maricopa Youth Council. I was nominated and inducted into the National Honor Society of Leadership and Success through the Central Arizona College chapter. I also enjoy volunteering my time at the Maricopa Veteran's Day Parade through the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 133.

"My greatest achievement was this past summer; I was one of 60 incoming high school juniors and seniors in Arizona to be selected as a participant at Arizona State University César Chávez Lead-



ELIJAH RAINES

"I am in my third year of high school; however, I have gained enough credits to earn my diplo-

ership Institute. I was selected based on an essay on water conservation and drought in our state, academics and community service. I attended the one-week residential program, housed at Barrett's Honors College at ASU. This one-of-a-kind experience embraced community service, development of leadership skills and encouraged civic engagement. Our group was motivated and inspired through César Chávez's life, legacy and spirit of helping others and community involvement."

ma. I am originally from Chicago, Illinois, and have lived in Maricopa for four years. When I first began attending A+ Charter Schools, I started looking for service opportunities through my high school. National Honor Society was a great option because it fit into my school schedule and didn't disrupt my busy afternoons. I also wanted to use NHS to help promote school culture and highlight the importance of citizenship and service.

"My teachers' sincere engagement in my academics is one of the aspects of A+ Charter Schools that have helped me accomplish my proudest achievement — acceptance into my top universities, including Dartmouth College, Claremont McKenna College and Carleton College. My school facilitates communication and the open exchange of ideas, and I will continue to use the skills I have learned throughout my academic and professional career. After high school, I intend to go to college to study pre-med and Africana Studies. I am interested in the social barriers and health disparities that disadvantage minority communities."



There are 43 graduates this year at Heritage Academy. The ceremony is on campus at 7:30 p.m. on May 25. This year's Senior Spotlight selections are Lucas Adams and Cienna West.

Lucas will attend the University of Arizona and has plans to work in astrophysics. Cienna, who plans to enroll at Northern Arizona University, is exploring what she wants to do, but explains she wants to use her talents to give back to the community and help families and children.

LUCAS ADAMS

"I have long held the dream of discovering new worlds that lie just beyond our imagination. My goals are to eventually get my Ph.D. in astrophysics. Before I do, I first want to get my bachelor's degree in astronomy and math, and a master's in both specialties. I believe this study will help prolong life on Earth. I have been fortunate enough to explore other areas of



EDUCATION

interest besides academics at Heritage Academy, such as languages, community service and sports. I still remember the day I won my first swim medal. Swimming was a class that I was put into by accident and has now become a permanent part of my life, giving me an outlet that provides sanctuary from my busy brain.

“In the past four years, I was presented with opportunities, such as a four-year plan, dual enrollment classes, the ability to do college classes concurrently, and over summer sessions. These oppor-

tunities laid the foundation and allowed me to get my associate degree in science from CAC while still in high school. My greatest achievement will be graduating from college two weeks before graduating from high school.”

CIENNA WEST

“I’ve lived in Arizona since I was 6 weeks old. I consider Maricopa my hometown because it’s the only town I ever remember living in. As I’ve grown up, I’ve also gotten to see how my town has grown and changed, and it’s been an amazing



experience. Now, I’m preparing to try something new as I move to



Flagstaff to attend Northern Arizona University in the coming fall.

“Becoming a second-degree black belt has been the most rewarding experience in my life. Not only did it take immense physical training, but I grew a lot in character, as well. I couldn’t have done it without everyone at my martial-arts school guiding me along the way.”

M MARICOPA HIGH SCHOOL

There are more than 500 seniors in the class of 2023 at Maricopa High. Graduation ceremonies are 6 p.m. on May 25 at the school.

Ten seniors were selected for the Senior Spotlight, representing a broad spectrum of talents and goals: Denver Bryant; Arianna Cox, Emily Dickerson; Isabella Ebner, Victoria Fuiava, Diana Harris, Lillian Judd, Dominick Miszewski, Georgia Nickens and Zoie Zimpleman.

Denver is interested in film/media production and would like to edit everything from commercials to documentaries, movies and television shows.

Arianna, who earned a J-100 JROTC scholarship, will pursue a career in aerospace engineering.

Emily will follow her passion as a writer at Montana State University.

Isabella wants to use her talents to pursue a career in environmental research.

Victoria, who enjoys photography, wishes to start a business where she helps businesses and creative freelance talent find one another.

Diana, who will enroll at Brigham Young University in the fall, wishes to enter the geopolitical field and would like to be a policy officer at the United Nations.

Life is a long journey and Lillian, an avid writer, plan to take some time while at college to figure out the direction she will take.

Dominick will look to the stars and pursue a career in rocket science.

For Georgia and Zoie, it’s full-STEM ahead as both are interested in science, technology, engineering and math. Georgia wants to be a web developer and Zoie wants to work in management information systems.



DENVER BRYANT

“My career goal is to attend Arizona State University in the fall to major in film/media production and to become a professional video editor. Maricopa High School has definitely prepared me for my career path, by offering me a digital photography internship that allowed me to edit, interview and film my own documentary for the community called ‘Finding Sunrise.’

“A great achievement was being able to work as an office aide at Maricopa Wells Middle School and working at the Maricopa Unified School District Human Resources Department at 17 years old. Working in these two professional settings really taught me how to build connections, teamwork and help others in need.”



ARIANNA COX

“Aircraft and spacecraft have always fascinated me. High school has taught me about how time management is important to be successful, not only in school but in life, as well, especially to protect your mental state.

“My greatest achievement is getting the J-100 ROTC scholarship, because it will cover my tuition, housing and books while I get ready to serve as an officer in the U.S. Air Force after I graduate from Howard University.”

Victor Moreono/submitted

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EMILY DICKERSON

“Throughout my high school years, I’ve been on the varsity tennis team, varsity golf team, Graphic Muse and the Graphic Design program, where I qualified for state competition twice, the President of the SkillsUSA Arizona State Officer Team, Link Crew, the 2023 Club, and President of NHS on top of Honors, AP and college classes. These experiences helped me enroll in Montana State University. I intend to major in English (Creative Writing) and minor in film.

“A great achievement in high school was publishing an anthology in my creative writing class with a few of my classmates, which led to me pinpointing my passion for writing. My career plan is to become an author, publishing my own books, and also work on film sets as a screenwriter while learning about the industry to produce my own TV series.”



ISABELLA EBNER

“I have had several memorable

moments, but my favorites have been getting to inspire incoming freshmen with my school spirit during Freshman First Days. I loved getting to show them the best parts of campus, tell them personal stories on how I overcame difficulties, and leave them with wisdom and excitement as an experienced upperclassman.

“Additionally, my greatest achievement during these past four years is the amount of community service I have gotten to complete. National Honor Society has pushed me to complete at least 40 hours of service each year during my junior and senior years. I am so proud to have served with incredible local organizations and give back to the community I love.”



VICTORIA FUIAVA

“My career goal after high school is to create a freelance business that’ll help other businesses find candidates who have the talent I was blessed with, and to earn a degree in marketing/advertising or business. At Maricopa High School, I was able to develop and hone my talents for photography, film, marketing, project management, service, scholarship, leadership, citizenship and a love for music.

“The main programs that have helped me achieve such growth were marketing, DECA, NHS and digital photography. To be honest, I’m mostly a quiet and reserved person, but through the MHS Marketing Program, I was

able to meet more people and take initiative in opportunities that are useful. The NHS Program has taught me to better myself in order to better my community and the digital photography class has helped my vision in seeing different perspectives. These lessons learned are what I believe to be expedient for my career goals.”



DIANA HARRIS

“During my four years of high school, I was the former Miss City of Maricopa’s Outstanding Teen 2020, former Youth Art Council Representative for Pinal County, co-president of the Maricopa Dance Team and co-captain of the first Maricopa High School Pom Team. In addition, I took numerous AP courses and honor classes, which awarded me a full scholarship at Brigham Young University.

“My ultimate dream career would be to become a political affairs officer for the United Nations. With my high school experiences, I feel inspired to take initiative in strengthening the international community. My roles at MHS allowed me to see pure diversity and share similarities and differences through our passions. Because of this environment, I can envision myself creating improvements for our country’s international affairs.”

LILLIAN JUDD

“For now, my main career goal is to find a career that makes me happy. I have a few general ideas in mind for what I think I would



like to do but have never settled on anything concrete. However, if my time at high school has taught me anything, it is that using the resources available to you is the key way to find what you are passionate about. Whether it be through classes, clubs or hands-on learning, I plan to take every opportunity I can in college to find the career that suits me best.

“My greatest achievement in high school was winning a first-place medal for an essay competition I participated in during my sophomore year. I have always loved writing, so I entered the competition on a whim, not really expecting much to come out of it. You can imagine my shock when I found out I won first place!”



DOMINICK MISZEWSKI

“I have always been enchanted by the stars, always wanting to reach out and touch them. That’s why I’m studying aerospace engineer-

Victor Moreno



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ing in college, to get my foot in the door of a field that will hopefully be my career. My goal is to own an engineering firm that deals with rocket technology.

“So far, my greatest achievement has been being a part of the Rocket Challenge program. Being able to help launch real rockets has given me valuable experience in the field I want to go into.”

GEORGIA NICKENS

“I knew I had always wanted to do something with computers or code, growing up addicted to Super Smash Bros and Splatoon only made that clearer for me, but I had always struggled pursuing that dream. When I finally reached high school, I realized I had the chance to dip my toes into the internet world I idolized for the longest time. Once I got the



chance, I immediately signed up for the computer maintenance class. Signing up for that class had to be the best decision I have ever made. I have not only gotten the chance to network within the IT industry and gain certifications as I take the classes but have also gotten to have hands-on work with technology.

“As I go on to college, I am happy that I can start with a higher position in the industry and have more control over my professional life through the experience I’ve gained here in high school, and I owe it all to the people around me: my parents, my teachers and, most importantly, my friends.”

ZOIE ZIMPLEMAN

“At Maricopa High School, I had the opportunity to be involved in Interact Club, Link Crew, Film Club, STEM Club, National Honor Society and Student Council. At school, I am a student who is dedicated to my studies, which led me to the top of my graduating class, as the salutatorian.

“I have chosen to further pursue my education at the University of Arizona-Eller School of Business, where I plan to pursue



a business administration degree in management information systems. This year, I traveled with the MHS Travel Club along with some of my favorite teachers to Italy, Germany and Austria.”



SEQUOIA PATHWAY

Sequoia Pathway will send 42 graduates into the world with its commencement, at 6 p.m. on May 26 at the school. The Pumas’ two selections for the Senior Spotlight are Kaliya Brown and Michael Luna-Fruit. Kaliya will attend Keystone College in Pennsylvania and pursue a career in medical diagnostics and Michael will play football for the Papago Pumas junior-college program while taking classes virtually at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah.



MICHAEL LUNA-FRUIT

“Throughout high school, I have maintained a 3.6 grade-point average while still competing in varsity basketball all four years, varsity football and volleyball my junior and senior year. My career goal is to provide for the people around me in whatever career path I choose.

“My greatest achievement is committing and signing to play football while still pursuing an education in college. Overall, high school was fun, and I will have many memories to look back on.”



KALIYA BROWN

“I have been at Pathway for five years and I’ve remained heavily involved as captain of our Lady

Puma varsity volleyball team and participating in Student Council as our student body president. I have decided to major in health sciences with the goal of becoming a diagnostic medical sonographer. I think high school has prepared me in a multitude of ways by introducing me to a competitive environment that will be similar upon entering college and transitioning into the professional world. I’ve also attended CAVIT since my junior year.

“My greatest achievement is setting a new school volleyball record for the most kills, at 667.”

Victor Moreno

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A+ Charter School



CLASS OF 2023

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Gianna Boggs
Mylinna Cerna-Mendez
Devon Dukes
Ariana Fierro
Grace Halbleib
Kendall Haley (Salutatorian)
Gavin Henkel
Ian Hill

Joepaul Jurado
Zoe Levandowski
Dayanara Ozuna
Satta Raines
Anlony Rojas
Nathan Rojas
Micah Shishmanian
Ashley Soto-Ornelas
Melody Steele

Samuel Steele
Clarissa Suwandy

Early Graduates:
Elijah Raines (Valedictorian)
Nathan Estes

Source: A+ Charter School

Nate Wong

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GETTING TO know

MONICA D. SPENCER
Reporter for InMaricopa

Hometown: Mesa & Dilkon, Ariz.

Pets: Jack, a 3-year-old tabby cat; Jake, a 10-year-old Australian Shepherd mix; and Dexter, a 9-year-old chihuahua.

Hobbies: Running, reading, film photography and punching trees in Minecraft.

Pet peeve: I'm a Virgo, so mine is people who exhibit poor manners.

Like most about Maricopa: Seeing the stars at night.



FAVORITE ...

Book: Ceremony by Leslie Marmon Silko

Movie: Amélie

Actor: Pedro Pascal

Food: I have two comfort foods: homemade Navajo tacos and chicken and dumplings.

Drink: An icy-cold bourbon sour or margarita on the rocks

Anything else we should know? In April I received the 2023 Eric Fischl Vanguard Series Award through Phoenix College. I took first place in the photo category and received one of four "best in show" awards, both for silver gelatin prints featuring my niece.

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



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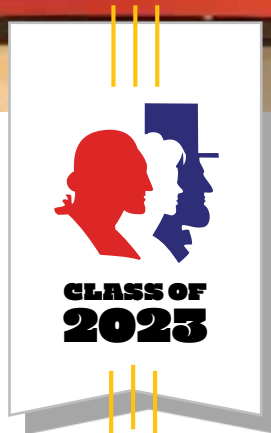


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Source: Heritage Academy

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Sequoia Pathway Academy



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Source: Sequoia Pathway Academy

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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.

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maricopa-az.gov/newsletter

Recycled water – water for the future

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



DID YOU KNOW THAT GLOBAL WATER Resources purifies and delivers about 750 million gallons of recycled water to parks and HOAs throughout the Maricopa community every year? That's enough water to fill more than 1,100 Olympic-size swimming pools!

What is recycled water?

Recycled water is produced by treating and purifying wastewater through multiple treatment methods. Global Water creates extremely clean, class A+ recycled water and delivers this resource through a separate system of purple pipes within the community. This water is used for a variety of outdoor uses. The diagram, above, shows an example of what this system looks like.

Why is recycled water important?

Recycled water is the only water resource that increases in availability as populations grow. More homes mean more showers, baths and loads of laundry — and thus more water to recycle! Recycled water is a locally controlled, drought-proof water supply that has been proven to be safe and dependable. That is why it is such an important resource for us now and into the future.

Total Water Management

Global Water has always recognized the importance of this resource and has invested

heavily in state-of-the-art, regionally planned water, wastewater and recycled water systems. Maricopa's recycled water system includes dozens of miles of purple pipe used to deliver water where it is needed.

Recycled water is a critical part of Global Water's Total Water Management (TWM) philosophy. TWM means managing the entire water cycle and conserving water by using the right water for the right use.

The use of recycled water in lieu of groundwater in the city of Maricopa has resulted in almost 10 billion gallons of saved water over the years!

How you can help

Help us recycle even more water by not putting fats, oils, and grease (FOG) or non-flushable wipes into your pipes. When FOG materials and non-flushable wipes are dumped down drains, they can form large grease balls that clog pipes and can have negative environmental impacts. ♻️

HELPFUL TIP

Wipe down greasy pots and pans or wait for grease to cool and pour it in the trash!



For more information on recycled water and total water management, visit our website at:

[GWRResources.com/total-water-management](https://www.gwrresources.com/total-water-management).



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Restaurant inspections



A summary of the March 12-April 13 food inspections by Pinal County Environmental Health Services

SATISFACTORY

native grill wings	Cooling Temperature of cooked chicken in prep cooler 54-57° (≤41°F required).	Hot holding Temperature of marinara sauce in steam well 115-119° (≥ 135°F required).
THE ROOST SPORTS BAR & CAFE	Hot holding Temperature of cooked chicken in steam well 125° (≥ 135°F required).	Equipment No cold water at cook line hand sink.
	Consumer advisory Offering cooked-to-order steaks and hamburgers without use of complete consumer advisory.	
ROSATI'S Pizzeria	Hot holding Temperature of red sauce held in a steam well 115-122°F (≥ 135°F required).	Controlling Pests Live cockroaches in kitchen.
	Cooling Temperature of cooked pasta held in walk-in cooler 68-77°F (≤41°F required).	Heating, ventilation, air conditioning Excessive dust around air vents above food prep. Build-up of debris on grill filters.
Say Sushi	Cooling Temperature of cooked rice in walk-in cooler 48-55° (≤41°F required).	Sealing Prep sink must be adjusted and sealed to wall.

EXCELLENT

- Butterfield Elementary School
- Central Arizona College — Culinary
- Circle K (21212 N. John Wayne Pkwy.)
- Cold Beers & Cheeseburgers
- Fry's Marketplace
- Fry's Marketplace — Sushi
- Fry's Marketplace — Cheese
- Fry's Marketplace — Deli
- Good Donuts
- Gyro Grill
- Helen's Kitchen

- Heritage Charter School
- Leading Edge Academy
- Legacy Traditional School
- Maricopa Head Start
- Our Lady of Grace Church
- Papa Murphy's Pizza
- Pizza Hut
- Roots Eatery
- Sequoia Pathway Academy — K-6
- Sequoia Pathway Academy — Secondary
- Yogurt Jungle

EXCELLENT No violations found.
SATISFACTORY Violations corrected during inspection.
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT Critical items noted during inspection cannot be corrected immediately requiring follow-up inspection.
UNACCEPTABLE Gross, unsanitary conditions necessitating the discontinuation of service.

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Permitting around town

March 16-April 11

Commercial

A permit was issued to build a **Burger King** at The Wells, 41980 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy., at a cost of \$900,000 by Capstone Constructors Corp.

Homeat Maricopa was granted permission to build two temporary tent structures at 17635 N. Porter Road for about \$147,000 each by Sam Construction Group LLC. A 500-gallon fuel tank will also be installed.

REV@Porter will build 37 steel carports to cover 194 spaces at a cost of \$313,954 by Gort Metals Corporation of Nevada.

Hampton Edison, a rental house community, will build a \$118,000 commercial pool and spa. The contractor is Rondo Pools and Spas.

Filiberto's Mexican Food in Sonoran Creek-Second Edition, 20320 N. John Wayne Pkwy., Suite 130, will have Kevin Construction perform the interior buildout for \$175,000.

Cobblestone Dental Center, 44600 W. Smith Enke Road, will expand 1,280 square feet at Cobblestone Farms at a cost of \$64,000. Denco Dental Construction is the contractor. A demolition permit was also issued to remove non-load-bearing walls, along with grid ceilings and plumbing.

WZ Asian Bistro and Sushi Bar, 21576 N. John Wayne Pkwy., in Cobblestone Fiesta, will undergo a \$79,000 renovation. The work will be performed by MCPK Construction Management LLC.

APEX Motor Club, 22408 N. Ralston Road, was permitted to begin work on 16 garage condominium units at a cost of \$1.7 million. The contractor is John D. Hensler. A permit was also issued for installation of new fire-alarm system and temporary tent coverage, and a 1,000-gallon fuel tank will be installed.

Maricopa Unified School District will have a fire pump built at Desert Sunrise High

School. The contractor is Chasse Building Team. Also, a 300-gallon diesel fuel tank will be installed.

Fire sprinkler systems will be installed at **Bungalows on Bowlin**, 44900 W. Bowlin Road, and at Copa Flats, 17485 N. Porter Road.

The city of Maricopa will build the foundation for its Municipal Court at 39700 W. Civic Center Plaza at a cost of \$3.5 million. Caliente Construction is the contractor.

Bungalows on Bowlin will build three canopies for \$58,000 each. Park N Shade of Tucson, Inc. will be the contractor.

Innovation Villas®West Maricopa, 21055 N. Village Pkwy., was permitted to build six more new duplex single-story, one-bedroom units.

EVR Porter is adding 14 detached garage units at a cost of \$71,000 each. Sodella Construction is performing the work.

Rummel Construction will perform \$2.4 million in grading and drainage work at Moonlight Ridge, a planned housing development at 22292 N. Green Road.

PERMITS ISSUED

15

RESIDENTIAL SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATIONS

92

SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLINGS

11

RESIDENTIAL SWIMMING POOLS

Residential

Lennar Construction of Arizona was issued permits for 19 homes at **Anderson Farms**.

K. Hovnanian Homes will be building four homes at The Lakes at **Rancho El Dorado Phase III**.

Meritage Homes was permitted to build 13 homes in **Province** and another six homes in **The Trails Phase 1B (Tortosa)**.

Century Communities of Arizona was permitted to build 26 homes in **The Trails, Phase 1A (Tortosa)**.

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Anxiety: Understanding and coping with a common struggle

BY LLEVA GROVES



ANXIETY IS A PERVERSIVE MENTAL-health condition affecting millions of people worldwide.

Feeling anxious in certain situations is normal, but when anxiety persists and impairs daily function, it becomes a concern. Anxiety can manifest as a general sense of unease, excessive worry, nervousness, or, more specifically, panic attacks, social anxiety or phobias.

Understanding the nature of anxiety, its causes, treatments and effective coping strategies is crucial in overcoming this common struggle and leading a more balanced, stress-free life.

At its core, anxiety is a natural response to stress. It has evolutionary origins in the human “fight or flight” mechanism, which helped our ancestors survive imminent threats. However, in the modern world, this response can be triggered by an array of everyday stressors, from work pressure to interpersonal conflicts. If left untreated, it can result in chronic anxiety, which has the potential to significantly impact an individual’s mental health and overall well-being.

There are several considerations when determining the causes of anxiety. One of the primary factors contributing to anxiety is the uncertainty that pervades various aspects of our lives. We may worry about our financial stability, job security or personal relationships, and this uncertainty can fuel anxious thoughts. Genetics, childhood experiences, and underlying mental health conditions can all contribute to the development and persistence of anxiety disorders. However, in some, there may be no known direct cause. Fortunately, there are several effective treatment options for anxiety.

One common form of treatment is psychotherapy, which involves talking with a trained therapist to identify and address the underlying causes of anxiety. Several approaches to psychotherapy exist, including cognitive-behavioral therapy, which focuses on challenging and changing negative thought patterns, and exposure therapy, which

involves gradually facing fears or anxieties in a controlled environment.

In addition, psychotherapy assists individuals in developing healthy coping mechanisms. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation or deep breathing, promote self-awareness and allow individuals to become more attuned to their emotional states, helping them better manage their anxiety.

It is also crucial to practice self-care. Regular exercise can help release endorphins, the body’s natural stress-relief hormone. A healthy diet that includes complex carbohydrates, omega-3 fatty acids, flaxseeds, chia seeds and magnesium-rich foods, such as nuts, seeds and leafy greens, are beneficial for mood and anxiety while limiting caffeine and high-sugar snacks which may exacerbate it.

While psychotherapy and healthy coping mechanisms are effective first-line treatments, they may not be enough. Some may require support through medications, such as antidepressants or anxiolytics, in conjunction with therapy. These medications work by regulating brain chemistry to reduce anxiety symptoms.

Remember that overcoming anxiety is a gradual process, and you must be patient with yourself as you develop and implement coping strategies. While anxiety may be a common struggle, the right combination of support, self-awareness, and proactive management can lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

Lleva Groves, PMHNP-BC, is a psychiatric nurse practitioner with American Medical Associates in Maricopa.



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Art as a soulful expression

BY CHRISTOPHER GOODRUM

MY PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS takes on many forms, from acting to directing; from playing music to writing music, and from publishing books to composing music for short films. Creative expression is a huge part of my life and a passion I have been fortunate enough to pursue.

My journey took me from talent shows to high school plays, from community theater to performing professionally on the steps of the capitol in California, and from Paramount’s

Great America in San Jose, Calif., to the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim.

The skills and experiences I’ve gained shaped me into who I am, and I can share my experiences with Maricopa, working closely with others in the community who are equally passionate and dedicated to the arts. This devotion is what drives my fellow performers to bring to the arts the highest quality of entertainment, sharing the stories of humanity that reflect the world around us.

Maricopa Community Theatre showcases the best talent Maricopa has to offer with experienced performers, directors, choreographers and theater technicians. An all-inclusive community that embraces diversity welcomed me and my family to the fold in 2017.

It also educates the youth and first-time performers with youth theater and summer programs, instilling in the next generation of performers the importance of art in all its forms.

I have the good fortune of participating in the arts, and it has been my great privilege to continue in Maricopa.

Maricopa is brimming with events that showcase and highlight local talent. Throughout this month, the Maricopa Arts Gallery has frequent art showings at Maricopa’s Library and Cultural Center. Maricopa High School has two events: the MHS Dance Company Annual Recital with three performances (May 3-May 5), and the MHS Band/Orchestra Spring Concert (May 16) at the MHS Performing Arts Center.

Maricopa Wells Middle School also has performances May 3-May 5 of “Haphazardly Ever After,” with a student art show on the night of the final performance.

And don’t forget MMC’s rescheduled May 6 Springtime Serenade concert.

Lastly, from May 31 through June 3, Maricopa Community Theatre proudly presents its production of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s “In the Heights.”

Christopher Goodrum is a published author, playwright, composer, actor and director, currently working at Maricopa Wells Middle School as an educator.

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Enough is enough

6 recent young adult suicides in Maricopa are 6 too many

BY BRIANNA REINHOLD, LPC, CFRC

SUICIDE IS THE SECOND-LEADING cause of death among teens and young adults ages 10 to 34, according to the Centers for Disease Control (2022).

The second-leading cause of death. Our youth are choosing to end their own lives before they have had a chance for it to really start.

Why? Why are they hurting so much? And more importantly, why are they not reaching out for help?

Maricopa has experienced at least six teen/young adult suicides since last fall.

Six deaths in Maricopa alone. Our youth are hurting, and as a community, we must step up and do more to help them. If you are a parent, talk to your teens. If you are a teacher, reach out to your students. If you are a youth leader, open the conversation with your youth-group members.

If you are in contact with any teenager, be their support. Be their strength. Be their cheerleader. You never know what they may be experiencing in another area of their life and your simple support could mean the absolute difference for them.

Parents! I know we all like to think that our children won't be a statistic. We like to think the smile we see on our teen's face is authentic and that they could never contemplate suicide. We like to think we have educated our children enough on how to deal with depression and on the resources available. We like to think that we have an open relationship with our children, that they will talk to us about anything. We like to think that we could never lose our child.

We must stop thinking that! We may have great relationships with our children and we may see them smiling, but we truly have no idea what is going on in their heads. We need to consistently open the conversation with our teens to discuss the tough topics such as relationships, bullying, self-esteem, sex, school, etc. Our teens learn from us and if we aren't doing everything in our power to try and help them, how can we expect them to always take the initiative to help themselves? Most of the time, our teenagers do not want to feel like a burden on their parents.

It is OK to discuss the tough topics. It is



OK to have uncomfortable discussions. These are the discussions our teens need more than anything they are being taught in school. They need to learn how to take care of themselves emotionally and mentally.

It can be scary at times opening the conversation of suicide with our teens. We may worry that by bringing up the topic, we are giving them ideas. This couldn't be further from the truth. Our teens are having discussions about topics that we could never imagine, including suicide, sex and drugs. Having healthy conversations about these topics is what makes all the difference.

Here are tips to help open that conversation with a teenager:

- Lean in — Body language is a critically important element of healthy and productive conversations. If the other person gets the impression you are not engaged, they will shut down quickly.
- Know your resources — You should know what is available for professional help in your area.
- Get comfortable feeling uncomfortable — Have discussions that aren't always easy. Bring up the tough topics.
- Create a safe place — Be judgment free. Make sure they are in a place they feel comfortable openly discussing these topics. Ensure they know you are a safe person to be talking to, as well.
- Start with "I've noticed..." — This is a great way to open the conversation if you've noticed your teen has been "different" lately.

You are not accusing them of anything, but simply letting them know you've seen a change and are worried about them.

- Ask open-ended questions — If all your questions are "yes" or "no," then your teen won't have to provide much detail and you will leave the conversation just as confused. Start your questions with words like, "How" and "Why."
- Practice active listening — Put your cellphones away. Turn the TV off. Make sure you are giving your full attention to your teenager throughout the entire discussion. Don't wait to answer and instead listen to what they are saying.

If during any conversation your teen makes a statement that they are contemplating suicide, thank them before you do anything. This can be extremely scary for them. By thanking them, you are letting them know how much it means to you that they confided in you and remind them that you will help them through every step of the way. You can then reach out to your nearest crisis center, call 988 (National Suicide Hotline), or contact 911. You can also take them to any local ER for an assessment. Please feel free to check out our website for additional resources and information, as well.

Brianna Reinhold, LPC and CFRC, is owner and clinical director of Northern Lights Therapy, PLLC.

 NorthernLightsTherapyAZ.com

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Rewriting your hormonal story: BHRT for women's health and wellness

BY DR. KRISTINA DONNAY DNP, FNP-C

BIOIDENTICAL HORMONE REPLACEMENT therapy (BHRT) is a natural alternative to traditional hormone replacement therapy.

Using a painless in-office procedure, the pellets are placed under the skin. Pellets are the size of a cooked grain of rice. They slowly release consistent hormones over a three- to four-month period in women to maintain an optimal level, avoiding the fluctuations of other modalities.

The pellets are made from natural plant sources and are bioidentical to natural hormones. As women age, their hormone levels naturally decrease or become out of balance, which can lead to a range of symptoms and health issues.

Hormones coordinate digestion, brain function, immune function, mood and libido.

If you suffer from any of the following, you may have low or fluctuating hormone levels:

- Cognitive function, brain fog, loss of concentration, memory lapses.
- Sleep Issues that include insomnia, nighttime or early waking.
- Hot flashes/ night sweats.
- Mood, anxiety, depression, mood swings.
- Weight gain or changes in body composition.
- Fatigue.
- Dry skin, thinning hair, brittle nails.
- Reduced libido or sexual function.

Having balanced, optimized hormone levels can provide a myriad of benefits for the body. Benefits of BHRT include:

- **Relief from menopausal and premenopausal symptoms.** These can include hot flashes, night sweats, mood swings and vaginal dryness.
- **Improved bone health:** Balanced hormones help prevent bone loss and improve bone density, reducing the risk of fractures and other bone-related injuries.
- **Reduced risk for certain diseases,** including cardiovascular and Alzheimer's.
- **Increased libido:** BHRT has been shown to improve sexual health, lubrication and satisfaction.
- **Boosted energy levels:** Studies have shown that women who use BHRT report an increase in energy levels and a reduction in fatigue compared to those who don't use BHRT.
- **Increased muscle mass and strength:** Optimal hormone levels help improve overall physical function and quality of life.

Here at Maricopa Wellness Center, we know that no two people are the same so we custom-tailor each treatment to attain your optimal levels. We also specialize in proper supplementation to help your body perform at its best. These supplements work in tandem with BHRT to filter out bad or excessive hormones and to help your body utilize the good hormones. Using supplements promotes beneficial estrogen metabolism and helps restore healthy hormonal balance along with BHRT.

If you are experiencing hormonal imbalances or are concerned about the effects of aging on your hormone levels, BHRT may be a suitable treatment option for you.

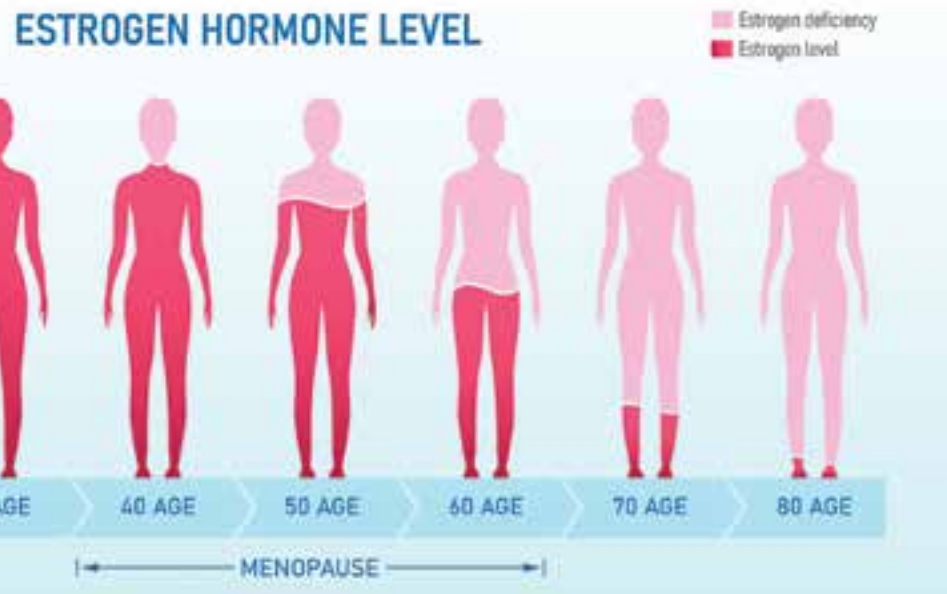
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12 tips to de-stress from parenthood pressures

BY HARRIET PHELPS, PSYD. RETIRED

THE BALANCE OF WORK AND HOME LIFE MAY sometimes feel like being on a merry-go-round with no way off. We need to be reminded to take a break and de-stress as a parent — for our own sake and our kids'.

1. Remember parenting is not perfect. Remember to give yourself kudos and rewards for doing the best you can.
2. Take a break and do something for yourself every day. What brings a smile to your face? Your child's smile? "Me time" is important.
3. Feeling overwhelmed? Admit it and get help. You do not have to be a super-parent.
4. Laugh often and keep your sense of humor.
5. Accept that kids will be kids. Learning is about making mistakes.
6. Before reacting, count to 10 when feeling angry. We hurt others emotionally and physically when reacting in anger.
7. We need hugs. Touch eases tension when given appropriately. If unsure, ask permission.
8. Listening is a skill we can all improve. We feel valued when someone listens to us. Make eye contact and show attentiveness when someone is talking. Working toward understanding the person reduces stress. Good communication prevents conflict and stress.
9. Schedule fun and fitness. Laughter and physical activities are great stress reducers.
10. Identify your joys of parenting. Talk to other parents about your concerns and share ideas for solutions.
11. Identify your expectations for each child. Expectations must be realistic for age and behavior.
12. Spend time together doing low-cost and no-cost activities. (See sidebar.) 📱

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

LOW-COST 'TOGETHER' ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Fly a kite.
- Take a trip to the library and take turns reading to each other.
- Plan a rock hunt and look up the name and energy it possesses.
- Tour City Hall.
- Watch people at the park.
- Feed the birds.
- Blow bubbles.
- Learn a dance. YouTube has great instructions.
- Refrigerators need new pictures. Make one for grandma and grandpa.
- Paint with water.
- Bake cookies from a ready mix.
- Tour the Police Department and ask to meet officers. Ask what they like about their job.
- Draw using a toy to make a shadow and outline on the paper. Switch roles for the evening.
- Identify Arizona birds. There's an app for that.
- Discuss safety at home. Where to meet up if there is a fire. Create an emergency contact with a neighbor.
- Star gaze. Look up the constellations in the night sky. There's an app for that, too.

Source: Dr. Harriet Phelps



Thrill of the grill

Experts give a taste of guidance with backyard-cookout season upon us

BY TOM SCHUMAN

IS THERE REALLY A BAD TIME TO break out the backyard grill? Spring typically is regarded as the start of grilling season on the patio, although here in the desert it's close to a 365-day-a-year opportunity.

And not just here.

In my former Indiana home, there were several pictures of me clearing snow to fire up some outdoor cooking magic. But I'm strictly an amateur — propane fuel for your basic burgers and bratwursts with some occasional steak, chicken or vegetables thrown in.

So, if we're going to share insights to assist in your culinary pleasures, we better call on the professionals. As in Lerrin Smith, floor supervisor and grilling expert at Karsten's ACE Hardware. Add in Damon Hahn and Sean FitzPatrick, co-owners of the Maricopa-based Coast 2 Coast BBQ food truck and catering service, and you'll be ready to make your sear mark.

Smith estimates he sells 10-20 grills a month. They range from the \$200 Grill LP Classic to nearly \$3,800 for the latest model from Traeger. Blackstone griddles are a trendy current option, he adds.

There is no shortage of accessories to enhance the grilling experience. Among the most popular are Bluetooth thermometers.

"You've got to get that meat just right, not overcooked or undercooked," Smith contends.

FitzPatrick agrees, noting many home chefs make the mistake of overcooking chicken or steaks.

"With chicken, if you get it over 165 to 175 degrees, it's done," he said. "You see a lot of people take it over 200. People get stuck on how long it is going to take, but every piece of meat is different. Temperatures give you a ballpark but ..."



His partner, Hahn, added, "We did eight briskets one week, all in the same smoker, all of them 13 to 15 pounds — and they all had their own agenda."

Coast 2 Coast BBQ specializes in brisket, even though the two men agree it is among the tougher things to get right.

Hahn tries to heed a wise reminder: "If you're looking, you ain't cooking," in reference to opening that lid too often.

FitzPatrick confides "it has taken a lot of trial and error" to perfect the art of grilling meat.

The food truck partners enjoyed home grilling before meeting when their sons were

Lerrin Smith says a variety of grilling supplies, including charcoal, wood chips and pellets are available at Karsten's ACE Hardware, along with an extensive selection of spices and rubs.

in Boy Scouts together. Soon, they were taking their cooking to the next level. They began catering in 2020 and added the mobile outreach a year later. Part of their learning process still involves checking out grilling websites and watching YouTube videos, which is not bad advice for the dad who rarely chucks a hunk of meat on the grill and is expected to get it right.

Smith, on board at ACE for nearly three years, receives many questions about fuel sources and types of pellets to use. His preference is straightforward: "Cooking with wood provides a different flavor and taste."

And Smith couldn't agree more with the advice from Hahn and FitzPatrick when they warn about cooking too fast.

"I try to tell people it's not about how quick it's done, it's about the experience, the socializing and the fellowship," he said.

A new offering from ACE adds to that experience. A BBQ awning, known as the Grill Gazebo, provides comfortable cover in less-than-ideal weather conditions — in our case from a beating sun that can sear a griller as fast as the grill sears dinner.

Bottom line: Fire up that grill, be patient and don't hesitate to try cooking various items. [In](#)

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French marigolds easy to grow, beautiful, yield for many seasons

WENDE GEHRT

FRENCH MARIGOLDS (*TAGETES patula*) have been a garden staple for decades because they're easy to grow and add a splash of color to any space.

They can be purchased as bedding plants and are among the easiest plants to start from seed. If you purchase bedding plants, choose a sunny, well-drained location and plant them 6-9 inches apart, watering in thoroughly. French marigolds can be directly seeded into the soil or started indoors for

best results. Seeds require temperatures of 70-75 degrees to germinate and seedlings will sprout in 7-10 days.

French marigolds add color to the landscape and provide benefits to the home gardener. The fragrance deters whiteflies and repels many flying insects, and French marigolds kill soil-borne root knot nematodes. They make a wonderful companion plant to vegetable or flower gardens and won't take over your garden. Marigolds are among the most gratifying flowers to grow for beginning gardeners and children.

French marigolds require little care and don't need rich soil or fertilizer. They'll thrive in pots or garden beds and need only sun and water to provide blooms until winter's hard frost or summer's extreme heat. While you might find many varieties of marigolds at the garden center or big-box store, there's a difference between French marigolds and African marigolds. While they're both available in a variety of colors and heights, the petals of French marigold flowers are more ruffled than petals of the African marigolds. French marigolds also have a longer blooming season.

French marigolds are generous plants that will provide many more plants and flowers after the initial purchase. Remove the dried seed heads

from the plant and store them in a paper bag or small cardboard box (not plastic). Deadheading the spent blooms also will keep plants tidier and encourage more flowering. Saved seeds can be planted just like purchased seeds with the dark point down. The saved seeds may produce plants that are genetically different from the parents, so there may be some variability in flower color and overall plant growth.

Along with their ornamental attributes, French marigolds also are edible and can be used to make a natural dye. They make beautiful bouquets and arrangements, but their strong fragrance should be considered before bringing them indoors.

In Pinal County, we can plant French marigolds outdoors from February through May with prolific blooms in May and June. For blooms September through December, plant in September and October. Seeds can be started indoors 4-6 weeks prior to outdoor planting.

French marigolds are easy to grow, beautiful, beneficial and, with seed-saving, you'll have flowers for many seasons to come.

Wende Gehrt is a master gardener at the University of Arizona.

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



most expensive HOME SOLD



22360 N. Daniel Drive **SOLD** March 10 \$ 649,995

This newly built single-story home in The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado was previously a model and came with upgraded landscaping. The home backs to a lake and has a backyard covered patio with doors to the dining room and master bedroom. The master has a walk-in closet and double-sink bathroom. Two other bedrooms in the home share a bathroom. There is an extra room, for an office or loft. The kitchen was sold with upgraded cabinets and quartz countertops, breakfast bar and a walk-in pantry. The house has an RV garage and a two-car tandem garage. It sold for \$75,000 below its original list price.

Community: The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado
Builder: Richmond American Homes
Year built: 2022
Square feet: 2,390
Bedrooms: 3
Price per square foot: \$271.96
Bathrooms: 2.5
Days on market: 51

2. 40412 W. Hall Drive, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado\$544,995
3. 18381 N. Falcon Lane, Glennwilde \$530,000
4. 45126 W. Juniper Ave., Alterra \$517,500
5. 40653 W. Walker Way, Homestead North..... \$512,500

least expensive HOME SOLD

18531 N. Wilson Street **SOLD** April 7 \$ 252,000



This single-story home in Senita has two bedrooms and two baths. It is close to one of Senita's community parks with a two-car garage, backyard covered patio and no neighbors directly behind it. It sold for \$58,000 below its original list price.

Community: Senita
Builder: Unknown
Square feet: 1,061
Year built: 2009
Price per square foot: \$237.51
Bedrooms: 2
Days on market: 167
Bathrooms: 2

2. 43171 W. Cowpath Road, Senita.....\$250,000
3. 43922 W. Lindgren Drive, The Villages at Rancho El Dorado.....\$274,000
4. 42599 W. Candyland Place, Province \$275,000
5. 35931 W. Velaquez Drive, Tortosa \$275,000

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Source: MLS, March 10-April 9

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Guaranteed rental income insurance worth considering

BY SHERMAN AND EUPHEMIA WEEKES



FOR SOME LANDLORDS, IT MAY BE especially important to protect rental income to avoid falling behind on mortgage payments or other bills.

An additional step to guarantee a steady payment would be taking out an insurance

policy. This protects the landlord when bad things happen to otherwise good tenants.

Despite the greatest screening process and selection of the best tenant, there is no guarantee they will be able to pay rent indefinitely. Life changes happen and a

tenant may stop paying for many reasons, among them job loss, divorce and health issues. A tenant may also become destructive and damage your property over changes in the household. When these things happen, landlords are left to absorb the cost of unpaid rent, eviction and repairs to damaged property.

Landlord Protection Guarantee is a viable option for some landlords. The amount and coverage vary by provider, but a typical Landlord Protection Guarantee will cover loss of rent, sheriff fees, eviction court fees, legal defense and costs.

Property repairs from malicious damage also are covered by your Landlord Protection Guarantee. However, the policy will not cover rent loss if the landlord fails to comply with the lease agreement and keep the property in a habitable condition.

Guaranteed protection is available through many providers. Property-management companies call it a variety of names, including rental-guarantee insurance, Scheer landlord protection and rent rescue.

Please reach out to us if you have questions or need further information on how best to protect your rental income.

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Real estate prices appear to be on the way back up

BY DAYV MORGAN

THINGS ARE CHANGING QUICKLY IN THE real estate market.

Following a slump in the final quarter of 2022 after the Federal Reserve spent most of the year raising interest rates, which indirectly caused mortgage interest rates to jump from around 3 percent to 7 percent in November, the market has recovered in the past few months. Things are heating up again. Those still looking

for the market to bottom out might have missed their shot.

The average sales price in Maricopa dropped 16%, to \$356,000 in December from \$427,000 in June 2022. The average sales price fell 1% from Dec. 2022 to March 2023 and that might be the last drop for the near future.

While some builders may have good incentives on completed homes, the base prices on “to be built” homes are rising.

In the Tortosa subdivision, Meritage increased its listing prices by \$3,000 in February, and DR Horton raised prices by an average of \$10,000 during the same period. KB Homes hasn’t raised its prices yet but hasn’t lowered prices in six months, either.

Similarly, in the Lakes at Rancho El Dorado neighborhood, Meritage has raised prices about 3% since January, and Centex homes in Santa Rosa Crossing are up \$2,000 since March.

Buyers were shell-shocked and hard to locate last fall, but that’s no longer true.

In October, there were 685 active listings on the Multiple Listing Service and by mid-April that number was down to 464, a decrease of 32 percent. This is not due to sellers pulling their homes off the market, but rather homes going under contract

that were listed months ago.

In the first week of April, there were 237 listings with a “pending” status in MLS. This is close to the 253 pending homes in the same week in 2021, a year in which prices increased an average of 3% every month.

In April 2021, there were only 46 active listings, or 90% fewer than we have today. Regardless, inventory is decreasing and that means it’s unlikely that prices will be falling in the future.

Additionally, of the 464 active listings, 278 were new construction, a whopping 58 percent, meaning that only 186 resale homes were available as of mid-April for a city of roughly 70,000 residents.

The lack of resale homes will inevitably push the new-build prices higher, along with the market in general.

How high remains to be seen.

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

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A dance with time

White tulle streamers. Golden balloon arches. Slow dancing to crooning ballads. If a high school senior prom is a rite of passage for American teens, then Maricopa's inaugural senior prom for its elderly on April 13 at Copper Sky was a gentle reminder to take joy in the epilogue of life. The night was filled with energy as seniors laughed with friends, danced in groups and swayed to tunes from their youth, like The Penguins' "Earth Angel." It showed that Maricopa's elders have plenty of vigor and sparkle in their golden years.



Monica D. Spencer



Monica D. Spencer



Celebrating Older Americans Month

BY RON SMITH

wealth of knowledge and practical wisdom enrich everyone.

In Native American communities, elders are respected for their wisdom and life experiences. They are expected to pass down their knowledge. In India, elders are the heads of their families. In eastern Asia, children are raised knowing some day they will swap roles with their parents. Respect is also a driving force in African American treatment of their elderly. Latin culture is centered around family as several generations often live under one roof.

In Western cultures there is fear of death — and aging that precedes it.

Ageism is prevalent. We celebrate youth. Ageism is discrimination. It compounds physical and mental problems caused by the aging process by reinforcing the myth growing old is a terrible experience. Instead of being a time of all the rewarding experiences possible in later life, our society tends to reinforce the view that this period is simply the consequence of survival.

In 2004, France passed legislation to protect its elderly when it had one of the

highest rates of pensioner suicides. During a freak heat wave, more than 15,000 elderly citizens died. Bodies weren't discovered until weeks later. France changed its civil code to require adult children to stay connected with geriatric family members. Recent heat waves in the U.S. showed similar consequences.

Let's use Older Americans Month to start our personal eradication of ageism. Treat older individuals with respect and avoid snap decisions about their capabilities based on age or appearance. Speak up if you see hostility or blatant discrimination toward an older individual.

And applaud the opportunities and benefits afforded us by our wonderful older Americans! 🗨️

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](https://www.inmaricopa.com/columnists)

MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS Month. Initially "Senior Citizens Month," the name came from a meeting in April 1963 between President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens. The name was changed in 1965.

This year's theme is "Aging Unbound."

It is important to acknowledge contributions of older people — to our economic well-being as a country, in defense of our freedoms and in shaping the character of our nation. Their



Post-COVID era may present challenges for seniors

BY AL BRANDENBURG

LIFE AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC is becoming increasingly evident.

New cases as well as hospitalizations and deaths are on the decline. Mask mandates have ended.

Still, some elderly and compromised people remain in a quandary about mask-wearing, attending indoor events and seeing friends again.

Experts say some seniors may have difficulties adjusting to a post-COVID world after more than two years of isolation. Many older adults still are fearful of the disease and hesitant to jump too quickly back into social life. Others lament the loss of two-plus precious years when there are more years behind them than ahead.

Experts say seniors should try to slowly re-emerge, perhaps by attending small gatherings at first.

Concerns can be particularly acute when it comes to the emotional well-being of adults 65 and older, who tend to be at risk of experiencing severe illness more often. Many still fear the potential effects of the coronavirus because they know someone who was hospitalized or died from the disease.

Some experts believe we are moving toward COVID-19 morphing to an endemic from a pandemic. The flu also is considered endemic. This means it is always present in a group or area but not always at elevated levels. We have learned how to live with the flu.

COVID-19 remains a pandemic because cases haven't stabilized into predictable patterns. So, plan for small, enjoyable activities with increasing frequency. It's helpful to remember adjusting to pandemic life took a bit of time. Adjusting to post-pandemic life also will take time, but with patience and persistence your mind and body will remember and adapt.

So, let's get out there and start living again. 🗨️

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GET-OUT-OF-THE-HOUSE IDEAS

The Dwarf Car Museum is a privately owned, non-profit museum showcasing handcrafted miniature automobiles of Ernie Adams. 🗨️ [DwarfCarMuseum.com](https://www.dwarfcarmuseum.com)



Arizona Science Center encourages discovery of the world of science and imagination. 🗨️ [AZscience.org](https://www.azscience.org)

The Heard Museum is dedicated to the advancement of American Indian art, it collaborates with artists and tribal communities to provide a perspective about the art of Native people. 🗨️ [Heard.org](https://www.heard.org)



Pacana Park has a large pond extensively used for fishing, aquatic center, recreation center and skate plaza.

Copper Sky Recreation Center has a fitness center, aquatics, 98-acre park with fishing lake, courts and fields. Maricopa Museum and Visitor Center at Heritage Park showcases the city's heritage.

Jane Askew Memorial Park at the entrance of Rancho El Dorado has a small lake, fountains, green space and facilities.

Al Brandenburg is a member of Maricopa Community Advocates.

We ❤️ Moms

Thursday, May 11 • 9:00am–3:00pm

Because we're so crazy about moms, we're getting an early start on Mother's Day. Please let us welcome you to our beautiful community, where seniors thrive, grow, and enjoy life. Everybody feels like family here.

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Age limits for older drivers: When are you too old to drive?

BY JOAN KOCZOR

ACCORDING TO AAA, BY 2030 there will be more than 70 million people 65 and older in this country, and 85% to 90% of them with a driver's license.

AAA warns we must face a reckoning when it comes to our ability to hit the road, noting "seniors are outliving their ability to drive safely by an average of 7-10 years."

Not that it's so simple to give up driving. Life in the U.S. is largely built around the car.

Americans rely on their vehicles to get to the store, to the doctor's office, to, well, anywhere.

To give up driving is to give up a sense of independence that seniors value.

In Arizona, drivers 65 and older must renew their licenses every five years. They are required to provide proof of adequate vision every-other renewal, or once a decade. They may not renew by mail or online and must appear in person.

Experts believe there may be ways to work around age-related challenges without giving up driving.

A driver with arthritis that may affect the ability to turn the neck and check blind spots can buy a car with blind-spot technology. A driver who no longer feels comfortable with some driving maneuvers — say, making a left turn at a busy intersection — can choose to avoid that intersection. These challenges aren't exclusive to seniors.

But will seniors be subjected to different requirements?

California is among states that make requirements of older drivers, specifically requiring those 70 and older to renew their license in person and provide proof of adequate vision. Many states require older drivers to renew their license more frequently.

Eighty-year-old Vermont state Sen. Mark MacDonald sponsored legislation requiring drivers 75 and older to pass vision and road tests to renew a license.

Sen. MacDonald said he was speaking from experience and knows the reality of growing older. He has been quoted saying, "My skills are diminished. ... I drive differently than when I was younger."

The Vermont bill was opposed by AARP, which said it discriminates on the basis of age. AARP's policy supports effective, evidence-based assessment to identify at-risk drivers of all ages.

The knowledge test for drivers 70 and older is computerized. Many seniors are not computer savvy. Applicants can request a DMV representative to read the questions aloud, and the applicant answers verbally.

Illinois is considering updating driving requirements for those 80 and older.

Will Arizona be next?

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

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MAY 6

Teen mental-health festival coming in May

Teenagers and their families are invited to a mental-health festival at Maricopa's Pacana Park in early May.

Express Fest, 4-10 p.m. on May 6, is aimed at providing mental-health awareness and resources for teens and their families.

"We have had some devastating losses within our community and this is my way of giving back to and fighting for the lives of our Maricopa youth," said Jelani Elliot, owner of For The Kulture and an organizer for the event. "This battle was already a personal one for me but since the loss of my own son to suicide, it has now consumed me and has become my life's mission."

The festival will feature a variety of teen-friendly activities, including games, raffles, giveaways and a movie screening to conclude the night. Food trucks, live music and vendors will be onsite.

"We really want to get people talking about mental health and seeing that it doesn't have to be so taboo," said Brianna Reinhold, clinical director of Northern Lights Therapy, and among the festival organizers. "It is going to be so much fun but also so important."

Among the highlights will be a fishbowl discussion group, in which teens may jumpstart conversations on difficult topics associated with mental health.

IF YOU GO

When: Saturday, May 6, 4-10 p.m.
Where: Pacana Park, 19000 N. Porter Road
Cost: Free

Sponsored by:



THINGS TO DO

May

1
Maricopa Historical Society
5 p.m., Redwood Room Maricopa Library & Cultural Center
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

2
Maricopa City Council
6 p.m., City Hall
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

6
Maricopa Amateur Radio Association
9 a.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center
18160 N Maya Angelou Drive

Safe House Express Fest
4 p.m., Pacana Park
19000 N. Porter Road
This is a teen mental-health festival. Come out and enjoy live music, giveaways, movie, teen activities and vendors.

8
Friends of the Library
5:15 p.m., Maricopa Library & Cultural Center
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

10
MUSD Governing Board
6:30 p.m., Maricopa Unified School District Office
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

16
Maricopa City Council
6 p.m., City Hall
39700 W. Civic Center Plaza

20
American Legion Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser
7 a.m., Veterans Center
41614 W. Smith-Enke Road

24
A+ Charter School Graduation
6 p.m., Elements Event Center at Ak-Chin Circle
16000 N. Maricopa Road

25
Maricopa High School Graduation
7:30 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

Heritage Academy Graduation
7:30 p.m., Heritage Academy
41000 W. Heroes Way

26
Sequoia Pathway Academy Graduation
6 p.m., Sequoia Pathway Academy
19265 N. Porter 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
6 p.m., Maricopa High School
45012 W. Honeycutt Ave.

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

For details on these and other local events — and to list your own — visit InMaricopa.com/Calendar.

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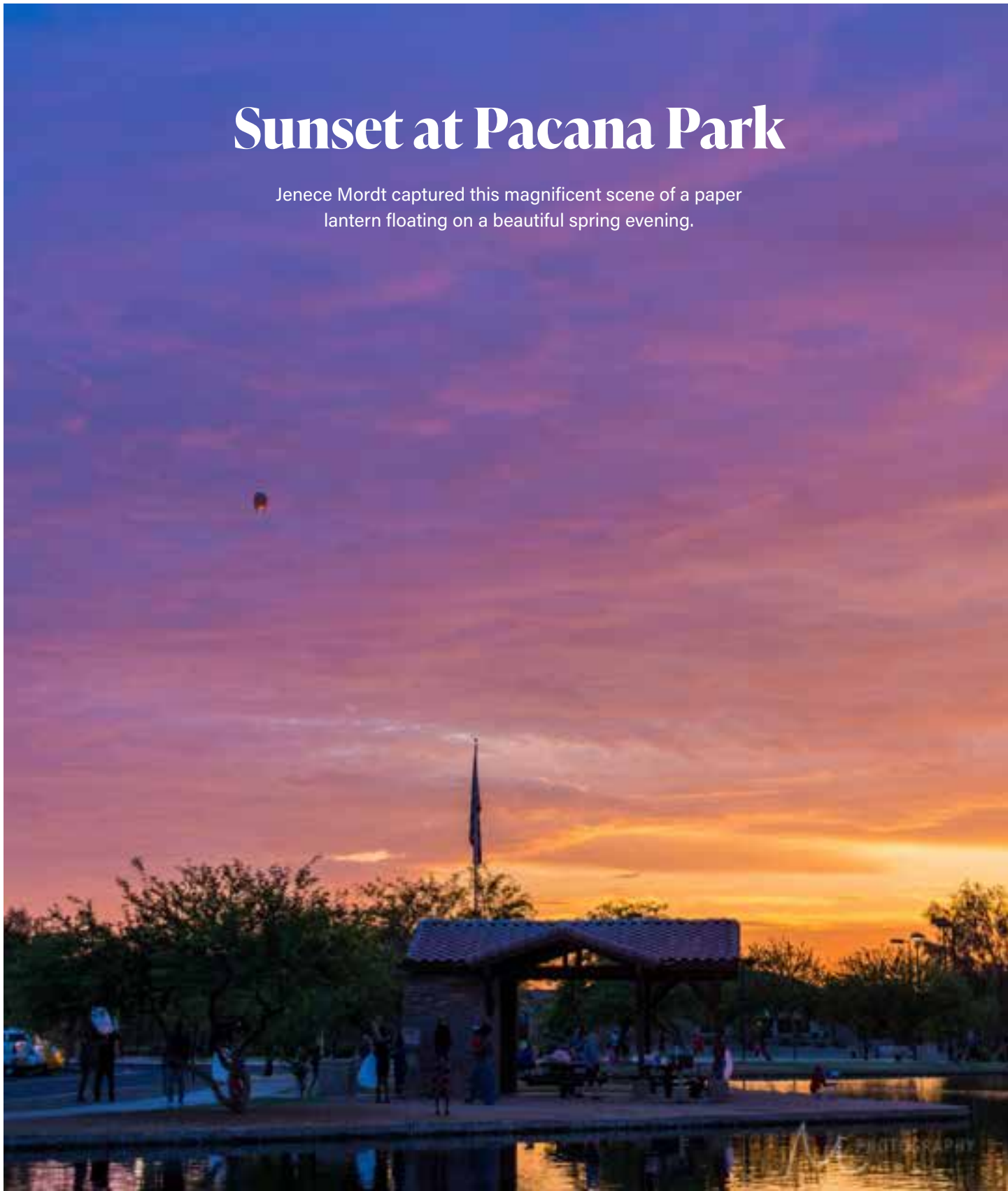


*Only new members of the Caesars Rewards program are eligible at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino. New members are defined as those individuals 21 years of age or older who sign up for a first time Caesars Rewards membership at the Caesars Rewards Center at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino at any time April 1 – June 30, 2023 at 11:59PM. When depositing Free Slot Play to your bank, balance expiration is based on time of deposit and will expire 72 hours after deposit if not downloaded to a slot machine. Re-deposited Free Slot Play will expire within 24 hours after re-deposit. Receive one free entry after accepting \$15 in Free Slot Play prize at a slot machine. Drawings will be held at the end of the month for new members in that respective month. Winner will be contacted via email within 5 business days of drawing. Prize must be claimed within two business days of notification. Prize must be redeemed by March 31, 2024 or prize is forfeited. Winner will receive four free nights and 50,000 Reward Credits. Winners are responsible for expenses beyond a total of five thousand dollars. Offer is subject to availability. Please see Caesars Rewards for Free Slot Play and Reward Credit expiration details. Valid only at Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino. Management reserves the right to change or cancel this promotion at any time without prior notice. Must be 21 or older to gamble and take advantage of this offer. Know When To Stop Before You Start. © Gambling Problem? Call 1-800-522-4700 or 1-800-NEXT STEP. ©2023 Caesars License Company, LLC. See official rules at the Caesars Rewards Center for complete details.



Sunset at Pacana Park

Jenece Mordt captured this magnificent scene of a paper lantern floating on a beautiful spring evening.



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