

 Maricopa

Health Guide

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For Exceptional Community Hospital Chief Executive Officer Bob Cardenas, and Registered Nurse Carmela Hamlett, patient care is the top priority.

General hospital

Veterans a force in opening local hospital

By Justin Griffin

FOR BRUCE MCVEIGH, A 30-YEAR ARMY VETERAN AND THE CHIEF OPERATING officer at Exceptional Community Hospital, a defining moment came at 9:37 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, when American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the Pentagon's west side, killing 184 and injuring 160.

McVeigh was serving as the chief of current medical operations for Secretary James Peake, who at the time was the Army's surgeon general.

Both worked in the basement of the Pentagon, one of the targets of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that day that also claimed the World Trade Center

towers and 2,763 lives there, along with another 44 victims in the hijacking and subsequent crash of United Airlines Flight 93 in southwestern Pennsylvania.

In the wake of 9/11, the mission was clear: care for the injured.

"I remember going with Secretary Peake, late at night,



Bruce McVeigh, Exceptional Community Hospital's chief operating officer, served for three decades in the Army, retiring as a colonel.



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“At Exceptional Community Hospital, we’re going to have those results the same day and doctors will be able to make decisions in a timely manner.” –BARBARA DUDIK HUERTA

the wee hours of the morning, visiting every single person in the Army who got injured in that attack on the Pentagon,” McVeigh said.

It was a process that spanned many nights and hospitals all over the Washington, D.C., metro area.

“It was all for the patient,” McVeigh said.

McVeigh said it’s a notion that remains with him to this day in his role at Maricopa’s lone hospital.

“It’s not about us,” McVeigh said. “It’s about the patients we serve in each community where we operate. We want to provide the best care to them and to be good partners in those communities, regardless of whether it’s Maricopa, Yuma or Bullhead City.”

That same dedication to community inspires Barbara Dudik Huerta, the hospital’s laboratory manager and technical consultant.

“I’m proud that we now have a hospital in the city of Maricopa to not only take care of a community that’s been underserved, but I live here,” said Huerta. “My kids live here. My husband is here. My parents live in Maricopa, along with two of my brothers. It’s nice to not only serve the community but my family.”

An onsite lab offers Maricopans a quality of care not available anywhere else in the city.

Any other office in the city must send lab work out to a contractor like LabCorp or SunQuest, which can’t deliver same-day results, Huerta said. About 90% of all health care decisions are made according to lab results.

“At Exceptional Community Hospital, we’re going to have those results the same day and doctors will be able to make decisions in a timely manner,” Huerta said.

Huerta is a veteran, too. She served more than four years in the Army as a lab tech at the San Antonio Military Medical Center, a 1.5 million-square-foot facility that includes a state-of-the-art burn unit. It’s the home of the U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research Burn Center.

“It is the only Level 1 trauma center in the Department of Defense,” Huerta said. “We were a hospital that got a lot of massively injured soldiers from downrange [Afghanistan and Iraq] that were coming to heal and get better. A lot of them were from burns.”

Personal care

Carmela Hamlett, a registered nurse at Exceptional Community Hospital, spent 14 years in the Army as a combat medic. Her title eventually morphed to health care specialist, but the job remained the same.

While the focus most of the time is on physical ailments, Hamlett also saw to the soldiers’ mental and emotional well-being.

As part of one assignment, Hamlett was tasked with helping soldiers medically discharged from Afghanistan transition back into the civilian world.

“Many were amputees, and others suffered traumatic brain injuries,” Hamlett said.

Her job sometimes meant assisting families as they helped care for soldiers when they got home, getting them ready to attend school and prepare for the rest of their lives.

“It’s definitely something different, especially for combat veterans,” Hamlett said. “They have a hard time grasping the concept of being a civilian. The camaraderie they’re used to as soldiers is gone once they become civilians and they’re left wondering, ‘What do I do now?’”

Early in her Army career, Hamlett was stationed in Kuwait and had plans to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

“But it never happened,” she said. “There were always extenuating situations where I was ordered not to get on that plane. I just took it as a sign that if I went, bad things would have happened.”

Instead, Hamlett drew other interesting assignments during her military career. The first was serving as health care support personnel for the Yuma-based Free Fall School. She also supported the Army’s parachute team that jumped in Arizona during the winters.

Hamlett faced her fear of heights head-on when she jumped with the Golden

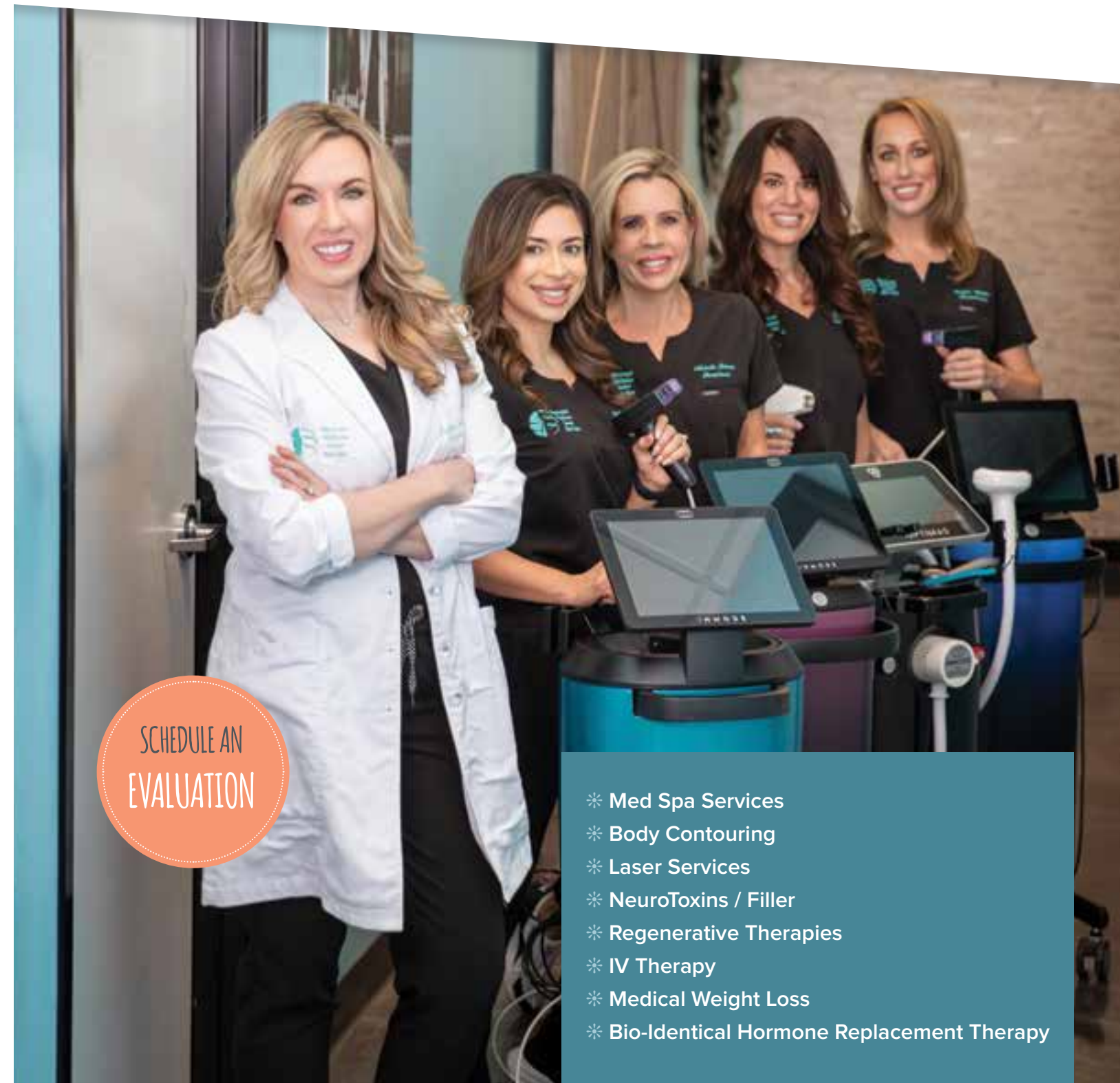


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Barbara Dudik Huerta, the laboratory manager at Exceptional Community Hospital, takes pride in opening Maricopa’s first full-service hospital.



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Knights, an elite group of Army skydivers.

She later served as medical support for the World Class Athlete Program, where she was onsite while members of the military trained for the Olympics.

“You never really hear people talk about it but there are so many cool jobs in the Army,” Hamlett said.

Filling a need

When it comes to opening a hospital, the devil is in the details. From personnel to supply chains, there’s a dizzying list of demands to get a hospital up and running.

To find people capable of handling such a gargantuan task, the Armed Forces are a good place to look.

McVeigh knew he found the right candidate when he hired Bob Cardenas, who had recently retired as an operations specialist from the Army Medical Services Corps. Cardenas had experience in coordinating medical support for operations in many far-flung regions of the world where, in some cases, there wasn’t any health care system to begin with.

“Sometimes it was a combat zone or for humanitarian relief or disaster assistance,” Cardenas said.

Cardenas was stationed in Fort Liberty (N.C.) from 2007 to 2010. From there, he was deployed to Iraq, where he worked to support medical systems for the troops in Baghdad. In 2010, he was

deployed to Haiti after the worst earthquake there since the 1800s. The initial quake was a magnitude 7, followed by aftershocks of 5.9 and 5.5.

“It was a massive humanitarian effort,” Cardenas said. “I was one of about the first 60 people from the U.S. Army on the ground. They needed a medical planner and an operations specialist and that was my field.”

He spent three months in Haiti, a nation with little infrastructure prior to the earthquake.

“Our focus was to provide care for the troops who were on the ground,” Cardenas said. “A lot of what we did was repair buildings, and sometimes, those included hospitals.”

A year later, Cardenas found himself on a plane to Japan. This time, it was following the tsunami that struck that country in 2011, devastating its infrastructure and damaging the nuclear reactor at Fukushima.

“They needed someone with my skill set again,” Cardenas said. “My wife was starting to wonder — I had to promise her I wasn’t chasing natural disasters all over the world.”

While Arizona isn’t the site of a natural disaster or a war zone, it’s a fast-growing state where people arrive in new locations before health care systems can be created, meaning that in many cases, companies like Exceptional Healthcare and specialists like Cardenas are building systems from scratch.

Exceptional Healthcare is expanding its footprint in Arizona. It opened a hospital in Yuma a few months after the Maricopa facility debuted. It will also open a hospital in Bullhead City this month and another early next year in Prescott.

While Cardenas no longer needs to worry about deployment to other countries, he spends a lot of time all over Arizona doing the same work he’s always done.

“It’s back to doing what I’ve been doing my whole life, which was supporting clinical experts and clinicians of all types of positions and nurses,” he said. “My job in the Army for almost 30 years was to make sure that the medical providers were in the right place at the right time to do the most good for

the most people, regardless of if that meant on a battlefield or if it meant in Haiti, Japan or whatever installation in the U.S. or across the world.”

Mission accomplished

Regardless of the field, any operation is only as good as its people. Exceptional Healthcare aims to hire the best people regardless of background, but McVeigh explained there’s an advantage to hiring veterans.

“What military people bring is a work ethic that, honestly, a lot of folks can’t replicate,” McVeigh said. “We go until the mission’s done.”

A good example was when Hamlett retired from the Army. She’d finished up her prerequisites at Mesa Community College but found

herself on the waiting list for an associate’s degree program.

“It was taking too long,” Hamlett said. “So, I looked into using my GI bill to go to a private college and I ended up going to Chamberlain University in Phoenix, which has an accelerated bachelor’s degree program.”

That tenacity is what McVeigh likes about veterans, he said.

“They don’t stop,” McVeigh said. “They can look at things in a different way and can multitask.”

“We think in a different way to achieve an end state. We don’t stop until the mission has reached its end state.”

Competition for veterans can be fierce. When Cardenas was hired earlier this year, there was a courtship.

“We wooed him for a couple of months before we were able to get him on board,” McVeigh said.

When Cardenas was plotting his next move, he also considered a serious offer from an aerospace firm in Huntsville, Ala.

McVeigh said he feels there must be an underlying mission behind any career.

“It’s amazing how people hit you up either on LinkedIn or whatever, trying to steal you away to work somewhere else because they get it, they want it,” he said.

“But I believe in Exceptional, and I believe in the mission and the long-term vision. As quick as I get those inquiries, I send them away and say, ‘No, I’m good. I’m where I need to stay.’”

JOIN ME ON MY NEW JOURNEY

Hello, wonderful Maricopa community! Over the past 11 years, it has been an absolute honor to care for you and your family’s foot and ankle ailments. Your trust and support have meant the world to me.

I have embarked on a new chapter at Advanced Foot & Ankle Specialists of AZ in Chandler. But fear not, Maricopa. I haven’t forgotten you! My door is always open and I look forward to continuing to provide care to the Maricopa community at this new office.

Change is invigorating, and I can’t wait to bring my passion for podiatry to this fresh environment. Your continued trust and patronage in this journey mean everything to me. I eagerly await the opportunity to see familiar faces from Maricopa as well as new ones.

Thank you for helping me become the physician and surgeon that I am today.



Dr. Alex M. Stewart

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Laser trailblazer 'focused on Maricopa'

By Drew Stanek

MARICOPA WELLNESS CENTER IS DEFINED by the word "first."

From opening Maricopa's first full-service Med Spa to holding the city's first coronavirus testing site, owner Kristina Donnay says she's laser-focused on giving back to the community through real, quality treatments.

Donnay and her father had no client Rolodex when they opened Maricopa Wellness Center in 2019. But today, the center is thriving — Donnay is a speaker and trainer for aesthetic lasers and hosted a seminar Oct. 14 for all of North America.

"Helping other facilities like mine offer really safe quality treatments has been one of our main missions," Donnay said.

Donnay grew up in Ahwatukee before making a home in Maricopa. She's a certified nurse practitioner and Maricopa Wellness Center's medical director. She's a certified master injector and licensed in aesthetics, too.

With the help of her father, Donnay built her facility from the ground up. For nearly four years, the father-daughter duo helmed the Maricopa Wellness Center. That changed in December last

year when Donnay and her husband, Chris, bought out her father because he was ready for retirement. Donnay says it was all a part of her plan.

Although Donnay chose Maricopa for personal reasons like her desire to raise a family and stay close to home, she says there are no plans to leave the growing city anytime soon.

"I have been approached many, many times to open other facilities in Chandler, Phoenix, or to franchise," she said. "It's not that it hasn't been an option, it's just

Continued on HG10

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genuinely not what I want to do. I am 100% focused on Maricopa.”

Maricopa Wellness Center offers a variety of services including laser treatments, body and face contouring, an array of therapies and injections, botox and medical weight loss.

Donnay owns seven lasers — five are InMode lasers, the brand she used to lead the international seminar last month. These lasers handle facial contouring, body contouring, hair removal, sun damage repair and vaginal rejuvenation, to name a few.

When Maricopa Wellness Center first opened, it was the only facility of its kind — a full-service med spa. Following Donnay’s trailblazing lead, Maricopa has since attracted three more med spas.

When asked why clients should choose Maricopa Wellness Center over other options in town, Donnay reflected on herself and her quality of service.

“I am a mom and I’m a female business owner. I am just trying to help people just like we all are,” she said. “The services we offer here are very genuine and real, the staff is very genuine and real, and I love that people come and see me and don’t have to leave Maricopa to get treatment.”

Maricopa Wellness Center is located near Smith Enke and Porter Roads and books appointments three to six weeks in advance. You can call or text 520-464-6193 to schedule a consultation.



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Molar express

Dentist grows with city

By Jay Taylor



DR. JARED POPE

MARICOPA WELCOMES MORE BUSINESSES EVERY WEEK.

As the city grows, it attracts new entrepreneurs, industries and jobs.

But some businesses are more than a storefront or a service — they're simply part of the fabric of the city. Maricopa Family Dentistry and Orthodontics is one.

Dr. Jared Pope, DDS, founded Maricopa Family Dentistry as a satellite office to his Chandler dental practice with just two chairs, two people, 350 square feet and a dream nearly two decades ago. Today, it's a thriving practice whose success mirrors the growth of the city it calls home.

"We got that place and opened it up, and it was pretty lean," Pope said, reflecting on the little building next to the post office that excited him in what he knew would be a fast-growing city. "There was nothing in there."

At the time, Bashes' was the hot new destination in town.

"There was just no office or professional space to lease down here at that point," Pope said. But after a couple of years, he saw 100 people come through his door every month. "We were really busy. We were the only dentist in town and people loved not having to drive to the Valley."

As the years went by, the

city — and his practice — grew.

"We were the first dentist in town, and the people and the city grow up around you," he said. "It makes a difference when people know you and you've proven yourself to them over a long period of time."

When you earn a good reputation in the community, 20 years goes by quickly, Pope said. It wasn't long before he started noticing something special.

"One day, you realize you're seeing multi-generational clients," he said. "You're treating the kids of the people who were your first patients. I'm 50 now and that makes it fun at this point in my career."

Those original 350 square feet and plywood cabinets have become a modern and comprehensive dental office on Honeycutt Road just east of John Wayne Parkway in a retail center Pope helped develop.

His practice has transformed and grown along with the city. He now offers a one-stop shop for a full range of dental needs, from preventative dentistry and routine work like cleanings, fillings, crowns and bridges to sophisticated procedures like oral surgery, orthodontics, implants and cosmetic procedures.

That range of services makes Maricopa Family Dentistry unique, not just in Maricopa, but in all of metro Phoenix. Very few dentists offer such a broad range of dentistry, especially the higher-end services.

Wisdom teeth, implants, dentures, root canals — no issue at this family practice.

"We do pretty much everything," Pope said. "Having all that under one roof makes it much easier for our patients.

People have enough anxiety about going to the dentist without having to go to two or three different dentists for essentially one procedure."

In 2013, Dr. Pope brought on partner Dr. Matthew Ross, who helped integrate new technologies into the office. Pope said the technology provides better service, especially when it comes to surgical and cosmetic procedures. "We do a lot of 3D digital design now, so we scan the patient's mouth for all our crowns," he said. The entire office is fully digitized and the doctors create a unique, multi-dimensional digital image of each patient's entire skull. That image allows them to position implants exactly where they want them in the bone. "The in-house, custom-designed 3D printed surgical guides reduce the potential for human error in placing implants," Pope said. "We're always learning, and it's been fun to integrate all that new technology into the practice. It's been really cool."

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MaricopaWellnessCenter.com
See ad on page HG 5, HG 8

2 Ritual Wellness MediSpa
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway
Suite 108
520-568-5943
f @RitualWellnessMedispa
See ad on page HG 19

Lotus Evolutions
41640 W. Smith-Enke Road
Suite 109 (Inside L'Mage)
480-779-8413 (Call/Text)
LotusEvolutions.com

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3 A-1 Health & Wellness
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MaricopaChiropractor.com
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520-350-1337

Harshe Chiropractic
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520-350-0074

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520-727-5762

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520-568-5959

Cobblestone Dental
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520-494-7333

Dentistry at Maricopa
20046 N. John Wayne Parkway
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520-413-5637

East West Dental
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway
Suite 104
520-868-6998

Edison Family Dental Care
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Suite A
520-463-4067

Family Dentistry of Maricopa
44870 W. Hathaway
520-568-7004

4 Maricopa Family Dentistry & Orthodontics
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MaricopaDental.com
See ad on page HG 12, HG 13

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520-252-4044

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Suite B-7
520-568-3828

5 Treasured Smiles Children's Dentistry
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TreasuredSmilesChildrensDentistry.com
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HealthMattersAZ.com

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866-960-0633

7 Sun Life Health
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SunLifeHealth.org
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8 Vitiello Primary Care
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VitielloPrimaryCare.com
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520-497-4575

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520-261-4661

Pacana Park
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Planet Fitness
20595 N. John Wayne Parkway
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520-666-2300

FUNERAL SERVICES

9 J. Warren Funeral Services
44400 W. Honeycutt Road
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520-836-8041
JWarrenFuneral.com
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HearingLife
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Casa Grande
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GentivaHS.com

Maricopa We Care
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Banner Casa Grande Medical Center
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Casa Grande
520-381-6300

10 Exceptional Community Hospital
19060 N. John Wayne Parkway
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EHC24.com
See ad on page HG 9

INSURANCE

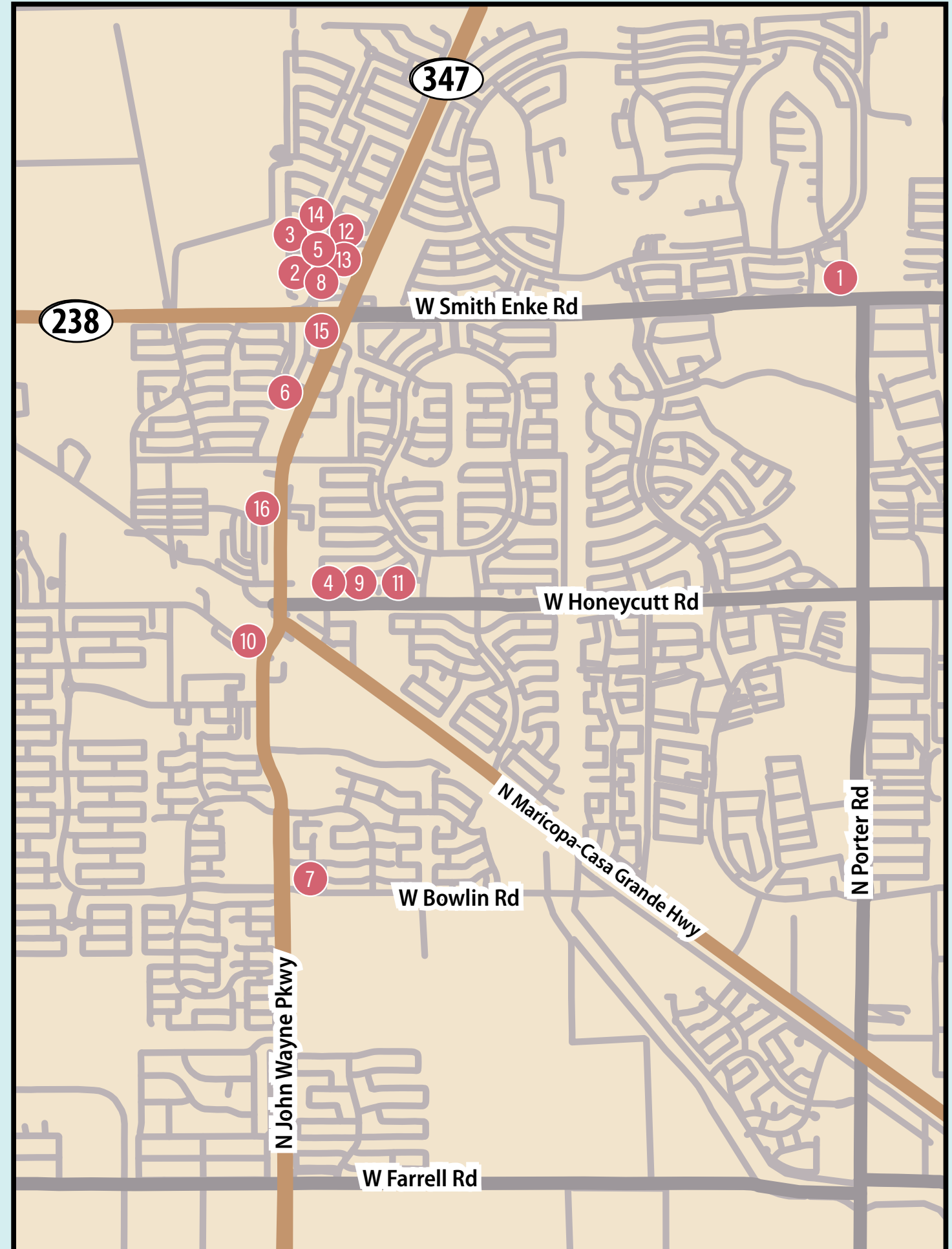
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14620 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.
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520-568-2270

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Suite 112
520-840-8533

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BeAwesomeYouth.Life

Blue Bell Behavioral Health
108 W. 1st St.
Casa Grande
520-463-3911
BlueBellBH.com

11 Holistic Mental Health, LLC
44400 W. Honeycutt Road
Suite 102
480-653-4051 – Virtual Appt. Only
HolisticMHaz.com
See ad on page HG 16

12 Northern Lights Therapy, PLLC
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway
Suite 103
623-243-2774
NorthernLightsTherapyAZ.com
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Joint Healing Operations
42796 W. Irene Road
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7 Sun Life Health
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SunLifeHealth.org
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8 Vitiello Primary Care
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How to combat burnout

It's OK not to be OK

By Katlyn Lawson, LPC

THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE BEEN CHALLENGING, to say the least. Politics, pandemics, inflation and so many other things — situations most of us never expected to ever happen, let alone in our lifetime. Children and parents bounced between online and in-person work, holiday vacations seem so far away — if we are lucky enough to get them — and life has seemed to fall into a mundane routine of daily responsibilities. This does not even account for the excessive heat we face daily. Burnout is starting to take its toll on so many.



Research shows there are three major indicators of burnout: overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and a sense of lack of accomplishment. Loss of energy, withdrawal from family and friends, irritability, lack of motivation and mental health struggles such as depression all fall into these three dimensions. These symptoms have a negative impact on our work, family, friends and most importantly on ourselves.

So how do we combat burnout and avoid the negative impacts these symptoms have on our daily lives? We need to prioritize self-care. Find the things that bring you joy and do them regularly.

This looks different for everyone as self-care is not a cookie-cutter experience. Some people enjoy painting while others enjoy cleaning. Some

might enjoy a long shower while others take a spontaneous road trip. Our energy and mood are like our bank accounts. If we are always withdrawing from the account and never depositing, we will end up in the negative and burnout will quickly ensue. So, find what deposits into your bank account and do that often.

Find coping skills that work for you. Again, there are no cookie-cutter coping skills. So often we think of coping skills as deep breathing and other grounding techniques. However, coping skills are a lot like self-care in that anything that helps you cope with stress and emotions can be an effective coping skill for you. Music, art, exercise and simply being alone are just a few that often are not thought of when considering coping skills.

There are many stressors in life and too often our default is to

avoid dealing with the stress and push through. Unfortunately, not processing emotions can cause burnout later down the line. Effective coping skills help us to process those emotions and work through them rather than avoiding them and bottling them up to be our future self's problem.

Finally, create clear boundaries in the areas in your life that disrupt your peace. Burnout is often caused by taking on more than we can handle. Maybe that means saying you're just not emotionally capable of being a shoulder to cry on right now or maybe it looks like not taking on that extra project for work. Saying "no" to things can be difficult. We need to know our limits and accept that certain things might make a bigger withdrawal from our energy bank account than we can afford currently.

Boundaries are not just with other people. Often, we need to hold boundaries with ourselves as well. Too often we find ourselves saying, "I just want to help." Create your boundaries and remind yourself that now is not the time, but later you might have enough in the bank account to spend some energy helping in a different way.

Burnout can cause many negative symptoms that impact our daily lives. It is important to be gentle with ourselves. We do this by filling our emotional bank accounts, using coping skills to process the stress instead of avoiding it and creating boundaries. If that is not enough, do not be afraid to seek help from social support or from professionals. Burnout can be difficult to manage, but you are not alone, and it is okay to not be okay!

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