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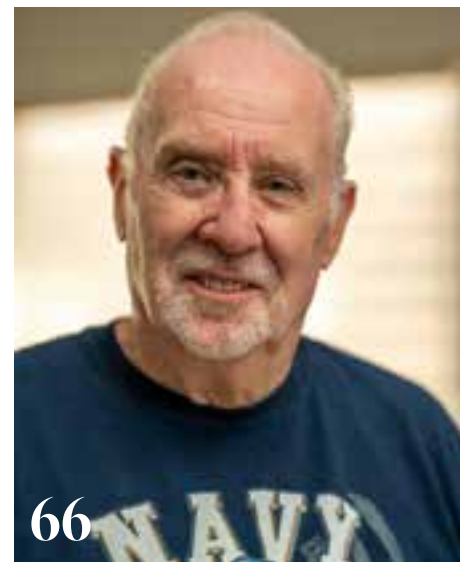
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**ON THE COVER**

Victor Moreno captured this commanding shot of Carmela Hamlett, Bob Cardenas and Barbara Dudik Huerta, employees of Exceptional Community Hospital who served in the Army. For more on their service to our community and nation, see page HG2.



# Hey Maricopa!

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# My hero

My grandfather never talked about the war when I was growing up. He always wore that ballcap stamped with veteran patches; so much so, it simply became a part of him. His service didn't come up in dinner conversation, from what I can remember.

To him, I think deployment to Korea was a memory so distant it felt like another lifetime. It wasn't until last year when he described to me his memories of a nation torn by conflict and communism, but through a lens of hopeful realism.

He was born 30 miles outside of Philadelphia in the 1930s; he had a middle school education when he married my grandmother — a marriage that would endure more than six decades. Humble beginnings for the man who is and will always be my hero.

When he told me about the Korean War and his time in the U.S. Army, I told him he was my hero. It was the last thing I ever said to him. He died a few months later, earlier this year.

U.S. Army buglers played Taps and presented my family a folded flag at the Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery. He was laid to rest in my home state of North Carolina. But his spirit lives on here in Maricopa, I think.

A soldier doesn't have to fall on a grenade, lose a limb or down a kamikaze pilot to become a hero in someone's eyes. Here in Maricopa, we have so many heroes. Every veteran, I believe, is a hero to someone.

Mere days of deployment are enough to become a hero, to instill discipline, to learn to never take life for granted, to make lifelong memories good and bad. Just

ask Lloyd Frank, a Maricopa veteran Tom Schuman profiles in this magazine.

My grandfather died after a lengthy battle with cancer. In this edition, you'll learn how veterans in Maricopa stand at the forefront of public health in our community, keeping our heroes close to our earthly home a little bit longer.



My grandfather only ever shared one wartime memory with me. But I remember how he described seeing images of South Korea today, unable to conceive how those ultra-modern, neon-lit and liberated streets were the same ones on which he stood decades ago, helping fight for democracy a world away.

Maricopa is becoming unrecognizable to some. We take the good with the bad; food is unaffordable and economic pressures spur guilt and shame, a theme our business reporter Monica D. Spencer and publisher Scott Bartle explore in this edition.

And Maricopa stands opposed to its southerly neighbor on either side of a wall of traffic blockades symbolizing so much more than a divided road, but a cleaved community; much like the 38th parallel in Korea where my hero aided in our great country's global pursuit of liberty.

Does your hero live in Maricopa? For many of my readers, I presume the answer is yes.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving and Veterans Day together this month, let's put our tribulations aside and celebrate our peacetime, our prosperity and most importantly — our heroes.

ELIAS WEISS | MANAGING EDITOR

## CONTRIBUTORS



KATLYN LAWSON

A licensed professional counselor with Northern Lights Therapy, Katlyn offers tips on avoiding burnout — at home and work.



JUSTIN GRIFFIN

To mark National Veterans and Military Families Month, Justin features the men and women in uniform at Exceptional Healthcare.



WENDE GEHRT

Wende, a Pinal County Master Gardener volunteer, writes this month about the joys of growing your own backyard citrus.



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Volume 18, Issue 11  
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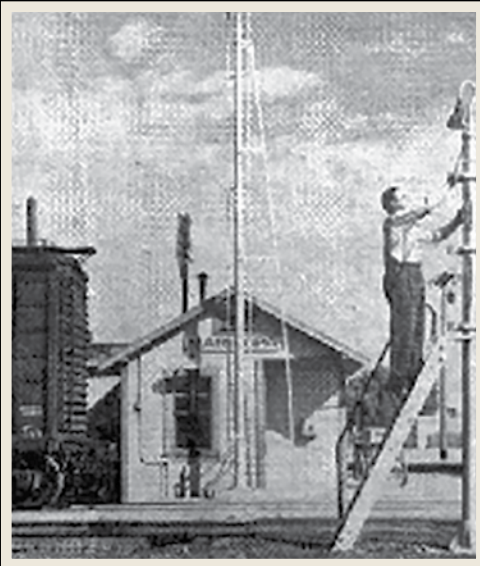
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## Telegraphing history

Edgar Poe Dehart was a telegrapher at Maricopa Station. He and his family settled in Maricopa Junction from 1926 to 1936. The two-story depot burned in 1931. A smaller depot was built because the Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad, which was built in 1887, closed in 1932. Three decades later, the station was sold and became a playhouse in Phoenix. The McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park in Scottsdale purchased and restored it in 2004.



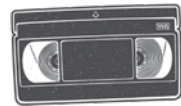
## THIS MONTH BACK IN...

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



# 2008

Maricopa City Council and the Ak-Chin Tribal Council held their first joint summit at Harrah's Ak-Chin Resort and Casino Nov. 22. The city and the sovereign nation discussed sustainability, transportation and environmental issues. Ak-Chin discussed its major concerns: trespassing on its lands, buffer zones for agriculture and preservation of cultural artifacts and resources.



# 2013

The end of an era: The local Blockbuster, next to Bashas', announced its closing Nov. 13 after the company declared bankruptcy. The Maricopa location was one of the last 300 retail stores to shut its doors. Anytime Fitness now occupies the space.



# 2018

APEX Motor Club broke ground on its \$33 million private racetrack on the northeast corner of State Route 238 and Ralston Road Nov. 8. It would be the home of a multiphase project with a clubhouse, garage condominium and racetracks. "We stood out here three years ago and saw some farmland, and here we are today building a racetrack," founder Jason Plotke said. "That's pretty darn cool if you ask me."

Maricopa Historical Society | Brian Petersheim Jr.



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Members of the Maricopa Moose chapter recently held one of their meetings at Raceway Bar & Grill on West Papago Road. The group moved its planning and general meetings to restaurants around Maricopa to avoid fees for renting city-owned facilities for large groups.

## Priced out

High cost to rent tax-funded spaces has groups looking elsewhere.

BY MONICA D. SPENCER

**W**HEN STAN AND JULIE HAYES moved to Maricopa from flat and humid Indiana, they were excited to launch a nonprofit service organization in their new hometown.

“Maricopa Moose is about bringing the community together,” Julie said. “It can be hard to meet people out here compared to our home state, so this gives everyone a chance to meet others and establish bonds.”

While the couple found a large community wanting to connect with Maricopa Moose, a local chapter of Moose International, the last thing they expected was difficulty renting a space in the city.

Stan said renting city-owned space, like in the library or at Copper Sky, is exorbitantly

costly for a fledgling organization. Costs ranged from \$47 per hour for a small room at the library to nearly \$1,200 for a social event.

“I understand the city needs to make money, but we felt like we were being bled dry as a nonprofit,” he said.

In that last instance, Maricopa Moose wanted to host a 50-person social event with alcohol and settled on Copper Sky as a venue. The couple received a quote for \$220 for the four-hour event, which felt reasonable, Stan said.

That changed the next day when they received an updated quote for nearly \$1,200. This included a space upgrade he did not request, as well as an alcohol permit, an hourly fee for an on-site uniformed officer and a request for insurance.

After holding a planning meeting at the library, Stan said he opted instead to host the social event in his backyard — for free.

“It all just left a bad taste in our mouth with how the city handles things,” he said.

Maricopa Moose is not the only group feeling priced out of city facilities.

Multiple organizations spoke with *InMaricopa* about their experiences, especially in having to move events to other locations or scramble to figure out how to cover the cost.

In fact, even after the city council approved a resolution for changes to rental fees on Oct. 2, that still didn’t change plans for some. Even the 7th annual Senior Information Expo was priced

*Continued on page 10*

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out; they moved their 2024 event from Copper Sky to the city library for cost purposes.

**'It's cost prohibitive'**

For the second time this year, the city contemplated adjusting facility rental rates, which had some residents questioning whether they could afford to rent the spaces they paid for.

Even Councilmember Vincent Manfredi noted room costs were high. During a City Council work session on July 25, he shared how much renting space in the library cost him for a job fair he hosted for his business.

"I rented three rooms at the library that lasted five hours," he said. "That cost me \$800-\$900."

Members of the Maricopa Pumas youth cheer team get in line for practice drills at Copper Sky Regional Park. The group practices during daylight hours, even in the middle of summer, to avoid paying additional fees to turn on the field lights.



**FIELDING A COMPLAINT**

It's not just the cost of meeting spaces that has upset organizations. It's fields, too.

Danelle Lendsey, vice president of local youth sports organization Maricopa Pumas, said the group's options for weekly practice are limited and field rentals can cost up to \$800 per month. The cost for two fields runs the group \$24 per hour per day. On average, the Pumas spend about \$192 per week, just for its two-hour practices,

four days per week.

Of course, there are other expenses: uniforms, drinks, snacks and admission to other facilities.

"We definitely try to save where we can when it comes to renting facilities," she said, adding the nonprofit tries to limit the length of practice to avoid the cost of lighting fields at night. "It gets extremely expensive and it's difficult on organizations like ours."

Few other local options exist for hosting football or cheer practice. Local schools rent their facilities, but they aren't always feasible options

for the Pumas' four-day practice week.

"It's actually really frustrating," Lendsey said. "We're providing a service for the city and for parents who want to find extracurricular activities for their kids. The facilities are paid for by the residents. We just want to feel supported."

A revised rental policy under consideration by City Council would decrease rental fees for multipurpose fields at Copper Sky to \$9 per field per hour, reducing the Pumas' weekly field costs by \$48, not considering the lights.

Peg Chapados, committee chair of the Cultural Affairs and Arts Committee, said she has heard murmurs from residents and groups about the price of rental spaces around the city.

"There's a lot of groups that just want to meet, talk and brainstorm," she said. "They don't want to host events. (The city) needs to get that worked out because right now it's cost prohibitive for most groups."

Susan Cameron, a local painter and president of the Maricopa Friends of the Arts, agreed.

"People are finding other places to go to and not using the library at all," Cameron said.

In Maricopa spoke with a handful of other representatives of various groups in the city. All came to the same conclusion: Maricopa government makes it difficult to host events in city facilities.

**'We have to pay through the nose'**

Many groups have opted to move meetings to other locations. Hayes said Maricopa Moose began hosting regular meetings at Northern Lights Therapy, where event space can cost less than \$50 for an evening.

Maricopa Friends of the Arts moved its September fundraiser from the library to Global Water, according to Cameron.

"We have to pay through the nose to have an event," she said. "We looked into the library, but it would have cost over \$1,000 for the atrium and another room for food. We went to Global Water and were able to have the space donated."

It was a constant battle for Cameron to find affordable space, and it left her feeling numb to renting from the city again.

"We're basically just moving away from it, and I don't mind," she said. "I used to get angry, but I'm just wasting my energy when I could use it to help artists. Eventually, all those rooms will be empty all the time because people won't be paying to use them."

**'We lost the support of the city'**

Jaime Harrison of Relay for Life of Maricopa, a fundraiser to help communities fight cancer and the only such event in Pinal County, said while operating costs over the last 13 years have fluctuated, they have now become unreasonable.

"This year, since the city has changed how they're doing their pricing, it has skyrocketed," she said.

In 2021, event costs (rental of the great lawn at Copper Sky, two rooms, tables, chairs and a

Continued on page 12

Monica D. Spencer

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Relay for Life isn't sure it can afford its annual fundraising party at Copper Sky this month.

**Rental rate changes**

It seems the city is well aware of the complaints.

On June 6, Maricopa City Council heard a presentation from the city manager's office about a proposed adjustment to facility rental rates and policy changes. This included revising the fee structure to reflect different rates for local businesses, residents and non-residents.

Shane Stone, then-assistant to the city manager said during the meeting the new fee proposal stemmed from an effort to make spaces cost-effective.

"We really want to make sure that facilities are available to our community and available to organizations that serve our community as well, without being overburdensome in cost while also being protected for use for years to come," he said.

The issue was brought up again during a July 26 work session and finally during a Sep. 19 council meeting. During both, the public and Mayor Nancy Smith reiterated how current costs have dissuaded some residents from using city facilities.

"I have heard from 100-200 different residents that have tried to reserve a room at the library, tried to reserve a ramada, tried to reserve

stage) ran the nonprofit \$1,775 after petitioning for fee waivers. In 2022, the bill was \$995.

For its upcoming five-hour event on Nov. 4, the group will pay \$3,650, even after dropping some rooms and other amenities.

"We can't afford to do anything else, even after we shortened the length of our event time," Harrison said. "None of us make any money on the event. Every penny not directly donated to the American Cancer Society is spent running the event."

The organization hesitated to approve the event because of the high cost, Harrison added.

"This year, we had to convince ACS that we would be able to raise enough money to donate funds and cover operational costs," she said. "Based on the amount of money we're spending to rent Copper Sky this year, we need to raise over \$100,000. Last year, we raised a little over \$23,000."

"It's hard, because we worked very hard to get our community involved. It feels like the city is making money off our nonprofit," she added. "I just feel like we lost the support of the city we used to have and in the end it's harder on everybody."

**HOW DOES MARICOPA COMPARE TO OTHER CITIES?**

Maximum hourly fee for athletic fields, does not include field preparation, lights, cleanup or additional fees.

	RESIDENT	NONPROFIT	NONRESIDENT	COMMERCIAL
Casa Grande	\$14	N/A	\$14	N/A
Chandler	\$11	N/A	\$15	\$17
Maricopa (current)	\$18	\$18	\$22	\$22
Maricopa (new)	\$12	\$12	\$36	\$18 (local)
Queen Creek	\$20	\$20	\$30	\$30
Tempe	\$20	N/A	\$20	\$20

Maximum hourly fee for a library room with a capacity of 25 people. Does not include any additional fees.

	RESIDENT	NONPROFIT	NONRESIDENT	COMMERCIAL
Chandler	\$40	\$20	\$40	\$40
Maricopa (current)	\$35	\$35	\$47	\$47
Maricopa (new)	\$23	\$23	\$70	\$35 (local)
Queen Creek	\$27	\$27	\$41	\$41
Tempe	\$10	\$10	\$20	\$40

various locations the city has," she said during the work session. "They just can't afford it. And the same is true for the nonprofits."

After a myriad of changes, the city decided prices would follow a revised fee structure, starting with a base rate for local businesses effective immediately. From there, residents and nonprofits would see a 35% discount from that base rate, while fees for non-residents would increase 200%.

According to a press release issued Oct. 5, the residential and nonprofit rates would be effective Nov. 2. The non-resident fees, meanwhile, will be subject to a 60-day posting period, after which the city council will finalize during a Dec. 5 meeting.

In one example, renting both the Redwood A and B rooms at the library currently run a resident \$130 per hour, while non-residents pay \$173 per hour. Under the revised rate structure, local businesses pay \$130, residents and nonprofits will pay \$85 and non-residents will pay \$260, all hourly fees.

This results in a \$45 per hour discount for residents and nonprofits, something the city said would "help support local initiatives and community-driven projects."

**But is it enough?**

When it comes down to it, though, most community organizations felt left out of the process.



An empty Redwood Room B at the Maricopa Library and Cultural Center.

Chapados said that while 35% was "a very generous discount," city officials did not reach out to the nonprofit community about facility usage and pricing recommendations.

"You can't publicly say you support arts, seniors and community groups, then turn around and make it cost prohibitive," she said. "Unfortunately, they've discouraged any nonprofit and recreation group from being able to meet at any city facility. Maricopa doesn't have a lot of public spaces right now and they keep putting roadblocks in the way."

Cameron with Maricopa Friends of the Arts said that even with the price reduction, her organization feels stuck with where to host

board and planning meetings. "I feel like we don't have a choice, we're going to have to follow the price schedule," she said. "It doesn't feel good to take money out of the funds that's supposed to go to grants and artist opportunities."

When asked what the group plans to do in the future, Cameron said they just have to remain hopeful.

"We're just going to do what we can," she said. "Either that, or we'll start meeting at McDonald's or something."

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





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# My way or the highway

In a tale of two cities, this road to riches divides more than just land.

BY ELIAS WEISS

**I**T WAS THE BEST OF TIMES; IT was the worst of times. For the city of Maricopa and the Ak-Chin Indian Community, Charles Dickens' timeless prose hardly ever felt so fitting.

Like his allegory in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Maricopa and Ak-Chin have long labored in unison. But as in Dickens' paradox, this altruistic exchange serves only to foreshadow an impending revolution.

The battleground? Where the John Wayne and Sonoran Desert Parkways converge like asphalt arteries in the heart of Maricopa.

Long slated for an innocent traffic light, this intersection now stands as a testament to bureaucratic folly. A decision made at the hands of city and tribal leaders more than half of Maricopa's lifetime ago left behind only a dizzying maze of road cones, symbolizing the growing fracture between two communities that both publicly state otherwise.

Much like the intersection itself — where

Ak-Chin police nearly staged a mass arrest of oblivious municipal workers — the road to riches took a sharp turn. A decade-long commitment washed away like the house of cards, like those hands dealt on felted tables just across the street, where the highway was meant to unfurl like a red carpet to the door of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino.

Every screech of the brakes in that sea of stop signs and traffic cones serves as a reminder of this tale of two cities, where a Berlinesque wall of neon blockades does more than divide land.

To the public's beckoning ear, they'll chant "the best of times."

But a months-long scour of public records and conversations with city leaders show that, for the accord between these two thrones, it's the worst of times indeed.

## Kiss of Judas

Ak-Chin Chairman Robert Miguel was in the eye of the hurricane that morning, but he

grinned and made merry with city dignitaries over breakfast in a sunlit Maricopa conference room.

"There's always that thought of cowboys and Indians fighting each other," he reflected.

Less than a week elapsed since that scene straight from an old western movie played out near city limits, when Miguel "had to summon tribal law enforcement to maintain peace in such a volatile situation," he wrote in a letter earlier that week.

And a volatile situation it was. But at that Sept. 14 breakfast, Miguel gushed about how Maricopa and Ak-Chin "have always been one family."

His motto, he said that morning, is this: "What can we do to help? We're willing to do what is needed to move forward in any way possible."

But it was Ak-Chin that seemingly sought to sabotage the Sonoran Desert Parkway in the 11th hour, accusing Maricopa of trampling tribal sovereignty and flouting federal orders.

Elias Weiss Photo Illustration

All while the city tried to put the final bow on its gift to Ak-Chin — a \$30 million highway leading nowhere but the casino, the community's lifeblood.

Just last year, Miguel spoke at a groundbreaking ceremony about the Sonoran Desert Parkway, dubbing it "exciting" and "a great opportunity" as he motioned his hand to the casino complex and promised the highway would go "right directly to that beautiful place over there."

The Sonoran Desert Parkway finally opened Oct. 11. It's impossible to access the casino from that road.

For the city, it wasn't for lack of trying.

## All-time low

Miguel penned a letter to Maricopa Mayor Nancy Smith that same week lobbing insults at city leaders and saying the time "marked a low point for the relationship between the community and the city."

Who at that breakfast table would have predicted such words amid platitudes of family unity?

Even Smith downplayed the tension, telling *InMaricopa* Oct. 10, "We have a mutual respect for each other and each community. Mutually respecting each other is always the key to having a good relationship."

If she has the key, she's yet to unlock anything.

A month earlier, Smith dared Ak-Chin to play by the rules. She gave an ultimatum: Allow the city to build the traffic signal as originally planned or get axed from the project. And she followed through.

Diplomacy aside, Smith agreed battling over the traffic signal was the biggest obstacle in more than a decade of work on the tailor-made thoroughfare, which one day will link John Wayne Parkway and Interstate 10.

City Manager Rick Horst and Vice Mayor Rich Vitiello were among others to name that dispute the project's largest hindrance — it cost taxpayers thousands of dollars a day as Ak-Chin forced workers to wait idly by.

And it all comes down to 50 feet of road at that crucial intersection — a sliver of land Ak-Chin gated, padlocked and barbed-wired when it heard Maricopa would place the final piece of the parkway puzzle, city officials say.

The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs did not grant Maricopa the legal right-of-way necessary to connect traffic signals there, according to Ak-Chin.

Public records tell a much different story.

Bryan Moritt



Workers remove barriers prior to the opening of the Sonoran Desert Parkway, where the new roadway meets John Wayne Parkway. The original plan was to install a stoplight on the edge of tribal property that would have better regulated traffic and served as a red carpet to the front door of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino until tribal leaders recently decided against it.

## You can't park(way) there!

The Arizona Department of Transportation has operated that splinter of road as a public highway since it was built in 1990. That year, Pinal County purchased the rights to operate on Ak-Chin land from — who else — the BIA.

The city holds permits to work there from both ADOT and Pinal County, according to

government documents from a hundred-page file the city supplied to *InMaricopa*.

That didn't stop the BIA from throwing its weight behind Ak-Chin's gripes, issuing three cease and desist letters in May, August and September. The letters are just that — requests

*Continued on page 16*



Workers prepare for the opening of the Sonoran Desert Parkway. Originally, the plan was to install a stoplight across the street from the new parkway to allow traffic easy access to Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino, but it all came to a head this fall when Ak-Chin leaders almost arrested all of the workers who were attempting to install the signal on a sliver of tribal land after tribal leaders changed their minds despite having agreed to the signals for nearly a decade.

— but Ak-Chin wrongly asserts the city “violated federal law” and “violated a federal order,” although no such order exists.

Ak-Chin believes federal law stands in the way. Its hands are tied.

Ak-Chin Community Council said as much when it told *InMaricopa* last month, “It is important that the project comply with federal law. Neither tribal nor municipal officials have authority to waive or disregard federal law, including the need to secure proper right-of-way before completing work on tribal land.”

But wait — not so fast.

After the mayor said any future plans to connect a traffic signal at the John Wayne and Sonoran Desert Parkways “would be at the sole expense of Ak-Chin,” the community suddenly offered a new way to sidestep that federal law — like magic.

The Ak-Chin council refused to answer questions from *InMaricopa* about this unexpected loophole, which would require the city to simply fill out a form.

Ak-Chin spokesperson Matthew Benson categorized the form as “a workaround.” However, it demands details that don’t seem to fit the spirit of Miguel’s commitment to do “anything possible” to complete the project as planned.

Presented as a compromise, city leaders said the workaround was more of a slap in the face.

“We had to fill out every worker, their license plates, their driver’s licenses, their VIN numbers,” Vitiello, the vice mayor, told *InMaricopa*. “It’s impossible, as everybody knows.”

As such, Ak-Chin’s entertainment complex won’t be accessible via the Sonoran Desert Parkway. And that’s on a “permanent” basis, according to city records.

Yet, Ak-Chin told *InMaricopa* days after the highway opened it was still “hopeful” about negotiating an agreement with the city. And Benson told *InMaricopa* Oct. 18 “every indication says they’re going to finish the work.”

BIA has yet to return a Freedom of Information Act Request from August for its conversation with Ak-Chin about the issue. ADOT Director Jennifer Toth declined to comment.

**‘Power trip’**

“Like a good neighbor, Maricopa is there,” Vitiello sang to the tune of the iconic State Farm jingle as a white shuttle bus bumped along the Sonoran Desert Parkway Oct. 4.

Eight of the city’s top brass, Arizona state Rep. Teresa Martinez and *InMaricopa* journalists made the first official drive down the parkway that balmy Wednesday evening.

Vitiello laughed, then became pensive.

“There’s no apparent reason for any of this,” he said. “I mean, they had cops out here ready to arrest our people.”

For Vitiello and others in city leadership, it’s a mystery why Ak-Chin would sabotage a mere traffic light — one that wouldn’t cost it a penny and would usher patrons to its lone center of commerce.

How will it justify that decision to its community members? The council wasn’t willing to answer that question.

“They’ll just keep blaming us,” Vitiello offered. “That’s all they’re going to do.”

**Checkmate**

This isn’t the first time Ak-Chin blocked the city’s development efforts.

Since 2019, Ak-Chin has been impeding an agreement between the city, Apex Motor Club and Global Water to extend a water main down State Route 238 and allow for expansion to the west.

Ak-Chin choked off Global Water’s plans to extend south toward Stanfield, Vitiello said.

The community gobbled up the golf course and the airport. It eyed other properties both east and west that would complicate the city’s ability to annex further into its extensive planning area, which yawns all the way to Interstate 8.

With its unincorporated square parcels slowly captured like pawns to a queen, the Maricopa map resembles a chess board, says Horst, the city manager.

What does that make all of this? A chess game.

“I can only speculate. But it’s all part of their power trip,” Vitiello said. “It gives them the power. That’s it.”

Ak-Chin Community Council refused to respond to the vice mayor’s comments.

**‘People will be hurt’**

Turn right from Porter Road onto the Sonoran Desert Parkway and you’ll cross four different speed limits before you reach that infamous

juncture with John Wayne.

You’ll face the casino head-on, but with no way to access it.

In lieu of the traffic signal planned at that intersection since 2011, it’s a meander of floric road cones and barriers funneling drivers away from Ak-Chin land from all sides of a four-way stop.

Smith told *InMaricopa* Oct. 10 she had “no concern” about safety at the intersection, citing ADOT engineers’ approval of the permanent traffic condition. But in a Sept. 8 letter to Ak-Chin, she wrote Ak-Chin’s noncompliance “poses a serious safety concern.”

Maricopa drivers are certainly concerned.

“It is dangerous and people will be hurt,” Lee Morano said.

Resident Ken Menez said, “The way it is right now, it won’t be long before the first accident.”

These fears stretch to the state capitol.

Martinez, the GOP lawmaker representing Maricopa, remembers seeing her father’s face for the last time before he died needlessly in a crash on the way to San Manuel. For her, it’s personal on multiple levels.

“I don’t want there to be accidents that prompt the safety light to be up after all,”

Martinez told *InMaricopa*. “That is very concerning as a safety issue and I fear about what could happen.

“I don’t want us to have a fatality there because we didn’t have a stupid traffic light.”

Martinez said an accident there could open any party to a lawsuit. Ak-Chin isn’t immune.

She spoke highly of both Smith and Miguel, calling the dispute a “miscommunication” and pledging her support to help settle tempers and achieve a compromise down the road. But for now, she’s scared.

With good reason.

Like city leaders, she struggles to understand Ak-Chin’s opposition to the traffic light it not only agreed to but asked for.

“The Sonoran Desert Parkway bypasses a lot of the Ak-Chin land,” she said. “It’s not always positive and polite. But it is what it is and it ain’t what it ain’t.”

**Broken promises**

Three hours.

That’s how long it took then-Maricopa Mayor Christian Price to drive from Maricopa to Flagstaff on May 9, 2014.

Price made a habit of driving all over the

state to attend ADOT board meetings. But this one was special, for two reasons.

His mind was occupied with thoughts of a 500-foot-long overpass above the train tracks at the John Wayne Parkway-Honeycutt Road intersection. ADOT had just added the project to its five-year plan.

And at this meeting, Ak-Chin’s then-chairman and vice chairman, Louis Manuel and William J. Antone, were tagging along.

During a public address of state leaders, Ak-Chin pledged nearly \$15 million toward that overpass, according to public records supplied by ADOT.

That’s a number that “was said many, many times,” Price recalled. Public records show Ak-Chin promised somewhere between \$10 million and \$15 million for the \$55 million project to myriad state leaders over the years.

In 2019, the overpass debuted in one of the most pivotal moments in city history. Ak-Chin never gave a dime.

Benson, the community’s spokesperson, said he wasn’t aware of any promises to fund the overpass.

*Continued on page 18*

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“Ak-Chin is saving face right now because nobody at the moment has any liability,” Price told *InMaricopa*. “When Chairman Miguel won, those promises that were made, they fell by the wayside.”

Price likened the political atmosphere on the Ak-Chin Community to the Russo-Ukraine War. Some people on the street may support it, but there are those in Washington who think it’s all too expensive.

“That’s the way they do business — things can be retracted until that money is ready to go,” he explained. “The politics changed. The view internally changed. There was never anything written, never anything proved.”

Nothing, perhaps, aside from ADOT records documenting promised funds. But it was never anything binding, Benson was quick to point out.

Just a tease. A flashy, years-long tease.

For Miguel, who is term-limited with nothing to lose, it’s already a distant memory.

“For decades, the Ak-Chin Indian Community has been a good neighbor to the city of Maricopa,” Miguel asserted at that September breakfast. “We’re never asking for anything back.”

Is either statement true? Not according to Vitiello.

“After that ordeal, they asked us for our lights and signs,” he said. “And Nancy [Smith] gave them the signs anyway.”

### A tale of two cities

Four years ago, Price and Miguel stood shoulder-to-shoulder, waving at the crowd from the top of float at the Maricopa Veterans Day Parade.


That memory feels far more distant today than it did just two months ago.

Smith insists she has taken up the mantle for Price in cultivating that “one family” relationship Miguel says he’s so proud of.

“The relationship between the city and Ak-Chin is something that every mayor and council has improved since the city was incorporated,” she told *InMaricopa*.

But Miguel says this is “a low point for the relationship between the community and the city.”

As in *A Tale of Two Cities*, it’s a paradox with no clear solution.

It’s the best of times, it’s the worst of times, after all. 

### A ROAD TO NOWHERE

Since the Sonoran Desert Parkway opened for traffic last month, many Maricopa residents have labeled it “a road to nowhere.”

Unless you live in Hidden Valley and frequently shop at Walmart, it’s not hard to see why 12 years of anticipation felt a little anticlimactic. After all, an informal poll of *InMaricopa* readers last month found that, for more than 4 in 5 residents, the highway won’t shorten any usual commutes.

But Arizona state Rep. Teresa Martinez, the Republican representing Maricopa, says the purpose-made parkway wasn’t built for today — it was built for tomorrow.

“We don’t have enough traffic for that road today,” she conceded. “But we’re going to have it someday.”

Martinez, who is in her first full term, sponsored a bill that secured more than \$9 million for the 15-mile, four-lane freeway linking John Wayne Parkway and Interstate 10.

That money could have gone toward any other road — State Route 347, State Route 238, Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway — or other troubled roads in her district like Thornton Road and Pinal Avenue.

“As a legislator, I have to make improvements to existing roads and make them safe,” Martinez said.

That’s why she and state Sen. T.J. Shope secured tens of millions of dollars



for relief at Cement Plant Road and to widen SR 347.

“When the 347 came to existence, it was short-sighted,” Martinez said. “Everybody knows the 347 is inadequate. It wasn’t planned well enough.”

The Sonoran Desert Parkway will eventually allow drivers to totally bypass the 347 during commutes to Phoenix.

As the corridor between Phoenix and Tucson continues its rapid growth, the Sonoran Desert Parkway serves to prevent such short-sightedness in the future.

That’s why the \$9.2 million she secured at the state capitol is earmarked for Maricopa’s third major thoroughfare.

“If we take that money and widen Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway, it would not be sufficient,” Martinez said. “The Sonoran Desert Parkway lays a foundation down for a future. We have to create a vision of an exciting parkway so that we can expand for growth.”

Just 20 years after incorporation, Maricopa has already eclipsed Casa Grande — a century-old city — to become the most populous municipality in Pinal County.

Maricopa is “a young, beautiful 20-year-old who’s ready to hit the town,” Martinez jokes. But that’s what makes anticipatory projects like this one so important.

Before too long, new homes and businesses will line the parkway on either side. A restaurant row concept is planned for the city center along with new parks and other forward-facing amenities.

“We have to start connecting the future growth that’s coming,” Martinez offered. “It’s either one day, or day one.”

To the large majority of Maricopans who said the parkway’s first phase won’t save them any minutes behind the wheel, Martinez says, “I understand your feelings. But on the other hand, when do we start preparing for the future?”

When is the future? Five years, she says.

In 2028, growth in Pinal County won’t just use the Sonoran Desert Parkway — it will demand the Sonoran Desert Parkway.

“I have to prepare for growth,” Martinez said. “Do we need it today? No. But we will definitely need it tomorrow.”

Bryan Moritt

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## Permits

Between Sept. 11 and Oct. 6

### COMMERCIAL

**Bosa Donuts** was issued a tenant improvement permit for its location at 17430 North Porter Road, valued at \$220,000.

**G2 Partners LLC** was permitted for a Verizon commercial cell tower modification valued at \$10,000. Located near John Wayne Parkway and Hathaway Avenue, modifications include new fiber conduits and upgrades to the generator and AC unit.

**Bungalows on Bowlin LLC** was issued permits for detached parking canopies for 11 units.

**Sunrise Preschool** received a permit for a \$41,000 commercial shade structure.

**EVR Porter LLC** got the go-ahead for a \$47,000 detached shade structure at its townhome complex on Porter and Bowlin Roads.

**Carl's Jr.** was issued a new commercial permit for a building, valued at nearly \$612,000 at 20015 North John Wayne Parkway.

**SM Fiesta LLC** received a permit for \$80,000 in commercial tenant improvements for the Bashes' Starbucks kiosk.

**Apex Landco LLC** was issued two permits for tenant improvements in two units, valued at \$124,000.

**San Travasa LLC** was issued a major development review permit for its impending EVR at San Travasa complex.

**ZG Holdings LLC** received a mobile vendor permit at 41800 West Maricopa-Casa Grande Highway for Duke City Burgers.

### RESIDENTIAL

**Lennar Arizona Inc.** to build 12 homes in Anderson Farms.

**Pulte Home Company LLC** to build 1 home in Santa Rosa Crossing.

**CW Tortosa LLC** to build 5 homes in Tortosa South.

**DR Horton** to build 4 homes in Sorrento and 18 homes in Tortosa South.

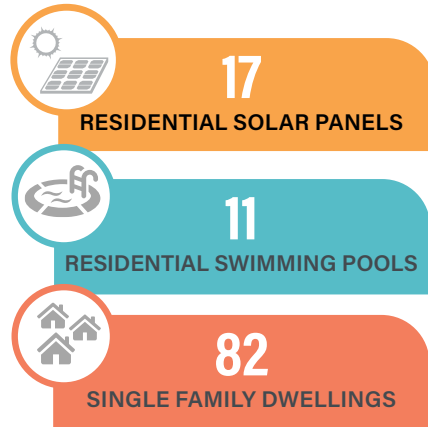
**K Hovnanian** to build 5 homes in Santa Rosa Springs.

**KB Home Phoenix Inc** to build 1 home in Tortosa South.

**Meritage Homes of Arizona Inc** to build 1 home in Rancho El Dorado, 20 homes in Province and 9 homes in The Trails.

**Century Communities of Arizona LLC** to build 6 homes in The Trails.

## Permits Issued



## No place like homecoming

Maricopa High School celebrated its homecoming in October. The Rams took it on the chin with a 28-14 loss to Tucson High Magnet School. The Rams looked impressive at times, piling up 377 yards of offense, but lost three fumbles. The festivities were numerous with the powder puff squad out in force, along with a homecoming dance where students partied the night away.







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A pair of students work on laptops while wearing masks in a classroom at A+ Charter School.

# Flu fighters

How the pandemic forever changed Maricopa schools

BY MONICA D. SPENCER



Juan Garavito, who teaches 12th grade English at Maricopa High, said he found it challenging to get comfortable being in front of a camera.



Michelle Mills, a U.S. history and economics teacher at Maricopa High School, said her biggest challenge was not having faces to look at when she taught online.

Kyle Norby | A+ Charter Schools



Nate Wong, dean of academic services at A+ Charter Schools, feels some students “were directly impacted by COVID, others indirectly.”

**I**T'S BEEN NEARLY FOUR YEARS since the coronavirus pandemic shuttered the world. Every day, the memory becomes more distant; the grasps at normalcy more infrequent.

But the pandemic's dystopian paradigm still lingers inside Maricopa classrooms, where graduation rates fell at a rate 10 times the state average and have yet to approach pre-pandemic numbers.

Faceless children swaddled in masks, video classes in empty rooms and social distancing may feel like relics of a not-so-distant past, but they were part of an ever-changing policy landscape that sowed dissension.

“I don't think anybody was in favor of them, but every family had a different situation,” said Nate Wong, dean of academic services at A+ Charter Schools. “Some were directly impacted by COVID, others indirectly.”

When COVID ravaged the U.S. in March 2020 — Arizona was at one time the most infected state — schools followed county and state health officials in tracking cases and contacts.

“We were doing things like finding out who was sitting next to who on the bus and making sure we communicated to everyone on the bus and in the classroom,” said Tracey Pastor, assistant superintendent of administrative services at Maricopa Unified School District.

MUSD Communications Director Mishell Terry said the district had to keep up with constant health policy changes from the CDC.

“I think we were all kind of just learning together and there were mixed feelings,” she said.

Brian Petersheim Jr.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Several students at A+ Charter School participated in a panel discussion with *InMaricopa* about their experiences during and after COVID. Students ranged in age from 8 to 14 when the pandemic began and struggled in various ways.



### FAITH REGAN, 17

**I was in eighth grade when COVID started. I was homeschooled my whole life and just registered to go to Maricopa High School. When COVID hit, that obviously didn't happen. I was really bummed out and really hoping I could go to high school.**

**Since I was homeschooled before, not having a teacher telling me what to do or classmates to interact with was actually pretty normal for me. But I definitely slacked off a lot because I was home all the time and just thought I would catch up later.**

**Online was kind of isolating because you**

**had to do everything on your own. You didn't have a teacher there to talk to or classmates to ask to compare homework with. You were on your own, you had to figure it out for yourself. So, I definitely became more independent. When schools reopened, it was my first time coming to school in-person, so COVID didn't really affect me how it affected other kids. But I think the hardest thing transferring to in-person was that my online school didn't have strict deadlines or penalties. Here, we actually got a penalty for late assignments.**

**If this happened again, I think we would know what to do and could be prepared to go through it again. But emotionally or psychologically, probably not. I don't think any one of us could handle that period of isolation again. We were lucky it only lasted two years. We don't know how long would last or if it would get worse than what COVID was.**



### JESUS FIERRO, 15

**I was in sixth grade when COVID first hit. I was actually excited about it because there was no school, it was like an extra-long break and an extra-long summer. But when fall started, I was like, 'Wait, we're not really going back?' That's when it started to get really hard, especially the whole online aspect of it.**

**I went to two schools during COVID, including an autism specialty school, and neither really handled online classes well. Communication was a big problem, and it was just hard**

*Continued on page 28*

trying to communicate with teachers.

The biggest issue was not the teachers but the students and disciplining students. Teachers couldn't really do that. There was one kid who spammed the class with fart noises over and over again. She gave the kid multiple warnings, but she couldn't really do anything because she's not actually there and she couldn't kick him out for long.

Coming back in person was awkward. You're so used to not talking to people and then you couldn't recognize people because of the masks. I didn't really know what half of my friends actually looked like, so that was kind of weird when we didn't wear masks anymore. It was like, who do I talk to? Who do I like? Who can I trust?

If something like COVID happens again, I feel like we're more prepared for it. We already experienced it, so I don't think it will really be a big thing for us. I don't think it would impact us a lot.



**RAFAEL ESCALADE, 16**

I was in seventh grade. COVID definitely brought my studies back so that



when I came back to school, I had to catch up on my learning.

It definitely taught me more about technology because I wasn't really using it in school at the time. Once I had to do online school, it taught me how to use computers for education.

The most difficult thing for me was the work and the assignments. The teachers tried to teach us stuff but by the time you grasp the concept, we were so far behind. So, the teachers would have to go back and teach us again.

**BRADLEY BARNEY, 11**

I was in second grade and I was really excited because of the extra time in summer. But I was really nervous to start online school stuff because it's something I never did before. It was really nerve-wracking.

When I started, my online school switched software every year I was there. It was hard to get used to, it was hard to communicate, and I didn't learn as much. I noticed I wasn't as engaged as I would be with in-person learning.

But I learned a lot about technology. It was a lot because I wasn't really

using computers in school at the time. So, I had to learn how to do all of that.

I got very antisocial because of COVID, because I never talked to people a lot during that time. Whenever I would talk, I would stutter and just stop talking and start shaking.

**MORGAN MILLER, 15**

I was excited to be out of school, but I didn't really realize how long it would last.

I didn't really learn a lot online, and I didn't take in what I was supposed to be learning. We didn't have Zoom calls, so we weren't really being taught anything. It was more, "You guys work on this and figure it out."

Eventually, it helped me be aware of the resources and how to research because I did that most of the time. I also got better with technology.

But I think COVID definitely set me back socially. Not being around a lot of people for a very long time just felt kind of awkward and uncomfortable. I felt very shy, but I eventually got over it. Last year was when school started to feel normal.

### Spray it forward

Glimpses of pandemic-era policy remain, the most visible of which are facemasks. In MUSD schools, children are required to wear masks at a parent's request.

"Our governing board is very clear that there's only one situation in which we ensure a student is wearing a mask and that would be if a parent has expressed they want their very young child or special needs child to wear a mask," Pastor said.

She said this remains an option for parents when it comes to all respiratory illnesses transmitted through sneezing and coughing.

Similar policies apply at A+ Charter, where students wear masks voluntarily.

"We see a small percentage of kids who still voluntarily wear masks for whatever reason they feel necessary," Wong said. "It's a family decision and that's what it always should be."

Another practice that remains? More stringent cleaning practices in both public and charter schools.

"Keeping the kids safe when they came back was a priority," Wong said. "There's a more conscious effort to make sure things are clean. COVID-19 is a virus that will mutate, so we want to prevent that as much as possible."

This meant a quick swipe of tables and chairs would no longer cut it. School leaders are making more conscious efforts post-pandemic to prevent the spread of not just COVID but also Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and flu.

"They're all something we need to keep an eye on and remind kids about cleanliness and washing hands," Pastor said. "On our end, we want to make sure that our buildings are clean and we're doing what we can to keep sick kids away."

This includes altering the previous protocol for quarantine after infection. Most schools still follow CDC guidelines to quarantine for 10 days.

"Those basic isolating guidelines are still in place," Pastor said. "When students or staff test positive for COVID, they're required to isolate... It's just like with chickenpox, RSV or influenza. It's best for them to isolate during that period of contagion."

Schools continue to monitor COVID cases — though less frequently — to watch for concerning trends. But otherwise, school officials say they aren't gunning for strict restrictions again.

"Unless the CDC or Pinal County's health officials issue something, those other policies are not in place," Wong said.

### Mental toll

Floundering academic performance topped headlines in recent years with students by-and-large struggling to catch up to their grade level. But Wong said the pandemic has made nurturing students' mental health and ability to understand and manage their emotions a priority.

"In recent years, there was already a decline in academic performance and social and emotional intelligence, particularly for junior high-age students," Wong said. "COVID just exacerbated the problem."

Pastor said MUSD saw similar problems.

From 2019 to 2020, the graduation rate at Maricopa High School tanked from more than 80% to less than 70%. In the following years, graduation rates slowly climbed to around 75% — still lagging behind pre-pandemic numbers.

Maricopa fared much worse than most school districts in Pinal County, where graduation rates on average fell less than 5%; and in Arizona where graduation rates fell on average just 1%.

"We've seen an increase in students with anxiety or depression, so we're doing our best to meet students' social, emotional and mental health needs," Pastor said.

MUSD administrators said this stemmed in part from children entering school for the first time in months and, for some, the first time ever. Others struggled to navigate both a changing world and large adjustments to family life.

"COVID's impact on families and family dynamics also impacted our students," Pastor said. "There are students who lost family members, whose family dynamics changed because someone lost a job. These life changes are impacting students."

As a result, administrators found they needed to utilize more patience and compassion as kids returned to the classroom.

"It's important to remember that we're seeing kids as a snapshot right now," Wong said. "They're going to live in a different world, so we've been a lot more patient and exercise a lot more compassion when disciplining... We wanted them to feel comfortable in school again."

### A silver lining

Nearly four years on, with the third booster shot rolling out and an uptick in COVID cases around the country, it seems the disease will remain in schools' peripheries indefinitely.

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Continued on page 30

**EDUCATION**

However, administrators say they're trying to focus on the few silver linings that emerged from the pandemic.

"During a recent parent meeting, I told parents about our plans to get kids caught up and to maximize the time they have in school and at home," Wong said. "I think in some instances, COVID brought families closer together."

For A+ Charter, the pandemic engendered a learning schedule never normalized before in the U.S.

"We want to make sure that when they're home, they're spending quality time with family, which is why we also moved to a four-day week," Wong said.

The pandemic also forced schools to identify how to best utilize technology across the board. This included ensuring students can access their curriculum without setting foot on campus, using online learning platforms to distribute assignments and track grades.

In other cases, it meant new channels of communication with families.

"A lot of our families work outside of

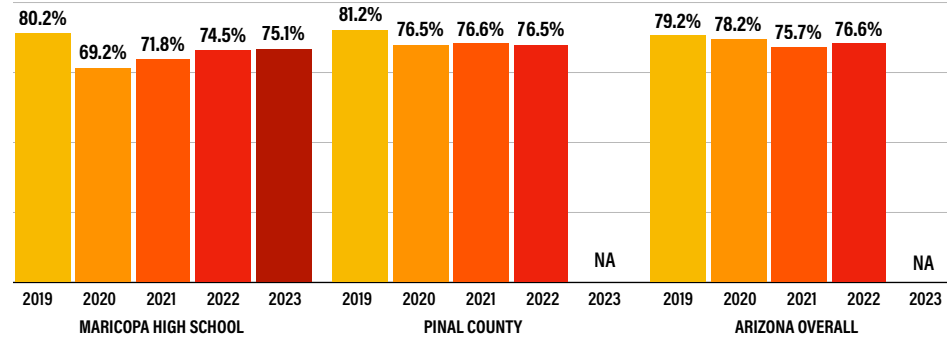
Maricopa, so they have options to meet with teachers online," Terry said.

Wong said he's hopeful this generation of students would make the best of the situation.

"There's no desire to go back to online or masks or any of that," he said. "But this

generation is super compassionate toward each other, and they're really good rolling together through everything. We just have to remind them that we can't control too much of the outside world, but we can control how we work together and treat each other." 🗨️

**MARICOPA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES**



Note: 2023 cohort data for Pinal County and Arizona not yet available.  
Sources: MUSD, Arizona Department of Education

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**What is tipflation?**

Tip fatigue — or tipflation — refers to the recent phenomenon of tipping becoming more prevalent across the entire service industry and increasing requests for higher tips. In 2022, Vox writer Sara Morrison noted this experience even began stretching into places customers wouldn't expect to leave tips, like retail stores and apple picking farms.

Tipflation grew out of the pandemic's widespread disruption to life and economy, including some correlating changes in the service industry: a surge in to-go food orders, the coinciding rise of global inflation and growing acceptance of tech advances.

Steve Chucri, president and CEO of the Arizona Restaurant Association, confirmed the trend.

"(Tip fatigue) is another outgrowth that's come from COVID," he said. "During and after COVID, to-go service really peaked for our industry."

In the past, Chucri said to-go orders amounted to an average of 5% of restaurant sales. During COVID, that demand ballooned to 25% amid shutdowns — and that demand never quite wavered.

"Now, to-go orders hover between 20% and 25%, so it's become a big part of what we do in the restaurant industry," he said.

The inflation surge that began in 2021 resulted in higher food costs that translated to higher prices and tips for customers.

"We're having to pass some costs on to our menu pricing," Chucri said. "That means the tipped amount will be higher. In theory, if you're tipping 20% on a \$50 ticket and now it's a \$60 ticket, you're going up a couple bucks."

And, of course, technology can't quite escape some blame.

"Technology 100% has played a role in this," Chucri said. "No disrespect to Toast or some of those other devices, but I think that's where some of it originated."

Contactless payments through point-of-sale software grew around this time, too — think iPad operating systems like Toast or Square. With these, cashiers or baristas could just flip a tablet to a customer that automatically prompts for payment and programmed tip amounts.

This form of automation appeared to be an ethical issue for Chucri.

"The one fundamental truth of this industry is that we believe tips should be earned; they're not a sense of entitlement," he said.

Jessica Bailin

**The changing etiquette of tipping**

Prior to the pandemic, tipping habits seemed pretty cut and dry: 15% to 20% at a restaurant, loose change or dollars at the coffee shop and nary a tip jar in sight at retail shops.

However, that changed with COVID. As Chucri mentioned, closed or limited indoor dining meant more consumers were ordering takeout. Restaurant and food service workers were considered essential workers, and plenty of people felt inclined to tip a little extra with each order.

In March 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, a small number of Maricopa residents responded to a question on Facebook that they tipped for curbside, takeout and delivery orders.

At the time, reader Michelle James admitted to being "a bit more generous" with tips.

"We always tip 20%-25% normally, higher depending on service," she wrote.

Likewise, Diane Youngblood was more likely to tip higher when picking up curbside or takeout orders from local restaurants.

"Lately it's been higher, between 30% and 40%," she wrote.

Why? Reader Donna Treadway said it succinctly.

"They are still taking care of us, only in your car and not a table," she wrote.

Those numbers are supported by a Forbes national survey.

In September, Forbes surveyed Americans on their tipping habits, revealing nearly one-third of people tip more than they did before the pandemic.

However, by 2023, that generosity wore thin, it seems.

That same survey revealed about 36% of respondents felt they shouldn't have to leave tips for picking up takeout food. That number hovered between 34% and 40% when considering service at coffee shops, fast-casual restaurants and food trucks.

The survey also found for most transactions, 57% of respondents tipped 11% to 20%. These respondents were almost evenly split in how they tipped, with half tipping 11% to 15%, and the other half 16% to 20%.

How did Maricopans fare? *InMaricopa* polling showed the overall number who tipped 11% to 20% was surprisingly similar — also 57% of respondents — but when it came to the nitty gritty, Maricopa residents were more generous.

About 13% of Maricopans said they generally tipped 11% to 15% when receiving a

Continued on page 34



# Tipping point

BY MONICA D. SPENCER

**WHEN JOE QUIGG RECEIVED HIS** receipt for a \$17 order at a Maricopa taco shop, he grew hot with anger.

means you order, park, run in, wait in line and retrieve the food yourself," she said. "The gratuity doesn't seem to be reflected in the service anywhere."

"They automatically put a \$3 tip on my drive-thru order without asking," he said. "I only caught it because I always ask and review the receipt while there."

These experiences and many more shared with *InMaricopa* around the influx of tip requests outside a sit-down restaurant point to varying emotions: anger, confusion, frustration and even a sense of guilt.

Cassie Lotz felt shocked the first time she saw an empty line beckoning for a tip on her drive-thru receipt.

Consumers are left questioning why some businesses in the service industry not only began requesting tips, but larger tip amounts or even automating the process that requires active refusal.

"It happens every time we go," she told *InMaricopa*. "A lot of places suggest it and you almost have to know a hack to avoid it."

As inflation continues to rage, households have less disposable income and blowback from consumers seems more common.

And Heather Vance said she felt baffled upon finding a local Asian restaurant automatically calculated a tip on her July order.

Has it all gone too far?

"It was frustrating because ordering takeout

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service. However, 44% said they tipped 16% to 20%.

It's a stark contrast from the 40% tips at the height of the pandemic but could show a return to normal.

Local and national tipping habits align with guidelines from the etiquette authority itself, the Emily Post Institute. Tipping suggestions for restaurants, delivery service and salons range from 10% to 20%, depending on the service.

Not so bad, right? Unfortunately, social pressures from pandemic trends seem to have stuck around.

**Tipped off**

Remember that episode of "Seinfeld" where George tries to get kudos for leaving a tip when picking up his calzone?

(That's season 7, episode 20, titled "The Calzone" for the curious. Each time George tries to leave a cash tip, the owner looks away and George becomes convinced he's being judged for not appearing to tip. This leads George to try taking his money to put into the jar again, but the owner thinks he's stealing. Hijinks ensue, yadda yadda, all because of that perceived guilt of not tipping.)

These days, most tip jars have been replaced with a touchscreen and programmed tip suggestions. And for some people, that guilt feels more real than ever.

Perhaps this is because the choice of not tipping suddenly became an action. When the tip screen pops up on the coffee shop or food truck iPad, consumers must physically press "no tip," type in "\$0" or figure out how to bypass the page altogether — with the cashier looking you in the eyes.

*Continued on page 36*

**TIPPING AROUND TOWN**

**Neaux Coffee**

Brooklyne Molyneux, owner of local coffee joint Neaux Coffee, said in all her years of working in food service, she's only encountered one customer upset about tipping.

But for the most part, Molyneux said, "It's no big deal!"

"Obviously, customers tip if they want to and I think we make pretty good tips here," she said.

At the coffee shop, baristas earn \$13.85 per hour, plus whatever tips they collect each day. Molyneux said on average they get an additional \$3 in tips per hour.

**Crumb! Cookies**

The tip screen at Crumb! Cookies is an odd one. Suggested tips start at \$2, amounting to about 40% of the price of the \$5 cookie.

Granted, the cookies are baked and decorated in-house, and the store bakers are a friendly bunch. But it's still hefty.

Baker Alexa Rock said that hasn't deterred



customers from wanting to leave a tip.

"It's weird, I think we have more people get upset if we don't ask for tips," she said. "Usually, a good handful of people are actually upset if you don't flip it over to ask for a tip."

Rock did not say how much she or her co-workers collected in tips daily, but she did say they are a welcome addition to her minimum wage salary.

"Personally, I don't feel like I need the tips," Rock said. "The tips make me feel better, but I feel like it doesn't make or break me because I love what I do."

**Arizona State Express Motor Services**

The strangest place Maricopans encountered a tip jar?

"MVD, (it is) crazy they take tips," said Alvin Johnson.

Other readers left similar comments, though resident Andrew Harrison said he left a \$10 tip once after some outstanding service.

"I tipped the MVD, dude had me in and out in under 10 minutes and was fun to talk to," Harrison said.

Each window at Arizona State Express Motor Services, a third-party provider owned by Lewis Green, has large jars emblazoned with "tips are appreciated" signs.

Green said the jars went up in 2016 after repeated customers attempted to tip the customer service representatives.

"A lot of times, we go above and beyond what's required trying to help customers, such as making phone calls, sending documents to the lien lender, or I'll do a free notary," he said. "Customers would try to tip the customer service representatives by having them take the change. On camera, that makes it look like they are taking money from the register."

Most representatives collect anywhere between \$4 and \$10 per day. For Green, it serves as a nice perk for representatives and confirms a truth he's known for years.

"Some people just can't accept the fact that something is free," he said.

Montica D. Spencer



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CITY OF MARICOPA



It's a stark change from simply tossing a dollar into the tip jar and seems to have led to negative feelings around tipping.

The Forbes study noted respondents were more likely to experience negative feelings around tipping, including feeling pressured (31%), overwhelmed (26%) and guilty (23%).

A survey by Bankrate supports this idea. Two-thirds of people reported negative feelings around tips, including 32% who felt annoyed by those programmed tip screens.

And in Maricopa, locals reported not liking the tip screen at all in an *InMaricopa* survey. In fact, 60% said they simply don't tip when prompted at a drive-thru, takeout or similar scenario.

Of those who did, half reported feeling resentful about being asked to leave a tip and 29% felt indifferent. The remaining 21% reported feeling content to tip.

Commenters reported feeling tips in the drive-thru or for takeout service were "off-putting" and "downright stupid."

### 'Trading down'

The majority of those negative feelings seemed to derive from one truth: Tips should be earned.

The Emily Post Institute says tips are "a significant way to show appreciation for a job well done," and they are one of the most valuable forms of gratuity shown to those working in the service industry.

In some areas, that feels easy to justify. Consider a meal at The Capital Grille in Phoenix, where it won't take much to spend \$200 on a dinner for two.

For a fine dining experience like that — with a hefty back of house staff, kitchen staff, managers, servers and hosts all ensuring a fine dining experience — Chucuri said those instances deserve every penny.

"These people are all making sure that food gets out hot, fresh and just how you should expect it," he said. "Those moving parts are what you're rewarding with a tip and the fact that your server has a smile on his or her face when they're giving it to you."

That intricate web of service grows smaller with casual, fast-casual and quick-service restaurants and the hope for a tip reduces. In fact, Chucuri said quick service restaurants — fast food joints with simpler menus and no table service — were "never really meant to be a tip industry."

Some Maricopans agree.

Take Lotz, who was surprised by the tip request for a drive-thru order.

"I am not going to tip at a drive-thru, especially when they make minimum wage

### A COMPLICATED HISTORY

Classist. Condescending. "Commercial bribes." A "cancer in the breast of democracy?"

Who would have thought this was how 19th and early 20th century Americans viewed the growing prevalence of tips in the service industry?

Today, most Americans appear to hold negative, guilt-centric views on handing over tips, according to survey after survey. And yet, it remains.

Tipping in the United States has a long, complicated history intertwined with justifying new wealth and racist policies during the Reconstruction period after the Civil War. But first, where did the act

of tipping originate?

In "Tipping: An American Social History of Gratuities," author Kerry Segrave outlined the history of offering gratuity for service workers, a custom that has origins in medieval Europe. The paternalistic relationship between lord and serf occasionally translated to a "few extra coins, from either compassion or appreciation of a good deed."

This habit eventually fell out of favor in Europe and right into the hands of Americans.

Segrave mentions America's nouveau riche began incorporating the tipping of servants both at home and abroad to confirm their growing affluence and influence. Prior to this, tipping in America was non-existent.

In this post-Civil War era, former enslaved African

Americans struggled to find living wages in the few industries that would employ them, namely as servants, waiters and railroad porters. A 2019 article from *Time* noted most employers in Southern states looked to tips as a way of avoiding actually paying these workers.

Several states began outlawing the practice by 1918, including Iowa and Georgia. However, those attempts were later overturned by each state's Supreme Court.

From there, tipping became even more prevalent across the country as restaurants adopted the practice to "subsidize a worker's pay with guests' extra money" and the introduction of the federal minimum wage in 1938.

or more," she said. "If they dined in, then that deserves a tip."

*InMaricopa* reader Anthony Lopo said he believes only workers who depend on tips should earn them, "unless someone is doing some special favor for you or going above and beyond what they should."

So, what happens when tips aren't "earned," and consumers feel overwhelmed by tipflation?

Chucuri believes it could wear down diners. "I think you'll see some fatigue on the consumer side where they won't go out as frequently," he said. "Or they'll do what we call the 'trading down' scenario. That's where you trade down from casual to fast-casual, or fast-casual to quick-service, because it's cheaper."

This could be problematic, especially for a growing industry. Chucuri said for the last two years, the restaurant industry outperformed grocery sales: by 20% in 2022 and by 29% so far this year.

### 'You shouldn't feel guilty'

So, what does all this mess about tipflation and social expectations mean for consumers?

In Morrison's Vox story, that meant being OK with saying "no."

Emily Post Institute's co-president Lizzie Post recommended learning how to "not give into the guilt" and "not feeling terribly bad about it."

Chucuri also said eliminate the guilt, especially in instances where tipping is not typically anticipated.

"What you're seeing in other service sectors, like at a kiosk at the airport, is they flip the screen and ask for a tip," he said. "You shouldn't feel guilty about saying 0% on that because what did they do? You pulled the bottle of water, you sat it on the table. You did all the work."

And why is that? Tips should be earned; they're not an entitlement, he said.

"Speaking for the restaurant industry, we at no time believe anyone should ever feel guilty about tipping us for the service we provide," he said. "They should want to tip in exchange, in connection with the service that was offered to them, plain and simple." 🗨️

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## Tipnotized

I've changed my tune on tipping and don't feel a bit bad about it (kind of)

BY SCOTT BARTLE

**B**RAINWASHING: THE PROCESS of pressuring someone into adopting radically different beliefs by using systematic and often forcible means.

In hindsight, I don't think it's dramatic to say the service industry brainwashed me — and maybe you — with its overzealous shift to soliciting handouts without regard to reason.

For decades I tipped the countless service providers — and back then you could put “food” in front of “service” — who made less than minimum wage and relied on gratuities to supplement their income.

I don't remember my base pay when I was a busboy and waiter, though it was something south of the \$3.35 minimum wage, but I remember how meaningful each tip I received was. So, I went through life tipping a normal amount — 15%-plus as a rule — and more when the service warranted.

In recent years, I've continued to tip in accordance with societal norms, even as those norms have changed.

I remember going on a touristy mountain bike ride in Bend, Ore. And I remember the guide being a real jerk — arrogant, condescending, impolite. What did I do afterward? I gave him a \$20 tip.

More recently, my wife and I went scuba-diving in San Diego. Well, my wife went scuba-diving; I bobbed on top of the Pacific Ocean for an hour because the guide lost track of his divers and would not allow me to descend. What did I do afterward? I gave him a \$20 tip. Am I that insecure? Or that susceptible to brainwashing? Either way, looking back, I am as amazed as I am embarrassed.

Fast-forward to this summer, our first family cruise. I tipped a guy on Royal Caribbean's Voyager of the Seas for letting me borrow a corkscrew for 30 seconds. Why? Intellectually, it seems obvious such a service would be included in the whopping \$90 per day (\$18 per person) I was already paying in mandatory gratuities. (Isn't this an



Should *InMaricopa* have a tip jar on its conference room table for advertising clients and prospects to grease the palms of its advertising reps or, worse yet, ownership? Here, Bartle toys with this hyperbolic question.

oxymoron?) Yet, the sense of obligation crept over me nonetheless.

On the flip side, despite feeling gouged by the mandatory gratuity charges, I generously tipped our room attendants and waiter and felt good about it because (a) they enhanced our experience, (b) I knew their names and they knew mine, (c) they rely on tips to make their living and (d) I was confident their young families in Indonesia (or so the stories went) would put it to good use.

The U.S. has always been the global outlier in the gratuity world. But we've really taken it to a new level in recent years.

It seems to me to coincide with the advent of Square and Toast. The uber-cool, point-of-sale, credit-card processing tools and their competitors revolutionized the payment process for millions of small businesses. It also seems to have revolutionized their payroll and our tipping philosophies.

It was cute and convenient when the merchant flipped around that little counter terminal or handed you a handheld version for you to stick in your card and pay for services. Back then, I recall “NONE” was a prominent selection on the “optional” gratuity screen. Now, it seems you're lucky if you can navigate to “OTHER” around the predetermined options the merchant thinks are more

appropriate for you, and profitable for them.

And it works. I find myself wondering what is socially acceptable, who is in line behind me looking over my shoulder, why I am arguing with gratuity ghosts over a tip that will likely just further enable our entitled society.

My perspective is as both a customer and business owner. I don't inherently mind workers accepting tips, despite my issues with the overt solicitation and weaponization of the human psyche thereof. If customers are inclined to voluntarily pay extra for services — whether for legitimate or weak-minded reasons as I've done in the past — so be it.

But it has graduated to the point businesses are unnecessarily and arguably unfairly subsidizing their labor costs on the backs of undeserving and oftentimes unsuspecting customers. Moreover, it's oftentimes the owner of the establishment you are tipping, not some single mom trying to feed her kids.

If you cannot operate, say, a retail business without asking every customer to overpay, maybe your business model is flawed, or the economics otherwise suggest you shouldn't be in that business.

I am no longer in lockstep with America's supposed tipping expectations of today; expectations, I might add, that most certainly were created by the beneficiaries of such

gratuities, not the benefactors.

I have my dog groomer shop to thank, along with much-delayed wisdom and maturity, for helping change my perspective from blind follower to independent thinker. It's hard enough coughing up \$65 to have someone wash my dog and cut her hair. But I am taking my dog to you and coming back to pick her up. You act like you don't know my name — even though it's right there on your schedule — and you certainly don't care enough to share yours with me. You're doing what I am paying you to do and absolutely nothing more. And you probably own the shop. Yet, you ask for, and I feel obligated to provide, a tip.

And I am not alone.

During my ongoing transition to a more independent thinker, I found my sister laughing out loud as she placed a pickup order from the Nektar app. “They want to know if I want to add a tip; and I haven't gotten service yet,” she mused.

No more. Now, I have rules. These rules, spelled out at right, can be summarized in one phrase: Give from your gut, not your guilt.

**66**  
*I find myself wondering what is socially acceptable, who is in line behind me looking over my shoulder, why I am arguing with gratuity ghosts over a tip that will likely just further enable our entitled society.*

### IT AIN'T EASY GIVIN' GREEN

Do as I say, not as I've done.

#### TIP NOTHING

- You are not a human.
- You accepted the job based on the wage offered, not whatever your store's robotic customer base blindly places in the tip jar or checks on the arguably inappropriate request on the payment screen.
- You are handing me something (I bought) over a counter
- You have done nothing outside of providing the service I ordered (i.e. doing your job).

- You have offered no pleasantries (No 'Good morning,' no 'Welcome in, we're happy you chose us,' no 'That's a nice tie,' no 'Hi, I'm Janelle'...)

#### TIP SOMETHING

- You are working a job known to rely on tips (e.g. waiter).
- You provided me a service I wanted but didn't need (e.g. bellhop).
- I know your name.

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- You know my name.
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Photo Illustration



## SLIM CHICKENS

The quick service chicken restaurant continued inching closer to opening, with exterior construction complete and crews completing interior work in October. Slim Chickens is scheduled to open in early November, according to Operations Manager Colin Clingan.

“We couldn’t be more excited, as we anticipate our introduction of Slim Chickens to Maricopa to be a very busy, positive, high-energy occasion,” he told *InMaricopa*.



*InMaricopa* readers confirmed they have a definite favorite when it comes to partaking in a sweet and spicy autumn tradition. One-third of readers voted Neaux Coffee as their favorite spot to order a pumpkin spice latte, beating national chains like Starbucks and Dutch Bros.



The clock is ticking for the renowned Mexican restaurant to serve its first meal to Maricopa. Per a contract with the city, Cocina Madrigal has until March 2024 to have a restaurant “open and operating” following its \$68,000 purchase of land near city hall.

Despite multiple attempts to contact owner and chef Leo Madrigal or his son, Brian Madrigal, neither have confirmed a timeline for the restaurant’s construction or opening.



**W&Z** After months of construction and anticipation, the pan-Asian local chain served its first diners on Oct. 7 in the Cobblestone Fiesta Shopping Center next to Karsten’s Ace Hardware. Hungry Maricopans can order sushi rolls, moo goo pai pan, Malaysian rice noodles, Thai curry and even a poke bowl.



The national pet supply chain was steps away from opening its doors in Maricopa last month. Exterior construction was completed, furniture moved in and signs went up in mid-October.



In 2021, the charbroiled burger joint first announced plans to reopen shop in Maricopa. Two years later, the restaurant received its commercial permit and broke ground on the 0.77-acre lot Oct. 20. The restaurant is expected to open in Q2 of 2024, according to spokesperson Nick Robello.

Good stuff happening at your business? Let us know at [News@InMaricopa.com](mailto:News@InMaricopa.com).

## Sprocket to me

AAMCO offers quality service without the upsell

**WE’VE ALL BEEN THERE.** Your car makes a weird noise, so you take it to the local shop. After mechanics look it over, someone tells you what the problem is — but invariably, there’s a spate of other problems apparently waiting to be addressed.

So, your \$100 tweak just became a thousand-dollar repair.

That’s not the way it works at AAMCO of Maricopa. Owner Tony Murell, who purchased the franchise on North John Wayne Parkway last year, has been in the automotive industry for nearly 30 years. And he knows many motorists hate that dreaded trip to the mechanic.

“We want people to trust us that what we’re telling them about their car is true, and that it’s the right thing,” he said. “We want it to be the same kind of relationship people have with their doctor, where they trust that the person giving them advice has their best interests at heart.”

At most garages, if a repair is estimated to take six hours but the mechanic can do it in four, the shop still bills for six hours. Part of those savings is passed on to the mechanic as commissions, which gives them an incentive to work fast — but not carefully.

“We don’t pay any of our employees on commission because we don’t want them to take shortcuts on a job or overcharge the customer in any way,” Murell said. “I probably don’t make as much profit as I could by doing things that way, but I can sleep at night. There’s no incentive for my employees to do any work that’s not needed.”

That sort of straight-forward approach came from where the 52-year-old cut his teeth during a four-year stint in the U.S. Coast Guard. He fell into the mechanical specialty by accident.

“My interest in cars started before my military service, but because I’m color blind, there were only certain jobs I could do in the service and one was in the engineering department working on vehicles in what they called the ‘Auxiliary Gang,’” he said. “We worked on small boat motors for fast boats, deployable boats, as well as hydraulics for hoists and cranes. It turns out that a transmission is essentially just a large hydraulic motor, so I got an early education on how transmissions worked, and it stuck with me.”

After leaving the Coast Guard, Murell installed car stereos, then co-owned his own custom car shop. After selling that to his partner, he moved to Florida and worked in the automotive salvage, recycling and

scrap metal industry for 20 years.

He and his wife of 10 years, Jeannie, moved to Arizona from Michigan in 2020, and he sought a new business opportunity.

AAMCO gave him a list of available locations and the closest one to him was Maricopa.

“I didn’t want to have to build something from the ground up, and I really liked the idea that AAMCO is the only national chain that specializes in transmissions,” he said. “We’re not a tire shop, not a brake shop, not a quick oil change place where there are a lot of competitors around. AAMCO is the only one doing transmissions.”

It wasn’t just the opportunity to work on transmissions that sold him on the AAMCO opportunity, though. He realized Maricopa would be a great place to own a business.

“I bought AAMCO because of the location in Maricopa,” he said. “The city is growing so fast, and it isn’t going to stop any time soon. You can go into some areas up in the Valley where they have peaked in terms of their potential, but here it’s a clean slate, a growing city, and businesses can grow with the city.”

“Also, people are friendlier here than in the Valley. Most of them are more laid back and down to earth than those in Phoenix, so it’s easy to do business in Maricopa.”

While transmissions are AAMCO’s specialty, they’re not the only service Murell’s shop offers.

He said he provides all aspects of car maintenance and repair with the exception of tires and alignments. But he still loves working on transmissions.

“Transmissions today are more complicated than ever before,” he said. “Since the invention of electronics, transmissions have become less durable than their non-electronic counterparts. Just the simple aspect of the number of speeds is a huge factor.”

And while the transmissions he works on may be more complicated than ever, his philosophy isn’t.

He also sets their hours in a family-friendly way, he said.

Murell only keeps the shop open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. so his staff can spend time with their families.

“It’s important to me that we do it this way,” he said. “We realized we can get by working a few less hours. Nobody wants to work six or seven days a week. People need time to spend with their families, and to rest and recharge so we get the best performance out of them when they’re here. We probably make a little less money by doing it that way, but our employees really appreciate it and are loyal because of it.”



Tony Murell, Owner, AAMCO of Maricopa

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A summary of the Aug. 9 - Oct. 8 restaurant health inspections by Pinal County Environmental Health Services.

# Restaurant inspections

## SATISFACTORY



**Cooling**  
Temperatures of cooked beans in walk-in cooler 53-55° (≤41° required).  
Temperatures of salsa, cooked carrots and chili peppers in prep cooler 52-53° (≤41° required).

**Equipment**  
Air temperature in prep cooler 57° (≤41° required).



**Sink operation and maintenance**  
Employee hand sink at food-prep station blocked by large vat of dough. No soap at hand sink at hot line service.

**Hot holding**  
Temperatures of cooked pork in warmer 89-119° (≥135° required).

**Cooling**  
Temperatures of cooked beans on metal pallet behind food service line 81-95° (≤41° required). Temperatures of cooked beef in a prep cooler 49-51° and temperatures of cooked salsa in walk-in cooler 50-68° (≤41° required).

**Date marking**  
No marked dates on 10 crates of individually packed salsa in cooler.



**Cooling**  
Temperatures of cheese, meat stuffed tortilla, pre-cooked chicken, salsa and egg rolls in reach-in cooler 55-57° (≤41° required).

**Cooling equipment**  
Ambient air temperature of reach-in cooler 60° (≤41° required).



**Backflow prevention**  
Chemical dish machine installed without approval from the Department of Environmental Health. Water-waste line from dish machine directly connected to drain of three-compartment sink, which is directly connected to sewer. Owner required to install airgap between three-compartment sink drainpipe and sewer inlet.



**Cooling**  
Temperatures of cooked rice in reach in cooler 49-52° (≤41° required).

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- Honeycutt Coffee
- IHOP
- Maricopa Elementary School
- Maricopa High School
- Maricopa High School Culinary Arts
- The Roost
- Tacos N' More
- Sunrise Preschool

**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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# 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

**F**OR 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

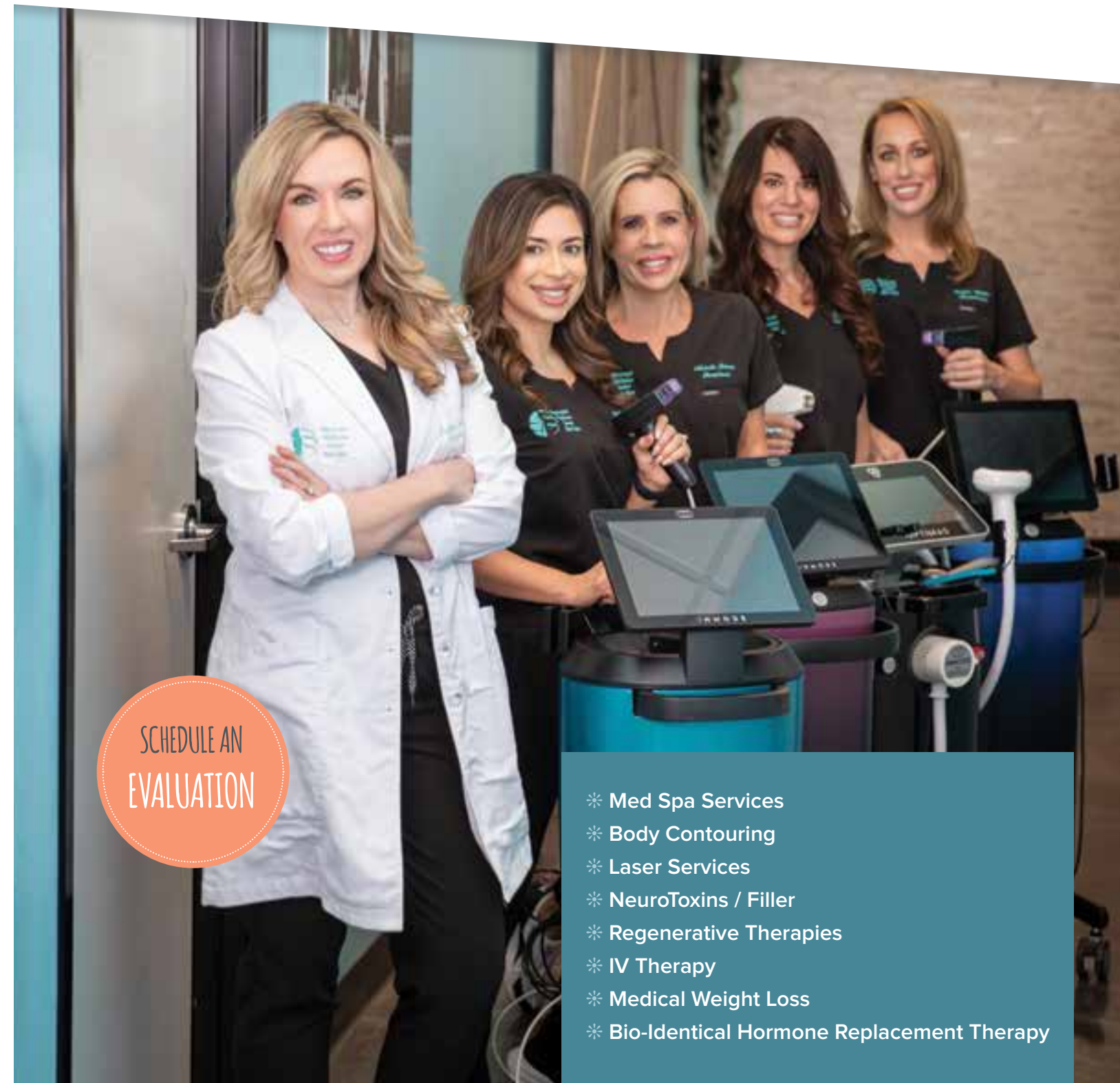


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**Barbara Dudik Huerta, the laboratory manager at Exceptional Community Hospital, takes pride in opening Maricopa’s first full-service hospital.**



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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

**M**ARICOPA 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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Dr. Kelvin Crezee



Dr. Matine Mirsaidi

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Second location



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(480) 893-1090 AHWFAC.com

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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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41600 W. Smith-Enke Road  
Bldg 14, Suite 3  
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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  
@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

### CARDIOLOGY

**East Valley Cardiology**  
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480-899-9430

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GetSunmed.com

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### CHIROPRACTIC

**3 A-1 Health & Wellness**  
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
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MaricopaChiropractor.com  
*See ad on page HG 18*

### Happy Clam Chiropractic

44574 Copper Trail  
520-350-1337

### Harshe Chiropractic

20800 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 116  
520-350-0074

### The Joint Chiropractic

20350 N. John Wayne Parkway  
520-727-5762

### Sonora Spine Care

44870 W. Hathaway Ave.  
Suite 5  
520-428-4772

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**Arizona Associates in Dentistry**  
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Suite 128  
520-568-5959

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Suite 103  
520-494-7333

### Dentistry at Maricopa

20046 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 105  
520-413-5637

### East West Dental

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

### Edison Family Dental Care

44555 W. Edison Road  
Suite A  
520-463-4067

### Family Dentistry of Maricopa

44870 W. Hathaway  
520-568-7004

### 4 Maricopa Family Dentistry & Orthodontics

44480 W. Honeycutt Road  
Suite 110  
520-568-9100  
MaricopaDental.com  
*See ad on page HG 12, HG 13*

### Maricopa Kids' Dentist & Orthodontics

41940 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.  
Suite 120  
520-589-2919

### Maricopa Smiles Dentistry and Orthodontics

41620 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.  
Suite 110  
520-568-2800

### Oasis Oral & Facial Surgery

21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 114  
520-231-6700

### PM Dental

20800 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 105  
520-568-7880

### Premier Orthodontics

21083 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite C105  
480-361-4600

### Smiley Dental

20917 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite A-105  
520-252-4044

### Super Smiles 4 Kids

21116 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite B-7  
520-568-3828

### 5 Treasured Smiles Children's Dentistry

21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Unit 117  
520-316-6111  
TreasuredSmilesChildrensDentistry.com  
*See ad on page HG 17*

### DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING

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### Poison Control

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### Ak-Chin Health Clinic

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520-568-3881

### 6 American Medical Associates

20928 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite C4  
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 102  
480-306-5151  
AmericanMedicalAssociatesAZ.com  
*See ad on page HG 3*

### Banner Health Center

17900 N. Porter Road  
520-233-2500

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21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 115  
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### Health Matters

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### Pinal County Public Health Clinic

41680 W. Smith-Enke Road  
Suite 110  
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### 7 Sun Life Health

44572 W. Bowlin Road  
520-568-2245  
SunLifeHealth.org  
*See ad on page HG 17*

### 8 Vitiello Primary Care

21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 108  
520-568-5943  
VitielloPrimaryCare.com  
*See ad on page HG 19*

### Zuwa Family Care PLLC

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Suite 102  
520-497-4575

### FITNESS

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Suite B3  
520-568-5226

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520-316-4600  
Maricopa-az.gov

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Suite D2-A  
520-261-4661

### Pacana Park

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### Planet Fitness

20595 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 400  
520-666-2300

### FUNERAL SERVICES

**9 J. Warren Funeral Services**  
44400 W. Honeycutt Road  
Suite 102-G  
520-836-8041  
JWarrenFuneral.com  
*See ad on page HG 16*

### HEARING AIDS

**HearingLife**  
1201 N. Pinal Ave.  
Suite A  
Casa Grande  
520-494-3824

### Priority Hearing and Tinnitus

41664 W. Smith-Enke Road, Suite 110  
480-289-6889

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520-233-6116  
GentivaHS.com

### Maricopa We Care

520-759-2147 #1

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1800 E. Florence Blvd.  
Casa Grande  
520-381-6300

### 10 Exceptional Community Hospital

19060 N. John Wayne Parkway  
520-534-0700  
EHC24.com  
*See ad on page HG 9*

### INSURANCE

**Allstate - Mauser Agency**  
14620 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.  
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### American Family Insurance

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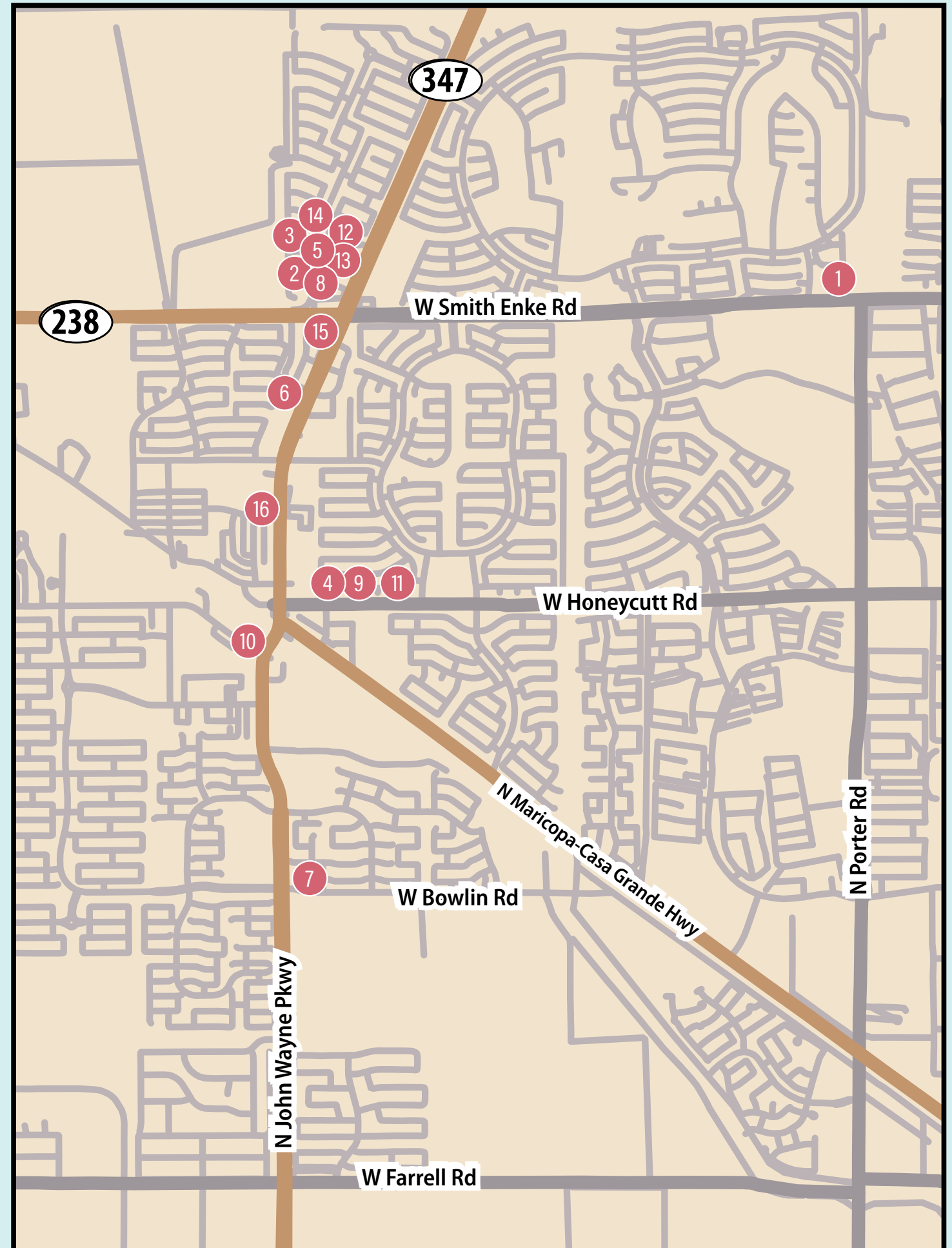
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**Massage Life**  
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480-205-0907

**Massage Maricopa**  
19194 N. Meghan Drive  
602-327-9939

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**1 Maricopa Wellness Center**  
41600 W. Smith-Enke Road  
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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  
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@RitualWellnessMedispa  
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**Sonoran Wellness Med Spa**  
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Suite 112  
520-840-8533

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BeAwesomeYouth.Life

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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**  
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**13 Maricopa Eye Care**  
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520-568-7538  
MaricopaEyeCare.com  
See ad on page HG 21

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20928 N. John Wayne Parkway  
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520-568-6750  
GloriaDSmith.com

**State Farm Insurance**  
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520-568-5588

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**7 Sun Life Health**  
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520-568-2245  
SunLifeHealth.org  
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**8 Vitiello Primary Care**  
21300 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 108  
520-568-5943  
VitielloPrimaryCare.com  
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**Zuwa Family Care PLLC**  
20046 N. John Wayne Parkway  
Suite 102  
520-497-4575  
ZuwaFamilyCare.com

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520-836-4401

**CVS**  
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520-568-8290

**Fry's Marketplace**  
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520-568-6233

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44572 W. Bowlin Road  
520-350-7646  
SunLifeHealth.org/pharmacy  
See ad on page HG 17

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520-568-0672

**Walgreens**  
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520-635-2334

**Walmart**  
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AdvancedFootAnkle.com  
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**14 Maricopa Foot & Ankle Center**  
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Suite 126  
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MFAAC.com  
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520-568-6077  
NativeGrillAndWings.com  
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URGENT CARE

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520-233-2468

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Suite 121  
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**16 Sun Life Health OB/GYN**  
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520-788-6100  
SunLifeHealth.org  
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**8 Vitiello Primary Care**  
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520-568-5943  
VitielloPrimaryCare.com  
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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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## Adding a child to your house title

BY PATRICIA GLOVER, CLDP, CP/ACP, CNSA

**L**OTS OF PEOPLE THINK IT'S A GOOD idea to put their child's name on the deed to their home to avoid estate tax and probate, or to prevent the home from being seized to pay for nursing home expenses.

To the contrary, co-owning real estate investments with your children may actually create more problems than it solves and may not achieve your intended goals in the long run.

- **No takebacks:** If you want to sell or refinance your home, you need signatures from each person who has an ownership interest. If any of those people is incapacitated and you do not have the power of attorney to sign on their behalf, you may end up in probate court, asking a judge for permission to sell your own home. If the person is of sound mind but simply refuses to sign, you may end up in costly litigation trying to remove the co-owner from your deed. By adding someone to your deed, the person becomes a co-owner with equal rights to the property. If you have a falling out with that person, there's no legal obligation to sign the title back over to you.
- **Creditors:** Even in the best-case scenario where there are no underlying issues between you and your child, you are exposing your home to an unnecessary risk to your child's creditors. A person's primary residence is usually protected from creditors even in bankruptcy, but when you add a person onto the deed who now co-owns the home as a secondary property, it is no longer exempt from collection efforts. In other words, your child's creditors can place a lien on your home, or a bankruptcy court may force the sale of your home to pay your child's debts.
- **Taxes:** When you add another person to your deed, the conveyance may be considered a gift, and if the value of that conveyance exceeds the statutory limit, you may be required to file a gift tax return. So,



if you purchase your home for \$125,000 but then add your child onto the deed when the home is valued at \$325,000, half of that \$200,000 gain may become taxable to your child when he or she sells the home. In Arizona, there is no death tax. Therefore, that \$100,000 gains tax can be avoided by allowing the property to transfer through inheritance instead.

- **Death and divorce:** Depending how your home is titled (e.g., "tenants in common"), your deceased child's heirs may have a legal claim to your home. If your child dies before you and there is nothing in the deed directing rights of survivorship back to you, you could end up losing a portion of your home to beneficiaries of your child's estate. Additionally, if your child gets divorced, your home may be considered a part of your child's community property and could be subject to distribution in your child's divorce proceedings.

There are better options available for protecting your home, such as setting up a revocable living trust or recording a beneficiary deed, which only transfers ownership of your home upon your death. Consult with a legal professional to ensure your specific needs and goals are met within the confines of Arizona law.

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### most expensive HOME SOLD



Previously sold for:  
New build

40931 W. Desert Fairways Sept. 29 \$ 615,995

This corner-lot home has garages for three cars and an RV. In addition to three bedrooms and a great room, there is a study and gourmet kitchen with a breakfast nook. The master suite features a large walk-in closet and dual-sink bathroom. A covered patio in the backyard joins an oversized backyard. It sold for \$74,000 less than its original list price.

**Community:** The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado  
**Days on market:** 98  
**Builder:** Richmond American Homes  
**Square feet:** 2,580  
**Year built:** 2023  
**Price per square foot:** \$238.76  
**Bedrooms:** 3  
**Lot size:** 12,230 sqft  
**Bathrooms:** 2.5

2. 40931 W. Desert Fairways Drive, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado....\$601,995
3. 40829 W. Desert Fairways Drive, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado..\$590,995
4. 40774 W. Park Hill Drive, The Lakes at Rancho El Dorado.....\$580,000
5. 41922 W. Palmyra Court, Glennwilde.....\$575,000

### least expensive HOME SOLD

44140 W. Cydnee Drive Sept. 13 \$ 250,000



This ranch home has a connected kitchen and living area with a bonus front playroom. The home sustained damage from an air conditioning fire that spread inside the home. It sold for \$30,000 less than its original list price.

Previously sold for:  
\$234,900 on  
April 17, 2005.

**Community:** The Villages at Rancho El Dorado  
**Days on market:** 23  
**Builder:** Unknown  
**Square feet:** 1,889  
**Year built:** 2004  
**Bedrooms:** 4  
**Lot size:** 4,951 sqft  
**Bathrooms:** 2  
**Price per square foot:** \$132.35

2. 52178 W. Basie Lane, Province.....\$263,400
3. 35434 W. San Sisto Ave., Tortosa.....\$280,000
4. 42003 W. Ellington Lane, Province.....\$283,000
5. 36536 W. San Clemente St.....\$293,000

Brian Petersheim Jr.

Source: MLS, Sept. 10 - Oct. 9

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## Growing citrus

Backyard citrus are a home gardener's joy

BY WENDE GEHRT

**E**NJOYING CITRUS FRUITS FROM YOUR BACKYARD IS ONE of the greatest joys of home gardening. Citrus trees thrive in Pinal County and with a few tips, you can harvest an abundance of fruit.

Citrus varieties have different tolerance to cold and frost. Limes suffer below freezing, lemons can handle temperatures in the high 20s, oranges and grapefruit can tolerate mid-20s, and kumquats are hardy to 19 degrees.

Your yard may contain several microclimates — small pockets that may differ from the climate in other parts of the yard. For instance, an area next to a block wall is suitable for different plants than an area that's completely shaded.

Choose your citrus variety based on your location and mature height. Standard trees will grow to 20 feet tall with a 20-foot canopy spaced 12 to 15 feet apart. Semi-dwarf varieties grow to 12 feet tall planted only 6 to 8 feet apart. True dwarf varieties are a good choice for containers.

Prune only for the four "Ds": dead, dying, diseased or dysfunctional (crossing branches, branches on the ground or water sprouts). Allow citrus trees to grow in a shrubby shape rather than a lollipop shape.

Citrus trees should be planted in well-drained native soil and watered frequently. Don't fertilize the first year as it can burn tender roots and the tree doesn't need it. Remove all fruit during the first year so the tree can use its energy to build a healthy vascular system rather than bearing fruit.

Protect trees when frost and freezing temperatures are expected by draping loosely with woven cloth — never plastic. Allow the fabric to extend to ground level but don't tie it up. Old-fashioned holiday lights that generate heat can be scattered on the ground without touching the trunk.

Fertilize properly after the first year using any quality citrus fertilizer. The University of Arizona offers a citrus fertilizer calculator online. Just enter the type of tree, size and percentage of nitrogen in the fertilizer and all the calculations are done. Keeping accurate records of your fertilizing schedule is helpful.

Proper watering is also vital to the success of producing juicy citrus. The University of Arizona also offers a great online publication on irrigating. Citrus should always be watered at ground level, not sprayed into the air. Deep and infrequent watering is best and should be done to a depth of 36 inches. Thirsty citrus have leaves curled upward like a cigar.

Enjoy growing your own citrus fruit and be the envy of your neighbors.

Maricopa resident Wendie Gehrt is a Pinal County Master Gardener volunteer.

[extension.arizona.edu/citrus-fertilizer-calculator](https://extension.arizona.edu/citrus-fertilizer-calculator)  
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## Keep it professional

BY SHERMAN AND EUPHEMIA WEEKES

**M**ANAGING TENANT POSSESSIONS after they're evicted or move out is one of the challenges self-managing landlords face.

Improper handling of tenant possessions can lead to legal trouble. If a tenant leaves behind personal property, the landlord must follow the process outlined in the **Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act** before disposing of the tenant's belongings. Failure can be very costly.

If the tenant delivers the keys, the landlord



may immediately dispose of any personal property left behind. In case of abandonment, the landlord should take an inventory of property left behind. All perishable items, biohazards or health and safety risks should be disposed of immediately. Animals left behind must be properly cared for.

Landlords are required to post an abandonment notice on the home and inform

the tenant of the property left behind and the location where it is stored. The landlord must hold the property for a minimum number of days to allow the tenant an opportunity to enter and remove personal effects such as medicine and clothes.

Five days after posting the notice, the landlord can retake the home and re-rent it if there is no personal property remaining in the unit. The landlord can charge the tenant for moving and storing items and caring for any animal.

After retaking the property, the landlord is required to store the tenant's possessions onsite or offsite. If the tenant does not recover the property, the landlord can donate or sell it. All proceeds from the sale must be applied to outstanding rent or costs for the tenant.

The landlord can discard or destroy the tenant's property if there's reasonable belief the value of the property is so low that the cost of storing, moving and selling it would not be recovered from the sale. For one year after the sale, landlords should keep good records of outstanding and unpaid rent and the sale of the tenant's personal property.

Property managers are professionals at dealing with tenants' abandoned property and helping landlords stay out of legal trouble. If you need help handling abandoned property and re-renting your space, please contact us at Crest Premier Property Management Team.

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## City inspections only go so far

BY DAYV MORGAN

**R**ECENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN STORIES locally and statewide about home builders concerning the quality of their work.

These homes have passed multiple building inspections — eight of them to be exact in the City of Maricopa.

Which brings the question of what exactly are they inspecting for?

The major inspections in Maricopa include the footing (and the metal reinforcements), the underground plumbing, rough framing, electrical, wallboard, stucco lath (the base for the exterior

stucco,) strap and shear (exterior sheathing and roofing) and the final inspection.

Most of these inspections are focused on fire safety and structural stability but there are many other items that the city isn't going to be looking at.

The city inspectors aren't going to fail a house if the interior paint job is lacking, or if the doors don't latch properly. That's why, as an owner, you need to take a hands-on approach. Open and close each door to every room in your house. Do the same with all the cabinets. Inspect the doors and drawers to make sure they are in working order. Flush the toilets, run water in the sinks to make sure they are draining properly. Also, turn every switch on and off. Think of your day-to-day routine and if you see something that's going to drive you crazy later, speak up.

These are all common problems in new construction that the city's inspectors aren't obligated to look for. The builder should make every effort to bridge that gap. But you must hold them accountable.

Regardless of whether the house is new, pay for your own inspection. Experienced home inspectors will look at areas that are hard to access and investigate more technical issues

that you may not be familiar with. For example, they will typically look at the roof to make sure everything is properly sealed. They will look up in the attic and may discover areas with missing insulation or wires that were spliced together and not properly protected in a junction box. And they will look inside the electrical panel to make sure the breakers trip when tested and have the correct amperage.

Share the inspection report findings with the builder and don't close until your concerns are taken care of. They will tell you there's a warranty and they'll fix whatever you need for the first year, but after you've closed and they have your money, fixing your problems may not be at the top of their list.

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

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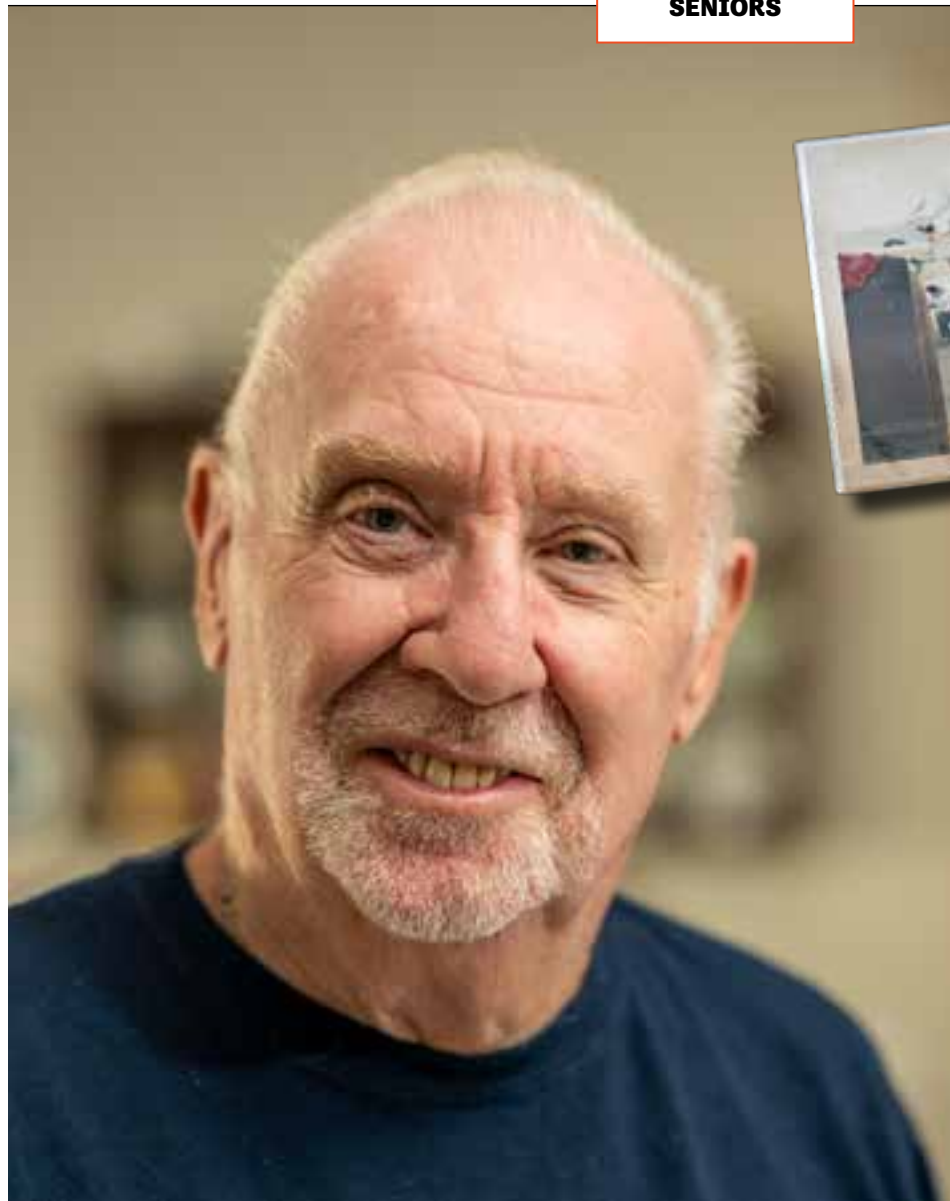
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In this glimpse into the past, we see as a young man, Lloyd Frank, who once served aboard the USS Ticonderoga (CVS-14) in the U.S. Navy.

of Tonkin while on routine patrol by North Vietnamese “junks” (boats used to ferry troops and supplies) and three Russian-built PT boats. About 200 miles south, a “general quarters” call sounded, ordering Frank and his shipmates to their battle stations.

“I have a surface target for you. This is no drill. I repeat, this is no drill.” Those words echo in Frank’s mind decades later.

The official response from Washington and President Lyndon B. Johnson was to shoot to kill if attacks persisted. The Ticonderoga pilots quickly flew in to support the Maddox and prevent any casualties and damage. Frank said the pilots destroyed the PT boats in what became the first shooting conflict involving a Navy ship since the end of the Korean War.

North Vietnam attacked again two days later, against both the Maddox and the Turner Joy destroyer. That prompted President Johnson to address the nation at just before noon on Aug. 4. It was a Tuesday, Frank recalled.

Johnson said: “As President and commander-in-chief, it is my duty to the American people to report that renewed hostile actions against United States ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin have today required me to order the military forces of the United States to take action in reply.”

Planes from the Ticonderoga and Constellation damaged or destroyed 25 North Vietnamese patrol boats and were credited with 90% destruction of an oil storage depot that represented one-tenth of the country’s petroleum storage capacity.

The U.S. involvement in Vietnam was in full swing.

Bryan Mordt

## Voice of the veteran

Maricopa recalls wartime service

BY TOM SCHUMAN

**L**LOYD FRANK ADMITS HIS military stint was brief — he served in the U.S. Navy from 1964 to 1966. But don’t be too quick to understate the impact these two years had on this 81-year-old Maricopan.

A Brooklyn, N.Y., native, Frank joined the Navy after Uncle Sam served him a draft notice. The son of a World War II Navy veteran, that decision was in his blood.

After completing boot camp in May 1964, he was assigned to the USS Ticonderoga, an Essex-class aircraft carrier deployed in the Far East.

His first thought upon seeing the 980-foot-long ship that carried about 3,500 personnel: “My God, that is huge!”

But Frank didn’t have a moment to waste jumping in. He volunteered on the flight deck, where his duties included moving planes around and getting them started. Later, he served on the crash crew, fighting fires and dealing with other emergencies.

The Ticonderoga was on its sixth peacetime tour in the Western Pacific. That all changed in early August 1964. First, the Maddox destroyer was confronted in the Gulf

### Life on ship

Frank recalls extremely busy days on the Ticonderoga.

“We were doing flight operations 6 a.m. to midnight every day,” he outlined. “Our planes supported the Army and Marines who were on land. We took ammo on at least every other day — a lot of them were World War II-era bombs. We also supplied food and fuel to several destroyers once or twice a week.”

It was not uncommon for planes to return from missions riddled with bullet holes. There were a few crashes, too.

Although nearly six decades have elapsed, Frank vividly remembers the day-to-day experiences.

“It was red lights at night — no more white lights,” he said, explaining the decision helped avoid enemy detection. “Everything was done with hand signals. Planes were moving in every direction. It was a busy, hostile environment. You could walk into a prop or get sucked into an intake if you weren’t careful. They say working on the flight deck is the most dangerous job in the military.”

Frank took part in two lengthy periods of daily air combat operations. The first was upon his initial deployment in 1964. The second, after the Ticonderoga returned to Hunter’s Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco in January 1955 for a five-month overhaul, commenced later that year and continued into the next.

While the work was stressful and often under less-than-ideal conditions, Frank said one must simply find a way to cope.

“I never once felt scared of anything. You were too busy. You just had to do your job,” he contended. “We would sleep in a compartment with 120 guys in a four-high rack. It was 120 degrees in there and hot as hell. But you would get a couple of hours sleep and then go back to work.”

The Navy wanted Frank to extend his two-year tenure. He was ready to get married and had a job lined up, so he opted to leave. The initial six-year reserve commitment was waived due to his service in a combat zone.

### Civilian experiences

Frank and his wife Joyce married 57 years ago. He was employed in the printing business, working on Wall Street for 40 years in New York. The couple spent 18 years in Las Vegas before the pandemic and the desire to be closer to grandchildren in Chandler brought the couple to Maricopa early last year.

“We were looking around, and we kept coming back here,” Frank shared.

In the late 1980s, Frank became involved with the Ticonderoga Veterans Association. The ship, commissioned in 1944 and serving 30 years, had a long and illustrious history. Frank was president of the group at one time and plans to attend the 51st annual reunion in San Antonio next year.

“There are shipmates there from every year. I met two who were with me on the ship in the same division,” he revealed. “Everyone sits around and tells war stories. As the years went by, we lost quite a few guys. Four years ago, we only had six World War II guys who could attend.”



Navy veteran Lloyd Frank and his wife, Joyce, in their Province home.

### UNITING BATTLE BUDDIES

Brian Agner attended last year’s Veterans Day ceremony at Province and quickly realized there were a lot of men and women living in the 55-plus community who had served their country in the military.

He later learned there was no organized effort to bring these veterans together. So, he started one. Today, nearly 70 veterans and a few family members

belong to the group. Frank Lloyd is also a member.

“We’re not here to step on any toes,” Agner said. “We just want to bring people together to share stories and do fun things.”

The reaction, thus far, is “Why did it take so long?” Agner served four years in the Air Force, primarily working on the Minuteman II missile system in the early 1980s.

The group, he says, “is going to do what it’s going to do. I don’t know what it will

Although Frank never set foot on land in Vietnam during his service, he did visit the country seven years ago.

“It reminded me that war is not a good thing, but kids need to know the history,” Frank said. “And Veterans Day is a very important day for all who served. We need to show our respect.”

Frank enjoys looking at the old newspaper clippings and relishing the memories they evoke.

“I don’t regret one minute of time I spent in the service,” he said. “It was a great learning experience. It made me a better person, a better man.”

look like a year from now!”

What he does know is veterans share a special connection.

“No matter your period of time or your branch, there’s something about knowing you went through basic training and the discipline of doing a job and doing it well,” he asserted. “I worked in hiring and I was always happy to interview that person from the military, knowing they came from that structured background.”

## Squad flex

Veteran combats ageism with fitness

BY MONICA D. SPENCER



Ron Angerame, 69, lifts a 30-pound ammunition can during a Marine combat fitness test in March 2023.

### FOUR MINUTES, 20 SECONDS.

That's how long it took 69-year-old Ron Angerame to complete the final portion of the intense Marine Corps' combat fitness test in March.

That's an eye-popping one minute, 49 seconds faster than the minimum time allotted for male Marines in the 51-plus age group.

"It was tough, it was really tough," Angerame said. "But one of the things I learned is that the only thing that could hold me back was myself."

Angerame first completed a less intense fitness test in 2021 as a quiet rebuttal to ageism in the workplace.

"There's this perception that Boomers just can't keep up the pace in the workforce," he told *InMaricopa*. "I thought, what can I do to help convince people I'm more than able to keep the pace?"

Earlier this year, he opted to complete the arduous CFT.

### What is the CFT?

Quick and fierce, the CFT is performed every six months to evaluate the strength, stamina and agility of enlisted Marines, a feat that won't go unnoticed by anyone who's struggled through it.

It entails an 800-yard sprint, a two-minute 30-pound ammunition can lift and a 300-yard maneuver-under-fire scenario. This final portion consists of rapid-fire sprinting, crawling, dragging and fireman-carrying a body. Then there's pushups, carrying ammo cans and a grenade throw.

And Marines are expected to complete all of these tasks in a matter of minutes.

"They say it's the toughest 10 minutes of your life, but it's a good challenge," Angerame said.

### Test your performance

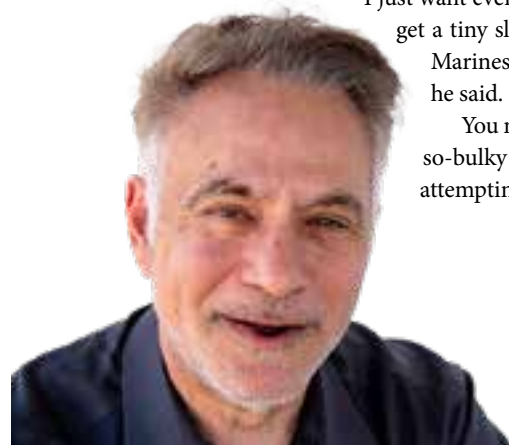
Wonder if you have what it takes to pass the CFT as a civilian?

On Veterans Day, Nov. 11, Angerame will join fitness trainers in hosting a CFT at Copper Sky Regional Park from 9 to 10:30 a.m. The group will also collect donations for the Maricopa Veterans Center.

Angerame said he hopes the community shows up to test themselves both physically and mentally, as well as gain some insight into the challenges Marines endure.

"I just want everyone to have fun and get a tiny slice of what our brave Marines have to go through," he said.

You might even spot a not-so-bulky *InMaricopa* reporter attempting the test, too. 🗣️



Ron Angerame



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8 a.m., Maricopa Public Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

#### Party at the Park — Relay For Life

3-8 p.m.  
Copper Sky Regional Park  
Entertainment, food trucks, artisan market, fun zone, raffles and more.  
Open to everyone and fun for the whole family.

#### SafeHouse - Break the Ice

9 p.m., Water & Ice  
20928 N. John Wayne Pkwy.



#### All-Maricopa Poetry Slam Championship

6 p.m., Honeycutt Coffee  
44400 W. Honeycutt Road, Suite 109

6

#### Maricopa Historical Society

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

7

#### Maricopa City Council

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

8

#### Maricopa Unified School District Governing Board

6:30 p.m., District Office  
44150 W. Maricopa-Casa Grande Hwy.

9

#### Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group

6 p.m., Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy.  
Suite 103



11

#### Maricopa Veterans Day Parade

9 a.m., Central Arizona College to Leading Edge Academy  
17945 N. Regent Drive

#### Marine Combat Fitness Test

9 a.m., Copper Sky Recreation Complex  
44345 W. Martin Luther King Blvd.

15

#### Blue Star Mothers of Maricopa

6:30 p.m., Maricopa Veterans Center  
41600 W. Smith Enke Road

16

#### Open Bingo

2 p.m., Caliche Senior Living  
1640 N. Peart Road, Suite 103  
Casa Grande

18

#### Teen Group

10 a.m., Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy.  
Suite 103

#### Maricopa ARTS Council's Studio Crawl

1 p.m., Maricopa Agricultural Center  
37860 W. Smith-Enke Road

21

#### Maricopa City Council

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

23

#### Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group

6 p.m., Northern Lights Therapy  
21300 N. John Wayne Pkwy.  
Suite 103

### 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 p.m., Parking lot behind Burger King  
20699 N. John Wayne Pkwy.

#### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

#### Celebrate Recovery Large and Small Group

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

Noon, Maricopa Library & Cultural Center  
18160 N. Maya Angelou Drive

#### Art and Sip

7 p.m., The Roost  
20800 N. John Wayne Pkwy.  
Suite 101

#### 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.

### Fridays

#### Narcotics Anonymous

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

#### Al-Anon - Strength & Home AFG

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

#### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

### Saturdays

#### Alcoholics Anonymous

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

ALL EVENTS ARE TENTATIVE

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

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**KAYLIN HANSEN**  
Intern at InMaricopa

Reside in: Copper Ridge  
Maricopan since: 2008  
Hobbies: Photography, journalism, music, art, video games  
Pet peeve: Duplicitous people  
Dream vacation: London  
Like most about Maricopa: Entertainment and walkability  
Like least about Maricopa: Rush hour

**FAVORITE ...**  
Book: The Bible  
TV Show: American Horror Story  
Actor: Evan Peters  
Song: Can We Pretend That We're Good? by Daniel Seavey

Website: instagram.com/loki.captures  
Quote: "The meaning of life is yours to create." -Kaylin Hansen  
Joke: Guess what...Chicken butt.  
Anything else we should know? I'm a huge motorcycle enthusiast.

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

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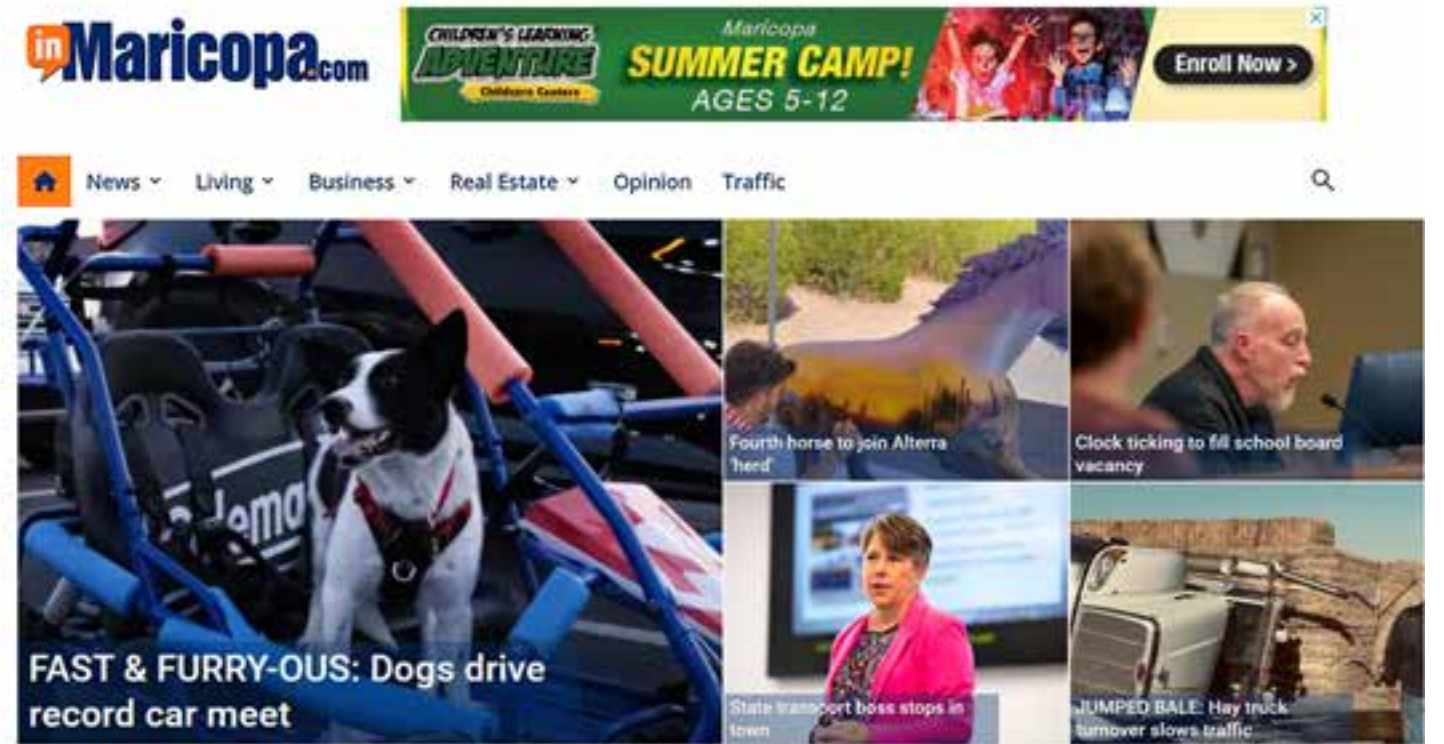


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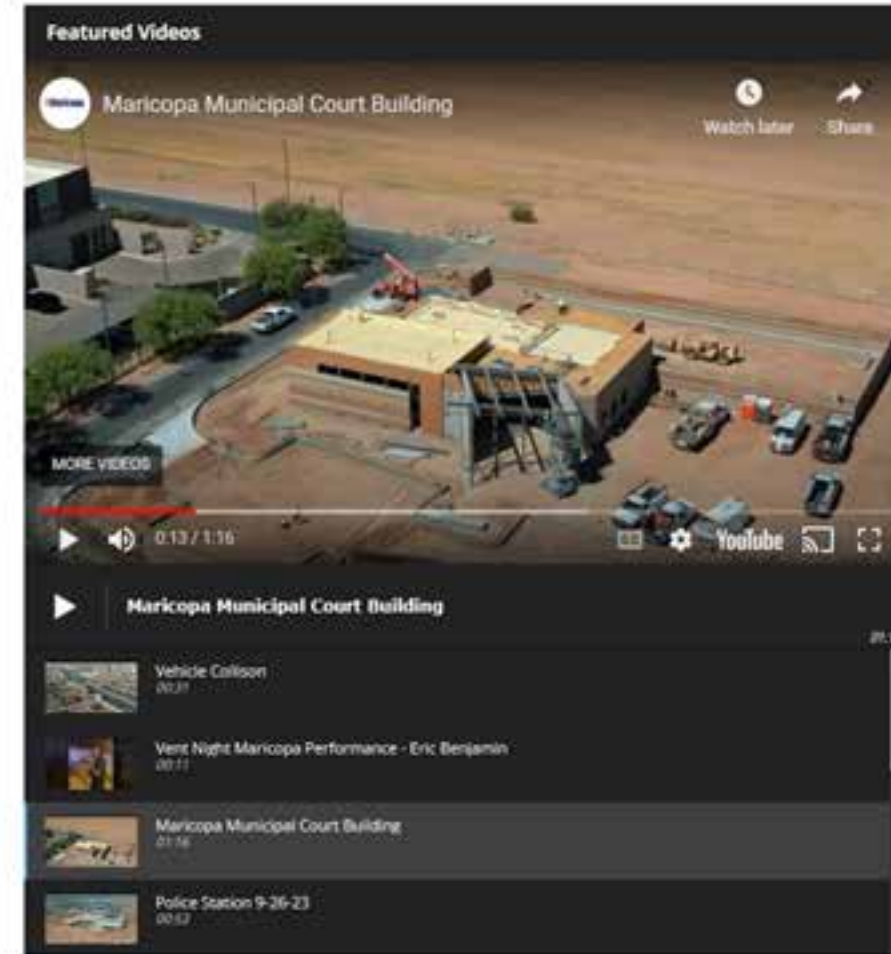


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