

WRANGLER NEWS

February 20 - March 5, 2021
Volume 31, Number 4
Covering Tempe & West Chandler for 30+ years



Photo by Billy Hardiman for Wrangler News



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Cover Story

Blues bash

Blues, jazz and good times pay tribute to Mardi Gras at Voodoo Daddy's Steam Kitchen **Page 16**



Smoke Out

ASU prof studies new med to help smokers quit. **Page 25**



Massive project

Work starts at Wild Horse Pass in West Chandler. **Page 3**



Beating the odds

Chandler man wins deadly bout with COVID-19. **Page 3**

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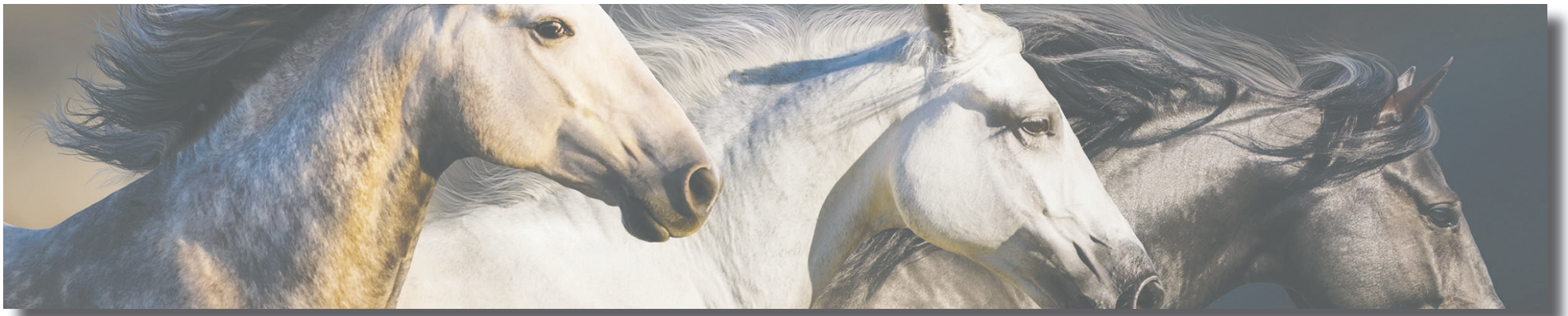


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FIND NEW ROADS™



PAGE 3

Your Home Page for Tempe & West Chandler Neighborhood News

Massive sports/entertainment project coming to W. Chandler

Phoenix Rising soccer stadium, hotel expansion seen as boost to Wild Horse Pass

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

West Chandler and Tempe are about to get a major influx of sports, entertainment and recreation options as well as job opportunities with the announcement of massive projects that will create a miniature city at Wild Horse Pass on the Gila River

Indian Reservation.

Coming to Wild Horse Pass, southwest of the Interstate 10/Loop 202 interchange in West Chandler: An 11-story second hotel tower at Wild Horse Pass Hotel, nearly doubling capacity to 447 rooms.

A 3,300-acre mini-city commercial development, headlined by an events center and concert amphitheater, that will be rolled out over a decade.

Included in the plan are five more hotels, a theme park, water park, timeshare complex, third golf course, vastly expanded equestrian center, villas, retail and office space.

Interstate 10 widening to four lanes plus a High Occupancy Vehicle lane in each direction from the

— RESORT, Page 20

Hospitalized for 134 days with COVID ordeal... *and he beat the odds*

By Joyce Coronel
wranglernews.com

Dr. Chirag Patel, a thoracic surgeon at Chandler Regional and St. Joseph's Norton Thoracic Institute, has a message for those who aren't taking the COVID-19 pandemic seriously:

Please do—your life may depend on it.

Patel was part of an ICU team that took care of Ryan Parker, a 39-year-old Chandler man who spent a whopping 134 days in the hospital due to COVID-19. The athletic father of two young boys



Ryan Parker spent four months in the hospital battling COVID-19.

— Photo courtesy Dignity Health

had no underlying health issues but experienced severe complications from the virus.

“People get offended, but

if you don't practice social distancing, it could be your

— COVID, Page 24

ADOT, residents still wrangling over noise on Price/101 freeway

By Lee Shappell
wranglernews.com

A disconnect remains between what Arizona Department of Transportation is saying and what hundreds of nearby angry neighbors are saying about noise from an experimental diamond-grinding finish on the widened Loop 101/Price Freeway through Tempe and Chandler.

Hundreds of residents within a half-mile of the freeway in Tempe and Chandler, who never complained about noise from the inch-thick rubberized asphalt overlay that was on the freeway before the widening, have been livid since the stretch was completed and opened to traffic last September. One sent Wrangler News a video taken in her backyard showing a reading in the mid-70-decibel range during morning rush hour.

ADOT claims that it took numerous noise

— NOISE, Page 6



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Nevitt Elementary School's fifth-grade teacher Samantha Kitchel raised \$6,000 on DonorsChoose to fund a machine that would dispense books instead of food items.

—Photo by Gabrielle Dunton for Wrangler News

Vending machines turn a page on history by dispensing books, not soda

By Gabrielle Dunton

Forget the snacks and soda: Students at Nevitt Elementary will soon be receiving a different kind of treats from their school's vending machine.

Earlier this school year, fifth-grade teacher Samantha Kitchel raised \$6,000 on DonorsChoose to fund a machine that would dispense books instead of food items.

The machine she eventually located doesn't take real money—only golden coins of purely, well, literary value.

How will students get this currency of the realm? Through making good choices and exhibiting exceptional behavior.

Those who receive a Nevitt Knight Golden Award will receive a specially conceived coin to insert into the machine, with the resulting choice being their ability to pick from an abundance of books.

The prize comprises a golden shield for any Nevitt teacher to give to a student who is found to be following the school's motto: Take care of yourself, take care of others, take care of this place.

Added Kitchel:

"We want all our kids to make good choices, and to be kind to others; I think that receiving a book from the vending machine is a good incentive for that."

The dispenser has been placed where children can view and enjoy it, an ultimate result of which will help inspire a love for reading in her students, and for all students at Nevitt, Kitchel says.

"I didn't start my love for reading until later on in life, so my goal with this project is to build students' love for reading at an early age."

The most exciting part about the concept, Kitchel says, is that the students who receive a book will be able to keep it forever.

"When I told my students about the book vending machine, they were excited," she said.

And so, it seems, were Kitchel and others in the school whose appetite for literature goes back to their childhood days.

"Being able to share their book with their family members is a great way for everyone to join in on building a love for reading."

More NEWS

City, Chamber vols lend a hand to businesses during pandemic

As the pandemic continues and the public is urged to continue wearing masks and practice social distancing and other safety measures, experts say it's crucial for businesses to have sufficient hand sanitizer and face masks.

To help address that need, the city of Tempe's Economic Development Department is giving away reusable masks and hand sanitizer to local businesses.

And, rather than asking already time-strapped companies to pick them up, volunteers from the Tempe Chamber of Commerce are delivering the supplies themselves.

Note the organizers: It's a different kind of business-to-business outreach.

More than a dozen volunteers are blanketing the city with packages of reusable masks and hand sanitizer. Each volunteer is assigned an intersection in the

community and is delivering the supplies to small local businesses in that area. Most will visit about 20 companies.

Tempe Chamber of Commerce President Anne Gill lauded the participants' service. "Many of these volunteers own or manage a business themselves," Gill said. "They understand how valuable these supplies are, especially with so many businesses struggling with short staffs and tight budgets."

Tempe Economic Development Program Manager Jill Bushbacher spoke to the effort as well. "A healthy community creates a healthy economy. These masks and bottles of hand sanitizer can help get our community back on track by keeping us all safer," Bushbacher said.

"If we all do our part, we can stop the spread of COVID-19." *Information: Jill_Buschbacher@tempe.gov*



HEALTH OUTREACH — Bags of safety supplies are being delivered to small, local retail and service businesses to help them keep employees and customers safer.

— Photo courtesy city of Tempe



Randy Goff
Broker/Owner

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I love Tempe too!





A decibel meter registers the noisy conditions in one Tempe woman's backyard near the 101.

—Wrangler News file photo

Noise

From Page 3

readings shortly after traffic began flowing across the new surface and then three-months later took complimentary readings at homes of some who had complained. The agency said that not only were readings well within the maximum 67 decibels in federal noise-abatement guidelines but that they also were nearly identical to those on the rubberized asphalt that had broken down and was nearing its life expectancy.

According to ADOT, rubberized asphalt noise levels increase as the surface breaks down during its 10-year lifespan.

The issue was to go in front of the Maricopa Association of Governments Transportation Policy Committee on Tuesday, Feb. 17, after Tempe Mayor Corey Woods requested at the Jan. 20

meeting that it be discussed.

ADOT staff was expected to provide results of additional sound tests at several residences in South Tempe at the MAG meeting.


"I am very eager to hear the results of these sound tests and we understand that staff from ADOT and MAG will provide their methodology of those tests," Woods said. "While I don't yet know what options for next steps might be, I am committed to finding a solution and staying dedicated to this issue."

Next steps could be tricky.


Nearly every mile in the metro Phoenix freeway system has a rubberized asphalt overlay. It was selected for its smooth ride and noise abatement. Many miles of it are approaching life expectancy and some are well beyond it already. There was no plan for paying for replacement costs, however, and at present there is no funding source identified to repave the system with rubberized asphalt.

To that, extent, it could be said that

— NOISE, Page 26



CHANDLER
arizona



Watch Mayor Kevin Hartke's annual **STATE OF THE CITY** at chandleraz.gov/StateOfTheCity to celebrate how we've come together through a year like no other. Stay connected and learn about Chandler's key accomplishments at chandleraz.gov/2020AnnualReport.

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Commentary

Lots of things to do in and around Tempe

By Jennifer Adams

Not long after I was sworn-in to the City Council in July 2018, I began hosting regular conversation events all around our community – each time in a different Tempe zip code. For now, our in-person gatherings have transitioned to virtual conversations during the pandemic, but I still enjoy getting together with residents to talk about whatever is on their minds.

During each conversation event, I bring my own personal “Top 10” list of the most important things I think residents should know at that moment. For my most recent gathering in early February, I offered up these tidbits that I would also like to share with you:

10. This year is the 150th birthday of Tempe!

Throughout 2021, we are celebrating alongside residents, community organizations and businesses. Tempe History Museum will feature a new “Tempe 150” exhibit later this year and plans are taking shape for a November community festival. Get all the information at tempe.gov/tempe150.



9. Desert Conservation Commission protects natural parks

One of the newest Boards and Commissions added by the City Council, the Desert Conservation Commission advises the Council on policies to protect and enhance the natural flora and historical and cultural assets of the Hayden Butte Preserve and Tempe’s portion of Papago Park. Visit tempe.gov/clerk for meeting details.

8. Possible annexation of north Tempe county island

The City Council has been considering the possible annexation of a portion of a Maricopa County island north of the Loop 202 and east of Rural Road, as well as a multifamily residential and commercial development project proposed for the area.

7. New technology company near Town Lake

Align Technology has brought its new headquarters to Watermark Tempe, located at Rural Road and the Loop 202. The company is a leader in digital orthodontics and dentistry. They are hiring for 150 jobs. Visit jobs.aligntech.com/jobs.

6. Golf Tempe Loyal-Tee card

Tempe is offering a customer loyalty card for Ken McDonald and Rolling Hills golf courses. Loyal-Tee members get the guaranteed lowest greens fees and discounts on the driving ranges, restaurants and pro shops. Tempe residents pay just \$29 – a savings of \$30! Visit tempe.gov/GolfTempe or ask the course staff members.

5. Newly renovated Tempe Woman’s Club Park

The Xeriscape Demonstration Garden, 1265 N. College Ave., promotes low water usage and desert landscaping practices. Visit for a self-guided tour. The renovated playground equipment is water-themed.

4. Rio Salado and Beach Park Master Plan

The city is issuing a request for proposals (RFP) this spring for private-public partnerships to bring land, aerial and water amenities to the area surrounding Tempe Town Lake.

For more information, visit tempe.gov/parks and click on “Rio Salado Beach Park Master Plan.”

3. COVID-19 vaccines

Vaccines are open to priority groups 1A and 1B, although supplies around the state are limited. State Farm Stadium, Phoenix Municipal Stadium and some Valley pharmacies are among the vaccine site locations. Tempe maintains information and links to resources about vaccines at tempe.gov/vaccines.

2. Ending homelessness

The City Council recently approved an investment in motel rooms as a short-term option for shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness.

The Aris Foundation continues to serve 150 people each week at Jaycee Park, providing meals, clothing and other items.

The Council also approved private security at city parks once again. City staff presented the Council with a more robust park safety plan at the Feb. 18 Work Study Session.

1. Stay connected, stay informed, stay healthy

The City of Tempe sends COVID-19 updates twice a week via email. To get subscribed, visit tempe.gov/enews and select the coronavirus list, as well as any other topics that interest you. You can also follow the city on Facebook (City of Tempe Government) and Twitter (@tempegov).

As always, I welcome you to reach out to me with comments, questions and ideas. You can reach me by calling 480-350-8835, emailing jennifer_adams@tempe.gov or visiting JenniferAdamsTempe on Facebook.

For more information about protecting your health during COVID-19, visit www.heart.org/en/coronavirus.

Jennifer Adams is a member of the Tempe City Council.



A family of schools — A community of learning

Tempe • McClintock • Marcos de Niza • Corona del Sol
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Dear TUHSD Parents, Families, and Community Members:

We write to you today with a sense of hope, as the alarming metrics and community spread that we have seen over the past few months appear to be on a steady decline.

We are hopeful for our students, that a return to school will bring normalcy to their lives and provide them with the social supports and meaningful interactions that are critical at this stage of their lives.

We are proud of our teachers, administrators, and staff, for their care and delivery of creative teaching methods during a pandemic which saw them continually pivot to best meet the needs of their students.

We strive to work in partnership with our parents and families; and while you may have had differences of opinion with us, we want to reassure you that we made, and continue to make, every single decision with the best interests of your child, and their safety, in mind.

It takes all of us, and we need you.

The world is tackling big questions right now. How do we meet “the new normal” that lies beyond the reaches of this pandemic? How do we take the lessons that we have learned and implement them in meaningful ways to impact our community?

We don’t have all the answers. But we will continue to listen, and learn, and work in partnership and collaboration with our community: students, teachers, staff, parents, families, community members, and the countless number of others who enrich our schools on a daily basis.

As we continue to plan for a safe return to in-person learning, we ask that you continue to be diligent and mindful in your own homes and in your daily activities. Be mindful of outside activities that may lead to additional community spread and cause metrics to rise. Be mindful of keeping your child home from school when they are ill.

Let’s come back, and stay the course, together and stronger. Because it takes all of us to be **#TUHSDStronger**.

#TUHSDstrong
www.TempeUnion.org



HONORING BLACK HISTORY

This Wrangler News special section pays tribute to those achievers and the hope that they bring acceptance and a lastingly diverse future.

By Corey Woods, Mayor of Tempe

During this year's Black History Month, I regularly find myself reflecting on how I ended up living my dream.

The inspiration for my public service journey unquestionably came from my parents, Barbara and Donald.

My mother was a high school teacher. My father worked in government and nonprofits.

Each night around the dinner table, the conversation included discussions about public policy and civil rights. When you are raised with that foundation – an encouragement to care about people and give back – it is only natural to find yourself choosing a path to do just that.

My brother began his journey in the U.S. Army. I chose public office.

In 2008, I was elected to the Tempe City Council at age 29 and as the first African American to serve on the Council.

I served two terms on the Council and then won the Mayor's seat in March 2020.

The road wasn't a straight path. There were bumps along the way, most notably when I lost my first run for the Council in 2006.

That certainly caused me to doubt myself and the resonance of my message. Yet this struggle led me to dig even deeper and, just two years later, succeed at winning that first term on the Council.

Initially, the pressure of the job – and all it represented to others and to myself – caused me to be somewhat reserved.

Over time, with the age and experience of passing years, I have learned to show more of who I am. The same person who cares deeply about Tempe residents, about affordable housing and homelessness and small businesses, is still the same person who loves hip-hop, tattoos and cooking up a storm on Sundays.

We all have many facets and today I am more comfortable showing mine.

I feel this responsibility as a weight of sorts, but not a burden.

It is a weight I am proud to bear; that I feel I am strong enough to carry; and that I hope to bring with me for as long as I can be of service.

Soon we will be out and about together again, once we get past the pandemic safely. I am hopeful that eligible Tempe residents get vaccinated as soon as possible.

That is the surest way for all of us, including our local businesses, to get through this whole experience stronger than ever.

It's an honor to be the first African American mayor of Tempe. Residents gave me the opportunity to do this job and I am truly giving it everything I've got.

My door is open to everyone – all voices, experiences and perspectives. Reach out anytime and share yours with me.



Tempe, long a city of 'firsts,' has lived up to that reputation with two Black top officials, the Mayor and Chief of Police.



By Jeffrey Glover,
Interim Chief
of Police

I first want to say that it is an honor and a privilege to serve the Tempe community and the men and women of the Tempe Police Department.

My journey into policing has indeed been remarkable.

Becoming a police officer was something I didn't have on my radar or even thought would be a part of my future. As a young Black man, I

was raised to respect police officers and cautioned about how to interact with the police to avoid confrontations.

There is a dichotomy of thought sometimes in the Black community regarding becoming a police officer, given the history of policing within communities of color.

You will be held to a very high standard within the Black community but can be heavily criticized for taking on the position. Policing is a noble profession that takes courage and a heart to help others in their worst moments.

There is also much bad history in policing where healing must

occur in communities around the country for the actions of the few bad actors in law enforcement.

During college, I started working for the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation. It was during this time that I had the opportunity to work closely with police officers.

The Phoenix Police Department had created a diversion program for youth that were picked up for curfew violations. In college, I was majoring in psychology but became fascinated with policing. The officers I worked with taught me so much about the positive influence you could have on young kids.

Additionally, many of the officers that were stationed out of the Maryvale station were people of color and seeing that representation had a significant impact on me.

I was later encouraged by some of those officers to join the profession, which I genuinely believe is a calling.

Since becoming a police officer, I have experienced many challenges throughout my career, but the reward far outweighs the struggle.

The attraction to this career was the opportunity to serve the community and be a positive example for young men and women entering the profession.

That's why becoming the first Black police chief in Tempe has such incredible importance not only to the Tempe Community and me but that of the Black community within the Valley.

We are in a challenging time, where police departments are heavily scrutinized. Our efforts to work in collaboration with the community are imperative.

The Mayor's Public Safety Task Force culmination has allowed our community to help shape the Police Department's future.

I have prioritized a community-centered approach, placing a high value in procedural justice and community policing. Just three examples include: a comprehensive review and assessment of our policies and procedures to assure we are consistently performing to the highest standards, evaluating ways to expand our recruiting and hiring, and the near-term formation of a Police Community Advisory Group.

The Police Department is uniquely positioned to embrace change, which is a challenge we welcome.

I'm very thankful to have the opportunity to lead the Police Department in the community where I grew up, and which I love!



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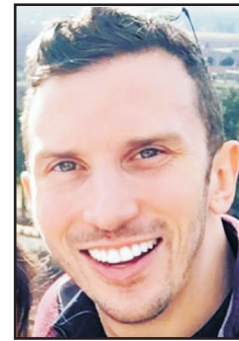


SPORTS . . . with Alex Zener

All-City awards cap fall season for area prep athletes

As the saying goes, "The show must go on." So must the Tempe All-City Awards, even if virtually, as they were on Feb. 6, when Tempe Union High School District fall-sports student-athletes were recognized.

When COVID-19 hit the U.S. a year ago, most people probably expected that things would be back to something akin to normal by now. The Tempe All-City Awards Banquet was canceled last spring after spring sports were cancelled.



Alex Zener

Association members were determined to give the athletes from 2020 fall sports some normalcy with these All-City Awards, as they have since 1982. Twenty-seven student-athletes from Corona del Sol, Marcos de Niza, McClintock and Tempe high schools received awards.

Corona had seven girls and seven boys honored, including three in badminton, two in volleyball, one in swimming, two in golf and six in football.

Junior **Samantha Arredondo**, who placed sixth in both the 50-yard freestyle and 100 freestyle at the Division I State Championships, received two All-City awards.

Corona's **Merilyn Li**, **Kayla McDonald** and **Megan Kirchhardt** won all three of the awards in badminton.

Li, a sophomore, reached the quarterfinals at state before losing to a Perry player. She was presented

the singles award while McDonald and Kirchhardt, both juniors, were recognized for their doubles play. They were the only doubles team from the Tempe Union High School District to qualify for state.

Aztecs volleyball players honored were senior **Anna Jackson**, at opposite hitter, and sophomore **Ella Lomigora**, at middle blocker.

Jackson played in all 56 sets during the season, leading her team with 217 kills, nearly four per set. She also led her team in aces, with 31, and added 94 digs.

Lomigora was second on the team with 141 kills, or 2.5 a set. Perhaps her most amazing skill is her ability to block the ball. Lomigora had 25 solo blocks and 56 assisted for a total of 81. The next-closest Corona player was Jackson, with three solo and 28 assisted for 31. Lomigora had 50 more blocks than Jackson.

Corona senior golfer **Caroline Formisano** was recognized for taking 27th place in the two-day Division I State Championship Oct. 26-27 at Tucson National Golf Course, carding 173. She was the top Corona finisher and helped her team finish eighth.

Corona sophomore **Nicholas Morrow** received a Tempe All-City award for his 14th place in the Division I State Golf Tournament with a score of 75 the first day and 69 the second for 144.

The Aztecs were led in the football category by senior quarterback **Quade Swearingen**, who had a storied career, especially his senior season, when he led his team to an undefeated regular record.

Swearingen completed 85 of 126 passes for 1,353 yards, more than 150 yards a game, as the Aztecs rolled to their best season in years. The team

was 8-0 and qualified for the Open Division of the 2020 AIA State Football Championships, where it lost in the opening round to Hamilton.

The Aztec football team, which did not miss a game due to COVID-19 restrictions, had three more offensive players and two defensive players recognized: senior **Jack Farley** and juniors **Theren White** and **Anyale Velazquez**.

Farley played in all nine games as kickoff returner, running back eight for an average of 25.4 yards. White was recognized for his play on the offensive line.

Velazquez, a running back, led the Aztecs with 1,006 rushing yards, an average of 111.8 a game, on 156 carries. He scored 12 touchdowns.

From the Corona defense, senior **Jake Schmitt** and junior **Elijah Sayers** received awards.

Schmitt, a linebacker, led the Aztecs in tackles with 33 solo and 20 assisted for 53 total. He was the team tackles-for-loss leader with 11. Schmitt also had three quarterback sacks and two interceptions.

Sayers, a defensive lineman, intercepted a pass, recovered a fumble, had 1.5 sacks, 16 tackles and five tackles for loss.

Marcos de Niza awardees included senior **Hailey White** for girls volleyball and seniors **Niccolas Updyke** and **Jacob Irick** along with junior **Nickolas Samaniego** and **Isaiah Williams** for football.

White, a middle blocker, played in all 51 sets, amassing 190 kills on 378 attempts, or killing the ball more than 50 percent of the time. She had

more than twice as many kills as her next-closest teammate, who had 91.

Updyke was the Padres' leading receiver, with 34 for 499 yards and nine touchdowns. Samaniego was recognized for his offensive-line play.

Williams, a defensive lineman, was the Padres' leading tackler with 39 solo and 28 assisted tackles for 67, an average of 8.4. He also had 17 tackles for loss, where the next-closest teammate had six. Williams' most-impressive statistic may be his 16 quarterback sacks, an average of two a game.

Irick, a linebacker, was second in sacks with four, and second in tackles with 31 solo and 27 assisted for 58. Irick also was the punter, averaging more than 33 yards with a long of 53 yards. He placed the ball inside the opponents' 20-yard line on 10 of his 29 punts.

McClintock senior swimmer **Candace Farling** ranked fourth in the state in Division II in the 100-yard butterfly with her time of 58.85 seconds at the state qualifier.

Sophomore **William Mueller** was honored for his seventh-place at state in 1-meter diving with 376 points, helping his team place 15th place among 29 D-II teams in the state championship.

McClintock football seniors **Jaden Mason** and **Khashmier Saxton** were recognized on offense and seniors **Benjamin Roberts** and **Noah Amin Sanchez** on defense.

Mason, who played quarterback and running back for the Chargers, was recognized as a rusher. In

McClintock's seven games, Mason carried 132 times for 1,013 yards, an average of 144.7 a game, and scored 15 touchdowns. He also caught seven passes for 37 yards. At quarterback, he completed 15 of 36 passes for 205 yards.

Saxon received his Tempe All-City award for his play on the offensive line.

Roberts, recognized as a defensive back, was the Chargers' leading tackler with 44 solo and 22 assisted for 66, 9.4 a game. He intercepted two passes, returning them for a 20-yard average. He forced and recovered a fumble.

Sanchez was recognized as a defensive lineman, with 26 solo and 17 assisted tackles 43, 6.1 a game. He posted 10 tackles for loss, one sack for 15 yards lost and a fumble recovery.

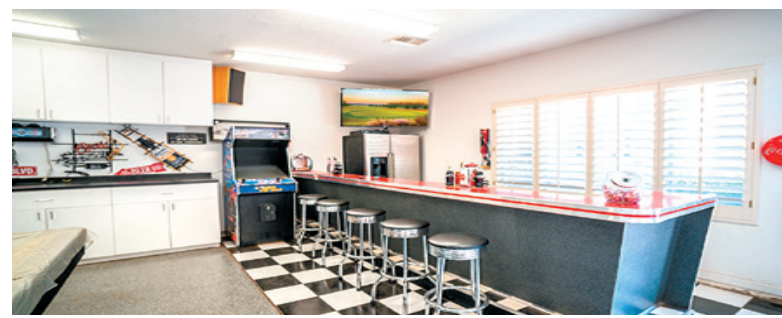
Tempe High senior defensive back **Isikeli Fakava**, who played in all six games, led the Buffaloes with 36 solo tackles and 17 assisted for 53, 8.8 a game.

Corona boys soccer

The Aztecs boys soccer team, with a 2-3-1 record, is relatively young, with five seniors. Last season, it had 11 seniors.

Senior **Reyes Carbajal's** three goals lead the team. He also has an assist for a 7 points. Sophomore **Andrew Davies-Boerner** has two goals and three assists for 7 points.

— SPORTS, Page 22



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14 years and 6'7" — No wonder he's being seen as a re-Peat

Profile by SAMUEL VOAS
wranglernews.com

After a day of online classes at Kyrene-Apprende Middle School, Koa Peat dribbles a basketball on the sidewalk as saunters across the street to his neighborhood park. The fourteen-year-old moves with a balletic grace that makes it hard to believe he is 6'7".

He speaks little as he glides across the concrete basketball court at Chandler's Centennial Park. His mother, Jana Peat, admires her son from the sideline as he jukes an imaginary defender and rises up for a jump-shot. "He is quiet like his dad," she says, endearingly. Indeed, his voice is barely audible over the jangling "swish" of the chain net. But perhaps that sound communicates everything the 8th grade phenom wants to say to a reporter.

Like many of basketball's greats, Koa prefers to let his game do the talking.

Talent like Koa's truly does speak for itself. Koa Peat is currently ranked 9th in the nation among basketball players in his age group. He has already drawn the attention of college scouts, as Arizona State University recently became the first college basketball program to offer the young player an athletic scholarship. His basketball acumen has also garnered more immediate interest, as he was recently scouted by an elite AAU team that is directly associated with LeBron James.

Koa Peat's elite athleticism is due in part to his pedigree.

His father Todd Peat is a former NFL lineman. Koa is the youngest of Todd Peat's seven children, all of whom are impressive athletes. His three older brothers went on to play NCAA Division 1 football after graduating from Corona Del Sol High School. His two older sisters, also Corona alumni, currently play D-1 basketball. Most notably, Koa's brother Andrus Peat currently plays offensive lineman for the New Orleans Saints.

Although Koa appreciates his innate athletic gifts, he believes that his on-court success is more a product of his hard work than of his genetics. He approaches the game of basketball with a level of discipline and maturity

far beyond his years. He completes two workouts a day — one on his own, and another guided by his brother and coach Todd Peat Jr.

These workouts include various basketball drills intended to improve shooting, ball-handling, footwork, and conditioning.

"I'd rather go through the hard work than go through losing," says Koa, as he sinks another deep three.

Jana smirks in agreement. "He hates to lose," she adds.

Koa credits his competitive spirit, in large part, to his siblings. For as long as he can remember, he's been playing sports against his brothers — a tradition that is ongoing.

He believes that these (usually) playful fraternal contests helped to forge the fierce competitive drive that keeps him striving daily to be the best player he can be.

When asked about his brothers' basketball chops, Koa responds in his good-natured yet stoic demeanor: "Yeah, they're good. But I'm the best." Sibling rivalries...

But Koa's basketball obsession is fueled by more than his competitive instincts. His ultimate goal is to be an NBA basketball player. In a perfect world, he'd one day be wearing a Suns uniform.

"I'd like to play for my hometown," he says.

Despite his lofty athletic goals,

Koa is careful not to neglect his responsibilities as a student. He currently boasts a 3.8 GPA as an 8th grader at Apprende Middle School in Chandler.

"I'm always focused on getting A's and B's — mostly A's," says Koa. "Education always comes first."

Aside from basketball, Koa Peat enjoys the same things as any fourteen-year-old boy. He plays video games like Fortnite or NBA 2K and listens to Lil Baby.

Yet, most 8th graders are not asked to navigate a cacophony of national media coverage, internet comments from strangers, and interest from college scouts.

One can't help but wonder how the soft-spoken young man manages the pressure, scrutiny, and expectations that come with such prodigious talent.

When asked how he feels about the complexities of his budding fame, Koa offers a disarmingly simple answer.

"It's nice. I just don't really let it get to my head. I'm just humble about it. I just work everyday to try to be the best player I can be."

Above all else, Koa Peat just wants to be great at the game he loves — a great basketball player. He knows there will be praise and ridicule, cheers and boos along the way. But that doesn't concern him. e can't hear it over the jangling "swish" sound of the chain net.



Reaching for the sky

Aprende Middle School 8th-grader Koa Peat, the youngest in a notable family of athletes, ranks ninth in the nation among basketball players in his age group.

At 6-7, Koa is relentless in the self-discipline and hard work required for a hoopster to make it in a highly competitive sport, according to his mom Jana Peat, photo at right.

The ball seems to fly effortlessly from his hands as he shoots for the chain net at Centennial Park.

With a bright future ahead of him—he's already received a scholarship offer from ASU—he works hard in school and says he's trying to be the best player he can be.

— Photos by Billy Hardiman
for Wrangler News



An evening of blues and groovin' to the oldies

took center stage at Voodoo Daddy's Steam Kitchen in Tempe, where the waning days of Mardi Gras were still being celebrated. Singer/songwriter—and Doctor of Education—Yuvonne Brooks, accompanied by RayRay Hinkle, wowed the assembled crowd. New-Orleans-inspired Cajun, Creole and Caribbean cuisine added a tasteful zing to the festive atmosphere at the eatery known for its live music scene.

Performance calendar: voodooaddys.com

*Photos by Billy Hardiman
for Wrangler News*





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Film Beat: Suggestions for Wrangler News readers considering a return to local theaters

By M.V. Moorhead

For seekers of worthy film offerings, three offbeat stories of American struggles worth checking out:

Nomadland—Frances McDormand is Fern, a widow left adrift after her gypsum mining village in Nevada becomes a ghost town.

She wanders the Western states in her beloved van, which she calls “Vanguard,” following seasonal work, and connects with the subculture of van and RV nomads with a hub in Quartzsite, Arizona.

She works cleaning state parks or in the kitchen at Wall Drug in South Dakota, at a beet harvest in Nebraska, at an Amazon facility in Nevada. She makes friends; a fellow nomad named Dave (David Strathairn) might even be a love interest, although Fern is cautious in such matters.

Scripted and directed by Chloe Zhao, this adaptation of Jessica Bruder’s nonfiction book feels like a true original, heartwarming without sentimentality, maybe a hair slow but beautifully acted and shot. McDormand and Strathairn are the only two professional actors that I recognized; most of the rest of the cast, including “vandwelling” YouTube guru Bob Wells, use their own names and play themselves, with great warmth and poignancy.

This gives the movie the quality of a documentary, but with a movie star presence at its center.

And it need hardly be said that McDormand is wonderful; Fern is another of her classic sensible yet frayed-at-the-edges creations. She gets across Fern’s aching sadness at finding herself at such a cosmically loose end, but she also shows us the exhilaration she feels at her independence.

Whenever Fern is tempted with an offer of permanence, her instinct is to move on. Maybe when Kris Kristofferson observed that freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose, Fern’s lifestyle is what he meant.

Minari—Lee Isaac Chung wrote and directed this autobiographical chronicle of a Korean family struggling to start a farm in rural Arkansas in the early 1980s. Dad Jacob (Steven Yeun) is an expert “chicken-sexer” (able to quickly determine the sex of chicks at a hatchery and sort them).

He’s dragged his family from California to the south, to the horror of his pretty, pious wife Monica (Han Ye-ri), because he wants to start a produce farm specializing in Korean vegetables and fruits for what he perceives as a growing immigrant market in Dallas and Oklahoma City (the title refers to an herb popular in Korean cuisine).

The couple and their two young children, Annie (Noel Kate Cho) and David (Alan Kim) are eventually joined by a mischievous, fun-loving Grandma (Youn Yuh-jung), who doesn’t seem to David to act like a grandma is supposed to.

There’s also a showcase role for Will Patton, as a religiously ecstatic, tongue-speaking farm hand trying to help Jacob realize his dream.

This may be the best film I’ve seen so far this year; a contemporary take on the early-’30s dramas about ordinary people up against agricultural and meteorological fate, like Murnau’s *City Girl* or Dovzhenko’s *Earth*.

As in those films, the antagonists are largely elemental: water, fire, health. But *Minari*’s characters aren’t emblematic; they have a psychological subtlety and reality,

and their passions and priorities also drive the conflict. The story-telling is simple, but the problems these people have with the land, and with each other, are anything but.

The Mauritanian—The title character, played with disconcerting charm by the Algerian-French actor Tahar Rahim, is Mohamedou Ould Salahi, who was held at Guantanamo Bay for a decade and a half, and tortured, without ever being charged with a crime, on suspicion of having been a recruiter for 9/11 terrorists.

Jodie Foster and Shailene Woodley are the pro bono lawyers working to free Salahi under habeas corpus, and getting stonewalled by U.S. intelligence. Benedict Cumberbatch is the Marine officer assigned to prosecute Salahi, who finds himself equally stonewalled.

Directed by the capable Scotsman Kevin Macdonald, this is another of the surprisingly large class of political dramas like *The Report* or *Official Secrets* or *Fair Game*, which remind us of the constitutional outrages of the W. Bush administration, as well as the failure of the Obama administration to rectify most of them.

Macdonald sets a unhurried pace, and generates a steadily waxing sense of almost Kafkaesque fury and horror.

It’s a well-acted, compelling movie and it can boil your blood. And it should.

Nomadland, Minari and The Mauritanian play at multiplexes Valleywide; Nomadland plays at the IMAX screen at Arizona Mills.



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Resort

From Page 3

Interstate 17 split near downtown Phoenix to Loop 202 at the Wild Horse Pass doorstep. Planning also has begun to expand the freeway to three lanes each way south to State Route 387 in Casa Grande, the final 26-mile stretch of two-lane freeway between Phoenix and Tucson, making access to Wild Horse Pass easier from central and southern Arizona. This comes just over a year after the Loop 202 segment connecting I-10 in West Chandler to I-10 in west Phoenix opened, making the drive for West Valley residents faster and easier.

And, a championship-caliber soccer team in a new 10,000-seat stadium when the Phoenix Rising Football Club relocates to the reservation in March.

The projects will provide new revenue streams to the Gila River Indian Community and create thousands of jobs at buildout over the next 10 years.

“The new development plan will create exceptional entertainment and lifestyle experiences, new jobs for community members, and will evolve our culture and legacy,” said David White, Wild Horse Pass Development Authority General Manager.

The development will enhance an already vibrant Wild Horse Pass area that includes high-end resorts Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino and Sheraton Grand at Wild Horse Pass, Aji Spa, Phoenix Premium Outlets mall, Wild Horse Pass Motorsports Park and lake, Bondurant High Performance Driving School, Rawhide Western Town & Event Center, Whirlwind Golf Club, Huhugam Heritage Center and KOLI Equestrian Center.

The goal at build-out is to make Wild Horse Pass the premier destination for sports, entertainment and recreation in Arizona.

Phoenix Rising stadium

The soccer complex will be the first to open, in March, in time for Phoenix Rising FC’s preseason training and May 1 opening of their United Soccer League season.

The club played the past four years at 6,200-seat Casino Arizona Field, northeast of the Loop 101/ Loop 202 interchange near Scottsdale. The team sold out 23 consecutive matches before COVID-19, building a rowdy, loyal fanbase in the stands and a winning product on the field. The Rising reached the 2020 USL championship game but the pandemic forced cancellation of the match.

The facility was not fan friendly.

The Rising and the Gila River Indian Community will share costs of the as-yet-unnamed 10,000-seat stadium, which is expandable and could accelerate the club’s plan to grow into a Major League Soccer franchise. Team officials said they will try to attract MLS preseason games to the new stadium.

“This partnership with the Gila River Indian Community allowed us to quickly expand our capacity, improve our fan experience, which is extremely important to our organization, and also



A rendering of the Phoenix Rising FC 10,000-seat soccer stadium .

— Photo courtesy Phoenix Rising

allows for long-term exciting things,” said Bobby Dulle, Rising general manager. “So it checked a lot of boxes for us. We’ve had a great four years where we were but this is just an opportunity for us that made a lot of sense.”

The practice fields are in and ready. Work is progressing on the stadium.

“Everything is happening in and around the facility right now at an unbelievable pace,” Dulle said.

Fans will notice several upgrades from the Risings’ previous facility, including faster entrance and exit with more access points, paved roads and parking areas, a large two-sided video board, improved VIP luxury seating, new family-friendly general admission section opposite the lively Los Bandidos and Red Fury fan groups, larger press box, improved sound system, new locker rooms and permanent restrooms with plumbing.

“We were using Porta Johns,” Dulle said. “Our fans and our partners and our premium guests are all going to be very excited with their experience this year. Some premium seating will be enclosed and air conditioned and some will be open air. What we found, and this is a unique thing about soccer, is the fans standing and chanting and singing when we score goals, banging on their drums. That’s the sound of soccer. People prefer to be outside and feel the energy from the crowd and environment and it’s a fantastic experience. We’ll have 10,000 spectators but we’ll still have an intimate feeling and that motivates our players.”

Massive development along I-10, Loop 202

This month, the Wild Horse Pass Development Authority selected Scottsdale-based Sunbelt Holdings to lead commercial development of 3,300 acres at

Wild Horse Pass south and west of the hotel, casino and outlet mall along I-10 and Loop 202.

“We are grateful to have been selected to partner with Wild Horse Pass Development Authority and the Gila River Indian Community at a pivotal time for the development,” said John Graham, chairman and CEO of Sunbelt Holdings. “We are committed to honoring the legacy and culture of the community and creating a sense of place that will pave the way for the future.”

Among Sunbelt’s property-development portfolio in the Valley are Marina Heights at Tempe Town Lake and Arizona State University Research Park in South Tempe.

The scope of this project exceeds both of those developments.

The Wild Horse Pass master plan was developed by the project team of CallisonRTKL, Kimley Horn and Elliott D. Pollack & Company.

Sunbelt Holdings will lead the master-planned development effort, providing asset management, construction management and marketing services.

“Sunbelt Holdings’ proven expertise and reputation in master-plan development, their blue-ribbon portfolio and deeply-rooted community connections made them the ideal partner for this expansion project,” said White, the WHPDA general manager.

Two I-10 widening projects coming

Just as completion of Loop 202 opened access to Wild Horse Pass from the West Valley, the three-year I-10 Broadway Curve project, which is to begin this summer from the Interstate 17 split near downtown Phoenix south to Loop 202, will enhance access from the city center and North Valley.

The project will add an additional lane in each direction and a new interchange at State Route 143 to enhance connection to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport.



A second 11-story tower will nearly double room inventory at Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino.

— Wrangler News photo by Lee Shappell

Expansion of I-10 south to Casa Grande will come farther down the line, but Arizona Department of Transportation has begun studies, in cooperation with the Gila River Indian Community, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Federal Highway Administration and Maricopa Association of Governments, with a goal of reducing traffic congestion on the freeway at the Wild Horse Pass exit.

The study includes whether to extend the High Occupancy Vehicle lane on I-10 south from Loop 202 to the Riggs Road interchange and improvement options for existing interchanges and roads that cross over I-10 along this corridor.

Pinal County cities Casa Grande, Coolidge and Florence are growing rapidly. Soccer is especially popular in Tucson and Casa Grande.

The I-10 bridges over the Gila River are part of a separate project.

Hotel's 2nd tower opens this fall

The superstructure of an 11-story second tower is nearly complete in the first expansion at Wild Horse Pass Hotel & Casino since it opened in 2009 at 5040 Wild Horse Pass Blvd.

It will add 205 guest rooms, including 37 suites – two of them 1,500-square-foot Platinum Suites, and increase the hotel's inventory to 447 rooms. The new tower will boast a rooftop restaurant to provide a dining venue with views of the sun setting over the Estrella Mountains. A bar and lounge will be on the second floor.

Two new swimming pools, including an adult pool for guests 21 and older, and the Oasis pool with hot tubs, cabanas and a bar and grill, are included in the \$143 million project.

"This expansion furthers our vision to provide additional economic development opportunities for

Wild Horse Pass, GRIC and the greater metropolitan Phoenix area," said Donald Antone, chairman of the Wild Horse Pass Development Authority Board of Directors.

The casino and convention center also will be improved. New colors, new carpeting, new lighting and an 80-foot by 12-foot LED screen are part of the casino upgrade. The convention center gets an additional 18,000 square feet indoors and additional 4,000 square feet outdoors.

"This expansion is a major investment in the Gila River Indian Community and symbolic of a new chapter in our history," said Gila River Hotels & Casinos CEO Kenneth Manuel.

"It reflects our commitment to be a leader in the gaming and hospitality industry through enhanced experiences and amenities, and we look forward to seeing the continued representation of our community's culture in the expansion project."

Sports

From Page 13

The Aztecs have spread the rest of the scoring among seniors **Alex Barria** and **Logan Beatty**, with one goal each. Sophomores **Aran Garza** and **Nico White** also each have scored a goal. Junior goalkeeper **Aidan Burns** has allowed nine

goals in six matches.

It has been trying for athletes and coaches during the pandemic, when a match or a game can be called off at the last minute.

The Aztecs were on the field ready to play Mesa Desert Ridge on Jan. 29 at home on the NFHS Network. Desert Ridge did not show up. The match may be rescheduled for Feb. 19.

Regardless, five seniors, including Carbajal, Barria, Beatty, midfielder **Moises Escobedo** and forward **Sean Amjadi**, are all happy to get any playing time in their final seasons.

Seven juniors -- goalkeepers Burns and **Jacob Feliz**, defenders **Padraic Maguire** and **Diego Aplicano**, forwards **Rohit Chagam** and **Frankie Sunderland** and midfielder **Nick Fiet** -- are optimistic that things will be better next year for their senior seasons.

Likewise, six sophomores -- midfielders Garza and White, forward **Davies-Boerner**, defenders **Nico Ramirez** and **Brandon Olivares**, and goalkeeper **Antonio Lopez** -- are glad they have two more years to play in conceivably better conditions.

Two freshman defenders, **Pablo Frausto** and **Vaughn Harris**, are expected to gain valuable skills and experience from their older teammates.

The next game was scheduled for Feb. 17, at home against Chaparral.

Corona is scheduled to play at home Feb. 22 against Mesa before a match at Chandler on Feb. 23.

The last three currently scheduled games are at home against Basha on Feb. 25, at Westview on March 1, and at home against Boulder Creek on March 2.

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Proposed voucher expansion assailed by Tempe public-schools advocate

Staff reports

A school-voucher bill that could change the face of public education in Arizona, seemingly in conflict with a similar measure that voters overwhelmingly rejected two years ago, has cleared the first hurdle with narrow passage in the Arizona Senate.

The bill would significantly expand the school-voucher program, making roughly 675,000 students in all of the state's 1,300 Title I schools eligible for vouchers in Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts program. The current voucher program serves fewer than 10,000 students.

The 16-14 vote along party lines, a victory for sponsoring Republican senators, sends Arizona Senate Bill 1452 on to the state House of Representatives.

The Tempe Union High School District refused to comment, according to

a spokesman. Attempts to reach a Kyrene School District spokesman for comment were unsuccessful.

Sandy Lowe, a former two-term member of the TUHSD Governing Board, and who has 25 years as a volunteer and public-education stakeholder, is adamantly opposed to the measure.

"Public education is designed to support all students who attend our schools; however, I believe in school choice for some students and their families," Lowe said in a statement to Wrangler News. "To preserve quality public education, which must address a multitude of needs, I believe there has to be restrictions on availability of the voucher system. Vouchers are needed especially for our lower-income families and those with special-needs children that cannot find the support needed for their students, within our public schools.

"As the bill is written today, I believe it would have a drastic, negative impact on public education and could have devastating effects on our students."

Public schools would lose state funding for every student who leaves via the voucher program for a private school. Students would not have to be low-income to take advantage of the plan. They would need only attend a Title I school, which is roughly 67 percent of public schools in Arizona. And they would need attend that public school for only 30 days before transferring to a private school and taking state funding with them.

While sponsors of the bill say it is intended to give low-income students an opportunity to escape low-performing or failing public schools in favor of stronger private schools for a more-equal opportunity at a quality education, foes say that the net effect actually will benefit students from wealthy families. Vouchers pay a portion of private-school tuition and lower-income families might not be able to cover the difference, where wealthy families can cover it.

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Homeward bound

Ryan Parker heading home, surrounded by loved ones who also sported T-shirts bearing the famous UA slogan.

Parker spent four months in the hospital fighting COVID-19, much of it on the ECMO machine.

Parker and the medical team at St. Joseph's Thoracic Institute that saved his life. — Photos courtesy Dignity Health

Covid

From Page 3

loved one that could wind up with severe COVID," Patel said.

Last July, Parker came down with the virus. He never expected the ordeal that would follow and said his friends who got the virus all recovered quickly.

"What I had heard was, 'give it about seven days and the symptoms will go away.' So that's what I did. But on day six or seven, I started getting shortness of breath just walking to the kitchen."

Parker called his primary care doctor who sent him to the emergency room. When he showed up there, Parker's oxygen saturation level (a measure of the amount of oxygen in the blood) was dangerously low at 63 percent.

"He was going hypoxic," Patel said. "It's life-threatening. We would expect anyone walking around to be above 92 percent."

Parker was placed on oxygen and given steroids, plasma and Remdesivir, a drug that's used to treat some hospitalized COVID-19 patients. For the first week, he was stable.

"Right around then is when he started breathing heavily and his respiration rate went up to 30 and 40. (A normal rate for adults is 12-20 breaths per minute.) His oxygen level started dropping more and "at this point we had already maximized him on the amount of oxygen through his nose and the only option at that time was to put him on a ventilator," Patel said.

Parker's condition continued to deteriorate. "And that's when I called my ICU team down at St. Joe's," Patel said. "We decided he would be a candidate for ECMO."

Parker was transferred by ambulance to Dignity Health's St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in downtown Phoenix and placed on Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation, or ECMO. The machine, which is also used for patients undergoing heart-lung transplants, works by taking blood from the body, loading it with oxygen and removing carbon dioxide. For COVID-19 patients, it means their lungs get to rest and recover.

Parker was on ECMO for nearly three months.

"For about two and half months, Ryan

was completely sedated. He was paralyzed essentially in what's called a medically induced coma," Patel said. "Probably for about a month or so, we were able to keep him awake while he was on ECMO. We got him to a point where he was not on the ventilator and he was maintained on ECMO."

At that juncture, Parker was able to take a stroll through the healing garden outside the hospital, even though the ECMO was still doing the work for his lungs.

Not every hospitalized COVID-19 patient is placed on ECMO however. "It's not like a miracle cure that's going to cure every COVID patient because it is very complex," said Sara Patterson, manager of external communications for Dignity Health's Arizona Division. "It's individualized. Every patient is evaluated based on their situation."

After four months, Parker was released from the hospital just in time to be home with his family for Thanksgiving. "The family prayer at Thanksgiving—everybody gave thanks for me and for everyone who took care of me. It was pretty emotional."

His two sons, ages 7 and 10, were only able to see him twice while he was hospitalized and were especially thankful to have their father home. These days, Parker is able to drive and move around without the use of a walker and said he's planning to return to work as a medical device salesman next month.

The nightmare he's been through has understandably given rise to a new perspective.

"It's given me a new appreciation for just all the little things," Parker said. "I cherish my time with my family so much. I always did, but just to lay on the couch and hang out with my kids, it's priceless."

His family is also grateful for Parker's long-fought-for recovery.

"It was pretty scary there for a while," Parker said. "Honestly, I think they started thinking I wasn't going to make it. So they are very, very thankful."

And as for those who think the pandemic isn't real, Parker offers this insight:

"Even when I was sick, I never expected this to happen. I would say, please use extreme caution. I would have given anything to be in isolation with my family at home instead of in an ICU fighting for my life."

ASU researchers find smoking among COVID-19 risks

By Janie Magruder
wranglernews.com

To the list of deleterious effects of smoking tobacco—from cataracts, diabetes and emphysema to heart disease, lung cancer and stroke—add this: more severe outcomes from COVID-19.

“There’s good data showing smokers, especially heavy smokers, are more likely to be hospitalized and to experience more serious outcomes if they develop COVID-19,” said Scott Leischow, a professor and director of Clinical and Translational Science in Arizona State University’s College of Health Solutions.



Leischow leads a new clinical trial at the university on smoking-cessation medication.

“Smoking has a broad, negative impact, not just on the lungs but on every single organ, your cardiovascular system, your immune system, and that escalates the risk of infection from the virus that causes COVID-19,” he said. “Clearly, smokers are much more likely to end up in the hospital, and we’re trying to avoid that.”

Leischow and his staff are recruiting study participants 18 and older who are regular smokers addicted to nicotine and motivated to quit. Participants will receive either cytidine, a substance under study that might aid smoking cessation, or a placebo, plus behavioral therapy during weekly visits to the ASU Downtown Phoenix Campus for 12 weeks. Compensation is as much as \$1,950.

Those interested in participating in the study may call 775-476-2360 to learn if they qualify.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that smokers younger than 65 be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in early phases of distribution. However, the CDC has left that decision to the states, and Arizona has not prioritized smokers for the vaccine.

Cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the U.S., accounting for more than 480,000 deaths every year, or about 1 in 5 of all deaths, according to the CDC.

ASU does not permit smoking on any of its campuses, but that does not mean that students, faculty and staff aren’t smokers.

In 2019, nearly 14 percent of U.S. adults 18 and older—an estimated 34.1 million people—smoked cigarettes. That’s down from about 21 percent in

2005. Still, more than 16 million Americans suffer from smoking-related diseases.

Leischow, instrumental in establishing the Arizona Smokers’ Helpline more than 25 years ago, and who worked in cancer prevention and control at the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center in Phoenix, is advancing research on a new option for smokers.

“If a person is really serious about quitting, the most important thing is combining an effective medication with behavioral support,” he said. “The question then becomes, what’s the best medication? Right now, it’s varenicline. But new options are needed.”

Known by its brand name, Chantix, the non-nicotine prescription medication varenicline was launched in 2006. It is designed to reduce the urge to smoke and relieve withdrawal symptoms, but it has dozens of potential side effects, from anxiety to vomiting.

ASU is hosting a Phase 3 clinical trial to assess the efficacy and safety of cytidine as a smoking-cessation therapy. Cytidine is a naturally occurring substance found in the golden rain acacia tree and, more locally, in the mescal bean plant in Arizona.

— SMOKING, Page 31

Protect your heart, self from COVID-19

Now that you’ve finished that box of chocolates from Valentine’s Day, why not spend the next week of February — American Heart Month — learning how COVID-19 can impact the heart and establishing good habits to improve your heart health all year long?

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer in the U.S. and the No. 1 killer of women, according to the American Heart Association. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates 30.3 million adults, or about 12 percent of the U.S. population, have been diagnosed with heart disease, which killed nearly 660,000 Americans in 2019.

But a majority — 80 percent — of long-term cardiovascular disease is preventable, according to heart.org. You can reduce your risk by improving your diet, exercising regularly, reducing your stress, monitoring your blood pressure, getting enough sleep and seeing your doctor if you notice anything unusual.

Unfortunately, a growing number of studies suggest that many COVID-19 survivors experience some type of heart damage, even if they didn’t have underlying heart disease and weren’t sick enough to be hospitalized, according to heart.org.

“We are seeing that the heart can be affected, even in mild forms of COVID-19, not just in severe cases,” said Dr. Rachel Bond, a cardiologist with Dignity Health in Arizona. “And even months later, the virus can lead to an inflammatory response, depending on the patient’s pre-existing risk factors.”

COVID-19 itself doesn’t damage the heart — the body’s inflammatory response to the virus does, Bond said.

“The virus invades the cells, and the body wants to fight these invaders,” she explained. “It creates an immune response, which becomes very heightened, and it tries to get rid of the virus. But it gets confused and attacks healthy cells, such as the lining of the heart or its valves.”

Bond has seen COVID-19 patients develop weakened or malfunctioning hearts, inflammation in arteries that can cause instability, and plaque development that can result in heart attack. All virus survivors should follow up with their primary care doctors to explore whether testing of the heart is recommended, she said.

Bond also cautioned that people with diagnosed cardiovascular disease, which includes conditions such as heart attack and failure, stroke, arrhythmia and heart valve problems, are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.



And for this reason, they should be vaccinated.

“In my personal opinion, the vaccine is the only possible way for us to mitigate the spread of this virus and get us back to normal,” she said.

But even after being vaccinated, and whether you have heart disease or not, Bond recommends you continue to wear a face covering, wash your hands, limit your contact with groups of people and social distance.

“The vaccines are 94 to 96 percent effective, however, we can still have people who have active virus but no symptoms,” she said. “For that reason, and because there are variants that may not respond to the vaccines we have, we still need to be vigilant, we can’t put our guard down. We need to protect the vulnerable.”

It’s critical that people experiencing heart issues not stay home from the hospital, erroneously thinking they won’t be able to get care because of COVID-19 hospitalizations, Bond said. Go right away if you have these symptoms:

- Discomfort in the center of your chest
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Other signs, such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Information: heart.org/en/coronavirus.

Janie Magruder
wranglernews.com

Noise

From Page 6

rubberized asphalt proved to be a failed experiment over time. It also could be said that better planning for replacement costs might have mitigated problems.

So MAG and ADOT last year set out to find an alternate freeway finish less expensive than rubberized asphalt and still within noise standards. In June, the MAG Regional Council, in partnership with ADOT, approved a three-year diamond-grinding pilot program.

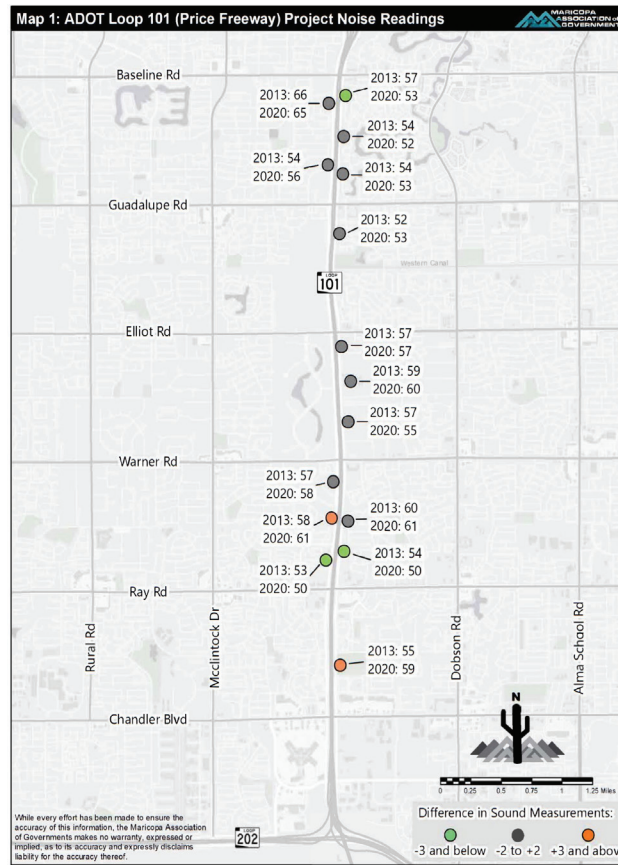
Diamond grinding has a life span of at least 15 years. Over a 25-year period, the MAG/ADOT study found that the life-cycle costs of diamond grinding were more than \$300 million lower than for rubberized asphalt for the metro Phoenix freeway system.

According to ADOT, preliminary results show that diamond grinding, in which specialized machines with diamond-tipped blades on rotating drums remove a thin layer of concrete roadway while creating small grooves to limit vehicle tire noise, is meeting ADOT's requirements for ride quality and costs. Additionally, ADOT's noise readings are comparable to those taken when rubberized asphalt was at the end of its useful 10-year life.

The stretch of Loop 101 from U.S. 60 to Loop 202 is the first in the Valley to use diamond grinding.

Neighbors, however, say it is diamond grinding, not rubberized asphalt, that is the failed experiment. They question the veracity and methodology of ADOT's noise readings.

"A couple of things occurred to me: One, they probably ought to do continuous monitoring and see where these spikes are," said Dr. Donald Boles, 68, who lives in The Oasis near Elliot Road and McClintock Drive. "If you had continuous monitoring for 24 to 72 hours, you might see some hellacious



ADOT noise readings taken after the 101 expansion compared with readings at the same locations before the work started.

— ADOT graphic

spikes in it and that would be interesting.

"And two, there are certain frequencies and certain wavelengths for certain sounds that could be a lot more irritating than others -- say the difference between a flute and an electric guitar. Are they noticing that kind of a difference in irritable form

than just pure decibel readings?"

Boles is an internal medicine specialist. His avocation outside of work is electronic music.

"I have a project studio in my house. I play all over the place. As a musician, I've played all over the country," he said. "I know something about waves, decibels and the physics of sound. That's why I started wondering if they just did spot checks. Was there any volume averaging done? What scale did they use? I just had a lot of questions."

His family has lived in their two-story home since 1997. The noise is especially irritating at night when they're trying to sleep in upstairs bedrooms.

"We certainly noticed it before everybody was talking about it," Boles said.

He added that they had no issues with noise when rubberized asphalt covered Loop 101.

Woods said that his office has heard from at least 200 people complaining about noise from the freeway.

"Some of my colleagues are well aware that we, in Tempe, and I believe also in Chandler and in Mesa, are receiving a high number of concerns from residents who live in the neighborhoods that are directly adjacent to the 101 where the resurfacing has taken place," Woods said at the Jan. 20 MAG Transportation Policy Committee meeting.

Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, who chairs the committee, agreed to the Tuesday discussion on diamond grinding, saying, "It's an important topic to our entire region."

Meanwhile, those near Loop 101 just want peace that would come from quiet.

"It seems to me that 200 people putting in complaints can't all be wrong," Boles said. "As far as I'm concerned, if they want to build a bigger wall or figure out some other way to do noise abatement, I think that would be great. I don't know if they ever even thought this was going to be a problem."

"Obviously, they've got kind of a failed experiment on their hands."

WE HEAR YOU

ADOT noise concerns

Editor:

The "experiment" in re-surfacing on the 101 through Tempe and Chandler has provided an increased and objectionable level of sound in our community.

The community has been united and vocal in its protest.

I'm confident that if the state refuses to accommodate the residents' concerns it will result in a major lawsuit and further taxpayer expenses.

As a remote decision was made to "experiment" with this populated stretch of 101, I would like to pose the following questions:

- Were procedures followed to get community input prior to this "experiment?"
- Were the deciding ADOT officials free of vendor bias or incentives to take this course?
- Was the contracting work for surfacing open to competitive bidding?
- Were the sound level measurements properly executed by an impartial expert third party?
- Were the sound level measurements taken from second story windows as well as ground level?
- Did it include continuous peak level monitoring for 24-72 hours?
- Was sound volume averaging used?
- What are the background frequencies and waveforms observed?
- Are there special frequencies and waveforms characteristic of this surface treatment?
- If the Wrangler newspaper states that sporadic measurements taken by ADOT were only 2dB

below the established objectionable level, and many residents with mobile digital apps were recording higher levels, would it not be indicated to check veracity, calibration and make further measurements?

• Are the towns bordering this "experiment" also liable for the damages this "experiment" will cause for diminished property values, and will property taxes be downwardly adjusted to reflect these changes? If so, how will community services be impacted?

• What measures of noise abatement are under consideration to ameliorate this failed "experiment?"

• Will public be part of the decision process for which noise abatement method is used?

— Donald Boles, MD
Tempe

Turn in old, expired meds

Tempe Police are partnering again with the Arizona Drug Enforcement Administration and law enforcement agencies across the state for an upcoming drug “take back” event.

The aims of the event are to prevent accidental poisonings, overdoses and deaths due to the inappropriate use of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications.

It happens from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 24, at the Tempe Police south substation, 8201 S. Hardy Drive.

Disposal is anonymous. In addition, two secure medication disposal kiosks are available for community members year-round during business hours at the Apache Police Substation, 1822 E. Apache Blvd., and downtown Police Headquarters, 120 E. Fifth St.

For additional information, contact Molly_Enright@tempe.gov or 480-858-6148.

Hometown for All moves forward

Tempe is moving ahead with Hometown for All, an innovative housing initiative introduced by Mayor Corey Woods and approved Jan. 14 by the City Council.

The initiative provides for a dedicated funding stream to accelerate the growth of affordable and workforce housing in the city and to ensure that Tempe has a variety of housing types.

For every development project built in Tempe, an amount equivalent to 50% of certain permitting fees paid to the city will be directed from the city’s General Fund to the Tempe Coalition for Affordable Housing, a nonprofit corporation affiliated with the City of Tempe Public Housing Authority.

From there, the funds could be used to buy and rehabilitate properties, or to buy land and request competitive offers from developers or nonprofit partners to build affordable or workforce units.

Learn more at tempe.gov/HometownforAll.



Helping us all stay healthy and safe

A physician. A family of six. A young professional. Our Mayor. They all had COVID-19 and are sharing their experiences in a new series of videos highlighting the personal impacts of the disease on our family, friends and neighbors in Tempe.

For some, it was the extreme exhaustion, difficulty breathing or loneliness while isolating.

For others, it was hospitalizations and lengthy recoveries.

For all, it was a stark reminder of how pervasive COVID-19 still is in our community.

Their collective message: I had it. You don’t want it. Sharing their stories helps reinforce what we all



can do to help keep Tempeans healthy and safe: wear a mask, socially distance, avoid large gatherings. See their stories and get COVID-19 information at tempe.gov/coronavirus.

Maricopa County creates vaccine dashboard

Community members can now review Maricopa County vaccination data on a newly launched dashboard that shows:

- Vaccine doses allocated and administered in Maricopa County
- How many people have received the first and second dose
- Breakdown of vaccines administered by race, ethnicity, age and sex

The dashboard is available at maricopa.gov/COVID19VaccineData.

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Conversations in Leadership

Since 2008, Tempe Leadership has been offering an opportunity for alumni and the general public to learn more about personal paths to leadership, including the challenges and rewards. Conversations in Leadership gives us the opportunity to discuss leadership with proven leaders.



This year's program on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, from 11:00 am – 12:30 pm features Senator Kyrsten Sinema and Tempe Mayor Corey Woods who will discuss leadership, challenges, and opportunities for the future.



The event will be held virtually with an opportunity to submit questions when you register. Sponsorship of this event is available!

[Learn more at tempechamber.org/events.](https://www.tempechamber.org/events)

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April 14, 2021 - 9:00 am

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May 14, 2021 - 9:00 am

**State of the Chamber
& Annual Awards**
June 25, 2021 - 9:00 am

To learn more email
events@tempechamber.org

2021 State of the District

Each year, the Tempe Chamber of Commerce presents the State of the District, a federal update with Arizona's 9th District US Representative. This year's event will be an interactive live broadcast with Congressman Greg Stanton who will provide a comprehensive update on federal issues affecting our district, state, and country.



State of the District is scheduled for Thursday, March 11th at 9:00 am. Following Congressman Stanton's address will include questions from different sectors of the chamber's business community.

Registration closes Tuesday, March 9th and if you are interested in sponsoring this important event please call 480-967-7891.

[Register online today!](#)

Presenting Sponsor



Nominations are open!

It's time to nominate businesses and business leaders for 2021. The Business Woman of the year award recognizes an individual's excellence in their chosen field and demonstrated leadership within the community. The award honors those who serve as a positive role model to others and are active in community and Tempe Chamber programs. The recipient will be announced at the 2021 Leadership Conference.

www.jotform.com/TempeChamberAZ/BWOY21Nominate

The Business Excellence Awards identify and recognize companies whose practices in business and employee development, community involvement, and customer service exemplify excellence. The recipient will be announced at the 2021 State of the Chamber.

www.jotform.com/TempeChamberAZ/BEA2021Nominate



The Chamber is collaboration.

The Chamber understands the importance of collaborating and building coalitions. By working together, we can build a better tomorrow.

Local leaders and influencers work together at www.tempechamber.org



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BRIEFLY

Valentines for heroes

Students and nearby residents at Aprende Middle School and Kyrene Traditional Academy joined forces with other Kyrene schools to collect more than 1,000 valentines for delivery to area hospitals.

Inspired by the national Hearts for Heroes movement last year, one Kyrene principal, Stephanie Phillips, had the idea to create a unique observance they named Kyrene Hearts for Heroes for Valentine's Day.

Phillips recruited several Kyrene schools across the district to participate, and the schools asked students and community members to use the idea to thank healthcare heroes.

The project culminated during the Valentine's Day weekend, with delivery to the chosen locations.

Tempe Diablos benefit: Hot dog!

A new location of Dog Haus will donate 20 percent of its sales to the Tempe Diablos during grand

opening events Feb. 20-21.

For more than half a century, Diablos members have donated their time, resources, talents and money to provide scholarships, grants and more to Tempe youth, education and charitable programs.

The store is at 430 N. Scottsdale Road, Tempe.

Who are your Bike Heroes?

Now's the time to nominate him/her

Do you know a person or organization that not only celebrates bicycling, but also makes life better for Tempe's two-wheeled community?

Nominate them to be Tempe's next Bike Hero! Nominations are open until March 31.

Previous winners include 2020 – Julian Dresang; 2019 – Dr. Trisalyn Nelson; 2018 – JC Porter; 2017 – Broadmor Elementary Bikecats; 2016 – Catherine Brubaker and Bike Saviours; 2015 – Erick and Rochelle Geryol; 2014 – Ryan and Jennifer Guzy; 2013 – Maja Wessels; 2012 – Patricia Berning; 2011 – Eric Iwersen; 2010 – Bicycle Cellar; 2009 – Sue Fassett; and 2008 – Tempe Bicycle Action Group.

Smoking

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It has been used for more than 50 years in Europe, but not in the U.S. because it does not have approval from the Food and Drug Administration. Its activation is similar to that of varenicline.

"When a person stops smoking, their dopamine level drops, causing anxiety, irritability, insomnia, depression, any number of effects, due to a lowering of that level," Leischow said. "Cytisinicline elevates dopamine levels, making it a little easier to quit because you don't feel as bad."

Results from a recent clinical trial in New Zealand, backed by Achieve Life Sciences, a Seattle-based pharmaceutical company, showed that cytisinicline coupled with behavioral support was as effective as varenicline, and with lower reported adverse reactions.

"The hope for many of us in the health arena is to have more options that work and that are lower cost, because so many smokers are not high-income people and cigarettes are costing them a lot," he said.

LA CASA DE JUANA



DELIVERS A KNOCKOUT WITH ITS FRESH AUTHENTIC AND MOUTHWATERING FOOD

If you think you have been to a Mexican restaurant lately you probably need to reconsider and visit La Casa de Juana.

The fare is authentic Mexican, and when we say authentic, we mean it! Upon entering, you'll be dazzled by the colorful décor, beautiful tables and chairs, Mexican painted murals, colorful banners hanging from the ceiling and beautiful art.

Warm orange and yellow tones echoing throughout the eatery will make this your favorite Mexican restaurant. Give La Casa De Juana a try and enjoy great food, awesome salsa, great service and amazing ambience. Don't forget happy hour from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. every day with \$2 beer (domestic and imports) and \$3 margaritas.

This place is a must. The flavorful salsa, the delicious margaritas, the extraordinary and well-priced food will definitely keep you coming back.

Check out our menu or order online at juanashouse.com

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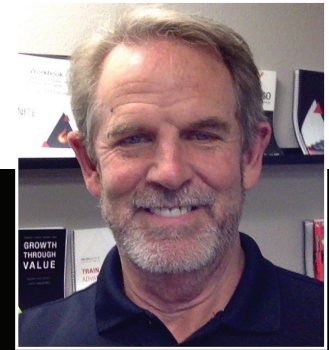
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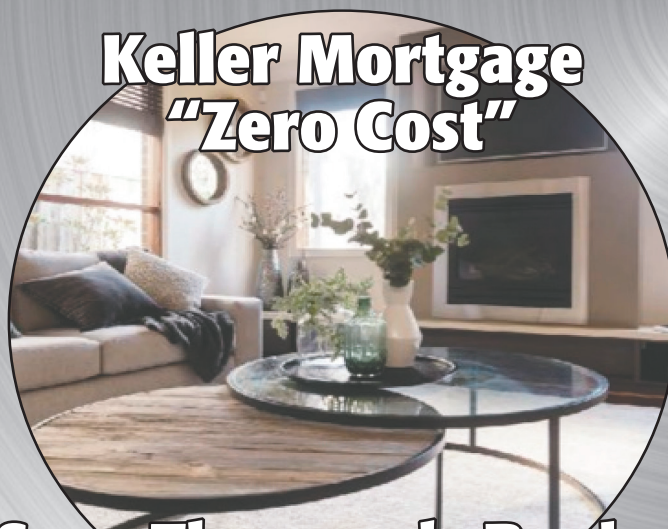
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Scott and Patti are on your side during COVID-19