

Red Mountain Ranch Up Close

Bringing neighbors closer to their community

February 2015

LIFE BALANCE IS YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD RETREAT FOR OPTIMAL LIVING



Submitted by Dr. Lisa Gold
Photo by Kim Phillips

The Life Balance Center, an integrated health and wellness center, will be opening soon at the Las Sendas Office Building.

Think of it as your neighborhood retreat—a place down the street where you can get back on an even keel. It's designed to help you and your neighbors meet life's challenges with centeredness and strength. Enlist a whole team of professionals to help you meet your goals for emotional and physical wellness.

The services offered at the Life Balance Center, located at the entrance to the Las Sendas Golf Club, include yoga (classes and private lessons), acupuncture, personal training, massage, chiropractic care, individual and relationship therapy, and nutritional counseling, as well as psychiatric and family medicine. The Life Balance practitioners also will be presenting workshops on health and wellness topics.

For those of you who de-stress best through physical fun, Life Balance is bringing Friday night ballroom dancing lessons (salsa and swing), group and individual Total Body Resistance Exercise, or TRX classes, and aerial yoga (yoga where you hang upside down from a swing made of scarves).

Life Balance is the collaboration of experienced wellness practitioners who share the same vision of integrated wellness. Together, they are creating something stronger than they could offer their clients on their own. They share a passion for integrating treatment of emotional and physical health.

"We all share the philosophy that the mind-body connection is more than a trendy notion," explained Dr. Lisa Gold, founder of the Life Balance Center. "It is the reality of who we are and how we function. We can choose to ignore the fact of who we are and what we need to live optimal lives of health and fulfillment, but ignoring the facts doesn't make them any less true," she continued. "Our physical health is affected by our emotional health, and our emotional health is affected by our physical health. When treating one aspect of a human being, you will see results, but when treating the emotional and the physical simul-

taneously, you see results achieved more quickly and they are longer lasting."

Dr. Gold, a marriage and family therapist, works with individuals and couples on issues of emotional and physical intimacy and health. She specializes in treating high functioning people who want to improve their lives. She works with those who want to reduce their stress and better manage anxiety, overcome struggles with weight loss and body image, heal from betrayals of trust and infidelity, and improve couples emotional and physical intimacy.

"Many clients come to me because they are overwhelmed by the stress and demands of their lives," Dr. Gold explained. "It is difficult to drive all over town trying to reduce your stress."

The Life Balance Center is a collaboration of sole practitioners continuing their private practices, but also working at the center to help clients meet their overall wellness goals.

"I really like the concept of the Life Balance Center, the umbrella of wellness in one place," said yoga instructor Sun Mancini.

Dr. David Leicken, a psychiatrist, said he is pleased with the collaborative environment the Life Balance Center offers, including holistic health and prevention treatments. "The view, in terms of wellness, is very peaceful," he added.

Dr. Caitlin Dlugas, a chiropractor, said her goal for practicing at the Life Balance Center is to give patients full care. "To have more of an integrative type of therapy," she explained.

Acupuncturist Tanya Hughes agreed. "I am very curious about the integrative practice model, and the unique opportunity to work with other practitioners on a larger scale."

Loraine Kern, a licensed counselor, said she admires the energy Dr. Lisa Gold brings to the Life Balance Center. "Lisa is a phenomenal person. What she has created here, I want to be a part of."

Clients choose the treatments and activities in which they want to participate. The practitioners maintain their clients' confidentiality, only collaborating if their clients give them written permission.

Let them know how you would like to find your balance. No driving around time to find the treatments and support you need to reach wellness goals. They are here in your neighborhood to serve you at your convenience.

*Enjoy our introductory special of two weeks of yoga for \$20.

Come get balanced.

MEET THE LIFE BALANCE PRACTITIONERS

- ♦ **Dr. Lisa Gold**, counselor and relationship therapist, clinical director of The Arizona Relationship Institute
- ♦ **Valerie Alston**, counselor at the Arizona Relationship Institute
- ♦ **Dr. David Leicken**, psychiatrist, owner of Ironwood Behavioral Health

- ♦ **Tanya Hughes**, acupuncturist, owner of The Acupuncture Center
- ♦ **Dr. Caitlyn Dlugas**, chiropractor, providing chiropractic care and chiropractic cranial sacral and sports massage, owner of Dlugas Chiropractic
- ♦ **Marisa Valandra**, family medicine nurse practitioner and weight loss specialist
- ♦ **Loraine Kern**, licensed counselor, Mountain Sky Counseling
- ♦ **Danny Collier**, personal trainer and nutritional counselor, owner of Simplicity Fitness
- ♦ **Maryl Knowles**, MSW and certified personal trainer
- ♦ **Jennie Yingling**, director of Life Balance Yoga and yoga instructor
- ♦ **Sun Mancini**, yoga instructor
- ♦ **Brea Kern**, yoga instructor ■

For more information, visit info@lifebalanceaz.com.

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Happy Valentine's Day

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Styling by Therese Barbetta

FEBRUARY SPECIAL

**\$10 Off a Gift Certificate in
the Month of February**

HEALTH

MARRIED COUPLE SEEKS PROFESSIONAL ADVICE FOR HEALTHY LIVING

By Dr. Afroze Ahmad
This is the third and last article in the series of why, what and how of blood pressure.

CAN I IMPROVE MY OUTCOMES FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

While my practice has a large percentage of couples, they may not choose to share the same exam room with each other during a clinic visit, but generally share many of the same diseases. So, when Maria and George Taylor requested a same-day and same-time appointment, it surprised me. Talking to them later, in the exam room, it was apparent the Taylors were committed to their New Year's resolution to improve their outcomes with high blood pressure.

HE SNORES, AND DRIVES ME CRAZY

To achieve their New Year's resolution, we started with non-medical strategies. "Doctor, you recommend 30 minutes of physical activity five times a week, and I easily can do it in the morning, once the kids are off to school," Maria said. "However, George snores all night long, which renders me sleepless and groggy in the morning, with no desire to exercise." George interjected, "Really? Do I really snore heavily?" Snoring is no longer just a cause for divorce. Snoring and other altered breathing patterns during sleep have been associated with increased risk of heart problems, including irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, stroke and even sudden death. Just as exercise drops the blood pressure by four to nine points, treatment for sleep disorders also helps with improving blood pressure readings.

EATING PLAN

"Healthy eating is such a cliché, and it certainly does not



help me with my grocery shopping," said Maria. "Is there a better cheat sheet to use for meal planning?" I can understand the frustration in her voice. Nutrition is vital for both prevention and treatment of high blood pressure. Meal planning should comprise of the mindful and dedicated reduction in saturated fats, sugars and cholesterol-rich foods. At the same time, incorporating fruits, nuts, whole grains and vegetables would result in the drop of blood pressure by eight to 14 points. "Pizza and cheese are the major sources of saturated fats at our dining table," I informed the couple. "Meal planning with two days of vegan dishes would go a long way in favorable outcomes with blood pressure. The best way to plan or consume a vegan diet is to hold or look at the food about to be consumed, and always ask yourself, 'Did this food ever have a mama?' If the answer is yes, it is not vegan," I said. "That will be easy," Maria said. "With George being a Cuban American, we eat beans three to four times a week." "That is great," I added, "as long as the beans are not eaten with sour cream." With a twinkle in her eye, Maria said, "I get it. Sour cream comes from a mama. So, I will be careful."

SALT INTAKE

George complained that salt prudence or salt restrictions are general terms, and he wished for some precise guidance. An easy way to remember is one-quarter of a teaspoonful is equal to 600 mg of salt. An intake of 2,400 mg is a good target, which means the total salt intake of both cooked and uncooked food should not exceed one teaspoon. "Wow, I never knew this fact," said Maria. Adhering to salt intake of one teaspoon or less can drop the blood pressure by four to eight points.

WEIGHT LOSS

I reminded both Maria and George of the fact their weight loss also is going to help them lower their blood pressure. George asked, "When and what kind of results are we

looking at?" I informed him, for every 20 pounds of weight loss, the blood pressure drops by seven to 20 points.

STRESS REDUCTION

Anxiety at work, home or in any interpersonal relationship may adversely affect blood pressure. Utilizing stress busters like yoga, breathing exercises and acupuncture, if supervised by a physician, would drop the blood pressure by five points.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

"I am no champagne George, but I still would like to know the alcohol limits, and the impact on blood pressure," George stated. As long as the alcohol intake is restricted to no more than seven drinks a week, I told him the drop in blood pressure is two to four points.

TOBACCO

Maria has been a winner so far, with a complete exclusion of tobacco for the past eight months. I informed her that her cessation will help drop her blood pressure by three to five points. Our clinic visit was coming to an end. I summarized the various interventions, including exercise, salt, alcohol, diet, weight reduction, and stress busters, and their effects on blood pressure. "By profession, I am an accountant," George added. "I have summed up all the points. To me, it looks like by Halloween of this year, I would drop my blood pressure by 33 to 45 points." Maria smiled, gave him a high-five, and said, "Me, too." ■

Dr. Afroze Ahmad is a cardiologist who cares and listens. She is a multiple board certified cardiologist. Las Sendas Cardiology is located at 3514 N. Power Road, Suite 107. For information, or to make an appointment, please call (480) 361-9949.

Valentine's Dinner

An Evening of Romance and Dining

Enjoy a Romantic 4-Course Prix Fix Menu
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The Patio at Las Sendas

FIRST COURSE
Terrine of Foie Gras

SECOND COURSE
Dungeness Crab Bisque
Dungeness Crab Meat – Cream – Ouzo Drizzle

Burrata Salad
Burrata Cheese – Pine Nuts – Blood Orange Segments – Watercress

Veal Saltimbocca
Polenta – Veal Cutlet – Prosciutto – Sage Caviar

THIRD COURSE
Lamb Chops
Sweet Potato Dauphinoise – Broccolini – Blood Orange Gastrique

Sea Bass
Roasted Red Pepper Angel Hair Pasta – Chanterelle Mushroom – Golden Raisin Relish – Rose Petal Beur Blanc

Surf & Turf
6oz Filet – Maine Lobster Tail – Asparagus Risotto – "Heart Beets" – Lobster Mushrooms

DESSERT
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LOCAL BUSINESS

Pets Will Enjoy Special Treatment ON VALENTINE'S DAY

Submitted by Happy Pets Palace and Playground

The best type of Valentine's Day weekend getaway includes your dog being pampered at Happy Pets Palace and Playground.

Your dogs will be spoiled when they board overnight at Happy Pets Palace. A special offer of a two-night stay over the Valentine's weekend means dogs will receive a complimentary luxury royal bath, complete with soft water and high-end shampoo, as well as leave-in conditioner.

Happy Pets Palace opened five months ago, in Mesa, at McKellips and Gilbert roads. The environment at Happy Pets Palace was designed specifically for overprotective pet parents wanting the best for their dogs because they are important members of the family. Happy Pets focuses on its top priorities, which are comfort, cleanliness, dog-dog play and safety.

The facility has live webcams for parents to check up on their furry babies. There are multiple climate-controlled inside and outside play areas, as well as different playgrounds, so dogs can be paired together by size and play temperaments. Dogs are loved, entertained and amused with all-day play, so pet parents enjoy a more relaxed and tired out dog at home in the evening.

Each Wednesday is Puppy Day, allowing puppies up to 2 years old to play and have puppy socializing all day, at a half-day rate. The facility uses pet-friendly and environmentally friendly cleaners to sanitize the entire facility inside and outside every day. The cleaning enzymes break down bacteria, thereby keeping the facility smelling fresh and clean.

Happy Pets educates its staff by offering 44 dog-related training courses for upper level dog management skills. There are another 33 courses for personal and professional development.

Education of the staff includes safety training to manage off-leash dog play and to recognize good dog play styles. Education also includes understanding

dog posture, and recognizing high-arousal signals and warning signals dogs are showing. Staff members also learn to help dogs feel comfortable in a new environment. They also are trained in pet first aid and pet CPR.

Evaluating dogs is required for all dogs boarding overnight or enjoying doggy daycare at Happy Pets Palace.

All dogs must be current on rabies, distemper, bordetella, neutered/spayed once of age, and free of flea/tick and other transferable diseases. All accepted dogs have passed a four-hour pre-screening interview process, showing they are a good fit for an off-leash dog-dog group environment.

Dogs of any breed showing aggressive tendencies are not allowed. Happy Pets evaluates each dog individually based on the dog's greeting style and stress signals, as well as dog body language around other dogs. A dog passing Happy Pets pre-screening will display relaxed signals around other dogs, and have balanced play style, being loose or curvy in their movements. ■

You can view the Happy Pets live webcams or learn how your dog can benefit from doggy daycare or dog boarding at Happy Pets by visiting www.HappyPetsPalace.com, or calling (480) 207-1852. Tours are given any time during hours of operation Monday through Saturday, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and on Sundays, from 8 to 10:30 a.m., or 4 to 6:30 p.m.



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A Closer Look at

LAS SENDAS GOLF CLUB

Features Entertainment, Dining & Golf

A Closer Look, Las Sendas Golf Club is a monthly column written for UpClose Publications by Las Sendas Golf Club. In this column, you will get an in-depth look at upcoming entertainment, dining and golf events. Our brand is our mission—to reach out to the community as your pathway to fun, recreation and a pleasurable lifestyle.

NEW MEMBERSHIPS

Become a Las Sendas Golf Club member, and get all the great, exclusive benefits at one of the best championship golf courses in the Valley, designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr.

New programs include social, annual non-refundable memberships or fully refundable seasonal or annual memberships.

New Social Membership \$3,000—Limited to 50

- Annual dues \$500 (first year's dues waived)
- 18 golf passes provided annually—value of \$960
- (6 golf passes valid November through April, 12 golf passes valid May through October)

New, Non-Refundable Golf Membership—\$15,000—Limited to 15

- Immediate golf membership privileges
- Annual dues paid on a monthly basis
- Option at five years to become a full golf member with 80 percent refundable

Fully Refundable Golf Membership—\$45,000—Limited to 5

- Immediate full golf membership privileges
- Annual or seasonal dues packages

Las Sendas Golf Club is a growing, vibrant club, with members from around the world who not only enjoy the game of golf, but also socialize when off the course. It truly is a club where membership has its privileges, along with the demanding challenges of true desert golf. For more information, contact Wayne Crandall at wcrandall@lassendas.com.

FEBRUARY FEATURE

THE VISTAS PAVILION AT LAS SENDAS PLANNING A WEDDING, BIRTHDAY, GRADUATION OR ANNIVERSARY?

Weddings

The Vistas Wedding Pavilion is Mesa's newest premier wedding venue. We can accommodate small and large weddings. Our location is surrounded by spectacular views of the Phoenix valley, sunsets and city lights. We offer personalized event planning services and a culinary team that will meet



and exceed your expectations with exquisite menu choices.

Our full-service wedding pavilion includes Bogey's private dining for your rehearsal dinner, elegant venues for your ceremony and onsite catering. The Vistas Pavilion is adjacent to Las Sendas Golf Club, a world-class championship golf course.

Client Reviews

Read what our clients are saying about us
2014—The catering director was amazing to work with, and made our wedding a special one-of-a-kind day. I would recommend this venue to anyone wanting to celebrate a wedding or special occasion. They are fabulous.

2014—The staff at Las Sendas was very helpful and courteous, and honored our every wish. They were very easy to work with, and made the time to answer all of our questions. The staff was helpful in working with us to stay at our personal budget, and flexible in offering ways to accommodate my husband and me. This location offers a great view of the Valley, and, most of all, it met all our needs, from serving a great buffet, to providing a scenic view for our guests, to providing the lighting, linens and centerpieces, etc. I am so thankful for their exceptional service in making our wedding reception fantastic and unforgettable.

2014—The staff and food exceeded our expectations. We are very happy we had our reception here.

2014—We had an absolutely beautiful wedding at The Vistas Pavilion, located at the Las Sendas Golf Club. The service was phenomenal, the food was delicious, the view was breathtaking, and we could not have asked for a more perfect day. The catering director coordinated the event, and kept us updated, in a timely manner, leading up to the event. She was very sweet, detail-oriented and professional.

2014—Everything was beyond our expectations. You and your staff are exceptional. Everyone was impressed with the entire function, from food, to service, to facility, etc. Thank you so very much. We hope to send you business through word of mouth. We cannot say enough great things.

2015—Everyone involved with the Vistas Pavilion was professional and courteous. Jackilyn was the standout, though. She was with us every step of the way, and never once hesitated to get us anything we felt we needed. She is a star among stars, and made our wedding both easy and very low stress. Knowing she was handling something was as good as knowing it was done. I cannot recommend this venue or Jackilyn enough. They get an 11 out of 10.

Spring Wedding Special April 2015— all inclusive package \$7,000

****Book by Feb. 16, and receive a \$500 discount**

Are you planning a wedding in the month of April? We have a few dates available, and are offering a short-term booking special—an all-inclusive ceremony and reception package starting at \$7,000 (does not include tax and gratuity) for 50 to 100 guests. Feel free to book a site tour at your personal convenience. **For more information, call us at (480) 396-4000, or visit our website at www.lassendas.com, and fill out our contact form.**

Summer Wedding Special June, July and August

****Book by Feb. 16, and receive a \$250 discount**

The Vistas Wedding Pavilion at Las Sendas is pleased to offer the following Summer Special Wedding Package for events booked and hosted in the months of June, July and August. The total cost is \$5,999 for 50 to 100 guests (does not include tax and gratuity), and includes the following items:

Ceremony

- White garden chairs
- Unity table
- Gift table and limeade station
- Setup and teardown of the ceremony and reception space
- Champagne and fruit and cheese platter in Bridal Changing Room

Reception

- Tray-Passed Hors d' Oeuvres
- Salad
- Plated Dinner
 - Includes champagne toast and non-alcohol beverage package
 - Includes rolls and butter, coffee and tea
- 12-by-12-foot dance floor
- White, black or ivory tablecloths
- White, black or ivory napkins
- Votive candles on tables
- Cordless microphone, with sound system for speeches and toast
- Projector and screen for slideshow
- Complimentary cake cutting
- Wedding Coordinator—will assist bride and groom with menu selections, ceremony and reception setup details, as well as ceremony rehearsal. Wedding coordinator will be single point of contact and onsite coordinator during ceremony and reception.

For more information, call us at (480) 396-4000, or visit our website at www.lassendas.com, and fill out our contact form.

Special Events

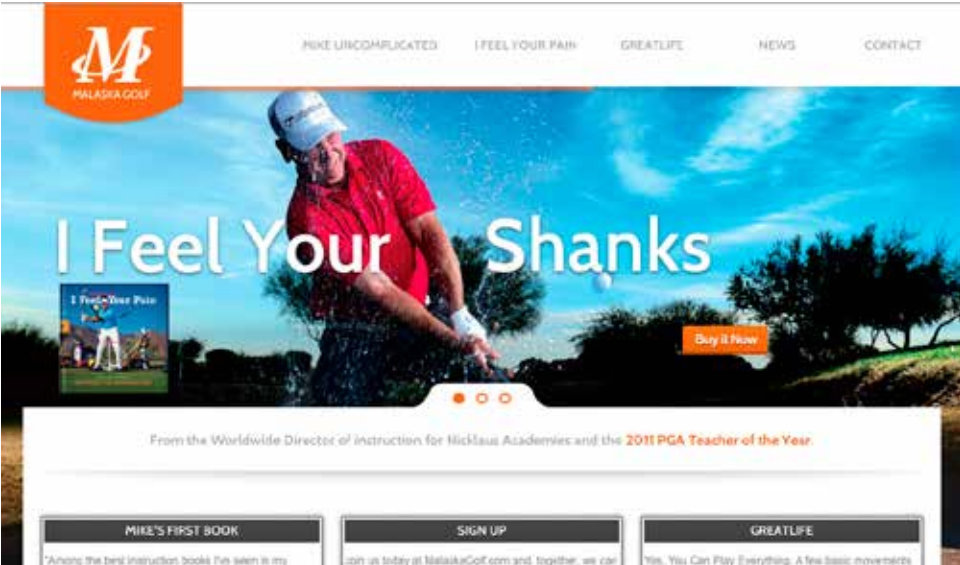
If you are looking for some new ideas for a birthday party, anniversary or family reunion, please come and see us at The Vistas Pavilion at Las Sendas. The Vistas Pavilion and our special occasions planning team can provide you with a number of dazzling party ideas, along with unique culinary menu choices. Our facilities include a large banquet room (capacity 300), a private dining room (capacity 60) and two smaller venues, the Garden Room and the Valley View Room for (50 to 100 guests). We can accommodate small, intimate events or larger corporate events and everything in between.

Book a special event in the month of April, 2015 designated dates (minimum 50 guests) by Feb. 16, and receive a \$200 discount.

For more information, call us at (480) 396-4000, or visit our website at www.lassendas.com, and fill out our contact form.



A CLOSER LOOK AT LAS SENDAS GOLF CLUB (CONTINUED)



LAS SENDAS GOLF ACADEMY

Mike Malaska has created the Malaska Golf Academy, at Las Sendas Golf Club, with a team of certified PGA and LPGA instruction professionals. The academy offers extensive golf lessons, programs, instruction and highly personalized instruction for men, women and juniors, as well as corporate and private groups, designed to enhance the skills of all levels, from beginners to tournament players.

The Malaska Golf Online Learning Center

Mike Malaska has launched the new state-of-the-art Online Learning Center, on a subscription basis. Instruction is provided through a developmental process, with increasing levels of difficulty. There are more than 300

videos available. So, the learner can see, read and hear Mike's golf instruction. Online learning packages include:

- **The M System**
A step-by-step process to develop skills necessary to reach your highest potential in the game.
- **Help Center**
Slices, shanks, chunks and bunkers—help is here. An expanding library of Mike's most valuable golf tips.
- **Grip it and Rip it**
Understand how to generate the most speed based on yourself—your body and your physicality.
- **Seniors**
For older players—learn how to evaluate yourself to get the most out of your game for years to come.
- **Play Everything**
Learn golf as part of a complete sports learning adventure, where you literally can learn to play everything.

The learning center will be available at www.malaskagolf.com.



Las Sendas Golf Academy Winter Programs

THREE-DAY GOLF ACADEMY PACKAGE	Three hours of daily range instruction Lunch each day at The Grille Restaurant Afternoon round of golf with an hour of on-course instruction each day (9-hole round option available) Welcoming gift and parting gift	\$940 per golfer (3-6 golfers) \$810 per golfer (7-8 golfers)
FIVE-DAY GOLF ACADEMY PACKAGE	Three hours of daily range instruction Lunch each day at The Grille Restaurant Afternoon round of golf with an hour of on-course instruction each day (9-hole round option available) Welcoming gift and parting gift	\$1,550 per golfer (3-6 golfers) \$1,350 per golfer (7-8 golfers)

For three- and five-day golf instruction packages and schedules, contact David Huffman at davidhuffmangolf@gmail.com, or call (480) 489-7673.

The Vistas Pavilion at Las Sendas

Spring Wedding Special

All inclusive packages starting at \$7,000
Dates available April 2015
Book by February 16, 2015 receive \$500 discount

Summer Wedding Special

All inclusive package \$5,999
June, July and August 2015
Book by February 16, 2015 receive \$250 discount

Special Events

Birthdays, Anniversaries, Graduation
Dates available April 2015
Book by February 16, 2015 receive \$200 discount

Las Sendas Golf Club

7555 E Eagle Crest Drive, Mesa, Arizona
info@lassendas.com or 480 396 4000

NEW GOLFER PROGRAM	Targeted for brand new golfers, and for golfers who have been playing less than two years. This is a five-week group program designed to introduce golf in a welcoming and fun environment. Covers all aspects of the game, which includes swing fundamentals (full swing, pitching, chipping and putting) basic rules, etiquette and on-course play.	Cost is \$195 for five-week course. Space is limited.
GOLF FUNDAMENTALS GROUP PROGRAM	Targeted for the more experienced golfer, to take your game to the next level. There is a total of five hours of group instruction. Pre-purchase your package, and then select the dates that will work for you.	Cost is \$195 for five hours of group instruction, including on-course play. Space is limited.
LIFE'S A PITCH, AND THEN YOU PUTT	This is a short game, on-course program, designed to help you learn the strategy for scoring. Are you using clubs that should work or clubs that do work? The program includes three one-hour, on-course lessons. A unique scoring card will point out the weakest area in your game, so you can focus and analyze your play. Get your group of four golfers together, and you can pick a time available.	The cost of the program is \$175.
LADIES COMPLIMENTARY CLINICS	ALL LADIES WELCOME. Please join us for these informative ladies' clinics in a fun and welcoming environment. All skill levels welcome. Clinics are monthly, on Thursdays, at 2 p.m.	No charge

For New Golfers, Golf Fundamentals, Short Game, Junior Golf Sticks, and Complimentary Clinics, along with Program Schedules, contact Tracy Berman at tberman@lassendas.com, or call (602) 920-8208.

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EDUCATION

Mesa Public Schools launches NEW APP FOR PARENTS

Story by Courtney Mollineaux and Laurie Struna
Photo by Derek Dinsmore

In January, Mesa Public Schools launched a mobile app designed to make information fingertip-accessible to parents.

MAKES COMMUNICATION A SNAP
“In a fast-paced technological world, it is crucial that families have immediate access to their child’s school news, updates and important contact information,” shared Helen Hollands, director of communication and marketing. “This exciting tool expands the possibilities for communication between home and school, bringing news instantly to busy parents on the go.”

USER-FRIENDLY FORMAT
The user-friendly format pulls information directly from the district and school websites, giving parents access to their child’s school, including contact to the office, attendance line and website. Parents may customize their use by selecting specific schools from which to receive information, including news and calendar updates.

“The uses for the app are endless, said Helen. “Think about the parent whose sick child is home with the sitter. Mom is on her way to work and remembers she forgot to excuse the child from school. The app provides parents the flexibility they need to take care of their business.”

SPECIAL FEATURES
There are special features enabling users to obtain pertinent information, such as lunch menus, athletic schedules and the parent/student portal.

Parents can access any of their accounts from the app. They can check a balance, pay a bill or even donate to the schools. It allows direct contact to the MyLunchMoney, MPS WebPay, Tuition Express and Extracurricular Activity contribution websites. The ease and simplicity of paying from a mobile device helps to ensure on-time payments and updated accounts.

With a simple tap of the parent resource button, a wealth of information is available. For example, if a question arises regarding student dress, the dress code link, in the parent resource section, takes the user directly to the district’s dress code policy.

As social media continues to explode as a communication and information outlet, the app provides instant convenience to the district’s Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram pages. One touch and a parent can stay current with all the happenings throughout the district. ■

The Mesa Public Schools app is available for free download through Google Play for Android users and the Apple Store for iPhone/iPad users.



EDUCATION

Arizona Teacher of the Year Is Announced

By Sharon Wozny
Arizona’s 2015 Teacher of the Year is John-David Bowman, who hails from Westwood High School, where he has been an educator for eight years.

This exceptional educator teaches International Baccalaureate (IB) Theory of Knowledge, IB History of the Americas and Advanced Placement U.S. History. He is following in the footsteps of one of his mentors, Nancie Lindblom, the 2013 Teacher of the Year who teaches at Skyline High School.

“It was an honor to be nominated, and definitely a surreal moment when my name was called,” John-David admitted. He is clear about at least one issue he wants to address. “I would like to continue to help pre-service teachers at Arizona State University get excited about the teaching profession,” he said.

John-David speaks highly of the staff at Westwood High School, praising them for their dedication to the students and for working tirelessly for the benefit of the students. “Any success I have had is attributed to them,” he stated humbly.

John-David became a teacher to influence lives. “It is a rare profession that allows me to have an impact on hundreds of people a year.” His students are inspired by his work ethic, as well as his dedication to helping them understand and apply material they are learning. In addition, he is an advocate for the students in his classroom. When he is



not teaching, John-David is busy running, reading and enjoying sports.

John-David received this prestigious award at the Arizona Education Foundation ceremony this past November. He will serve as an ambassador of education for Arizona, and is a candidate for National Teacher of the Year honors to be held at the White House this spring. He also will meet President Obama. “My goal is not to make a fool of myself,” he said.

Congratulations, John-David, on being Arizona’s 2015 Teacher of the Year. ■

For more information on Arizona Teacher of the Year, please visit www.azedfoundation.org.





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EDUCATION

SELF DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY IS A Unique Elementary and Middle School

By Jennifer Salvatori

For the past decade, Self Development Academy (SDA) is the only Arizona school consistently ranked among the top 10 schools by the Arizona Department of Education.

How has SDA attained this ranking and received other prestigious awards, including the 2010 Charter School of the Year Award, from the Arizona Charter Schools Association and Academic Excellence Award (2011)?

The success of SDA students is attributed to a visionary principal, dedicated teachers, administration and staff, supportive families and motivated students.

More than 14 years ago, Dr. Anjum Majeed founded SDA, after much encouragement from parents desiring a continuation of the advanced, and high-level preschool and kindergarten curriculums offered at Self Development Preschool. Since SDA's opening, the school has grown tremendously, and now consists of more than 460 students in elementary school (kindergarten through grade five) and middle school (grades six through eight). In 2013, SDA was approved as a Cambridge International Examinations school.

At SDA, the students learn two to three grade levels ahead of the Arizona state educational standards. Beginning with the kindergarten year, students are

academically challenged, and high academic expectations are established, all within a nurturing environment. SDA elementary school students obtain a solid foundation in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Students are taught at the mastery level and,

the curriculum emphasizes higher level thinking skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

One unique aspect of the SDA educational model is the small group pull-out. To ensure all students reach the mastery level of learning, students may be assigned to a small group pull-out. During the pull-out time, the teacher is able to instruct at a slower pace and provide individualized instruction for deeper understanding. The small group pull-out model is used to provide enrichment opportunities for excelling students, as well.

By the time SDA students reach middle school, many are prepared to enroll in Algebra I, Advanced Literature and Advanced Science. During middle school, students have the opportunity to complete Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, Advanced Literature, Science including Biology, Chemistry and Physics, Technology and Spanish. Many of these courses are not offered until high school.

Students completing eighth grade at SDA are enrolled in Honors and Advanced Placement courses upon entering high school. Additionally, many students receive high school credit for courses completed at SDA. This enhances their grade point averages, and makes them highly competitive students when applying to colleges and universities.

Aside from the academic focus, students have opportunities to develop other skills, such as public speaking, sports and performance skills. Class plays, winter performances and the science fair are just a few of the many annual in-house activities. Afterschool activities include Sports Club, Robotics, Foreign Language, Dance Club, Choir Club and Student Government. SDA is committed to developing well-rounded students who are well prepared for high school and beyond. ■

For more information, or to schedule a tour, please contact the front office at (480) 641-2640. Enrollment for the 2015-2016 school year has begun, and spaces are filling quickly.



LOCAL BUSINESS

Sweet Repeats has special items for Valentine's Day gifts

Submitted by Sweet Repeats

With Valentine's Day on Saturday, Feb. 14, Sweet Repeats would like to invite everyone to stop by and browse the many different gift options available for that someone special in your life.

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We need your spring items. Specifically, we are looking for designer lightweight clothing items, lightweight jackets, short sleeve blouses and tees, spring dresses, spring skirts and capris.

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As always, thanks again to all of our shoppers and consignors. We sincerely appreciate your patronage. Whether you are a shopper or consignor, we are here for you, and we will do everything in our power to make your experience at Sweet Repeats exceptional. *Happy Valentine's Day from Sweet Repeats.* ■

Sweet Repeats is located at 6039 E. University Drive. For more information, call (480) 275-2480. Store hours are Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



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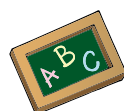
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EDUCATION

Students aid the community with monthly projects



By Dawn Abbey

Students in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter at Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center (AAEC) Red Mountain Early College High School are taking on monthly projects to give back to their community.

Following the FFA motto, *Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, and living to serve*, the members have participated in various events over the last semester. They supported the recent MIX 96.9 radio station awareness event, which was termed *Bras for a Cause*.

"The purpose was to collect as many bras as they could to support and bring awareness to breast cancer and domestic violence," said Britney Marsh, agricultural educator and FFA advisor at the school. "At a school of only 166 students, 116 bras were donated, making AAEC Red Mountain FFA the second largest collection site in the Valley," she said.

December was an especially busy month for the chapter. The team collected toys and school supplies, as well as hygiene

items to create 20 care packages for children at Sunshine Acres Children's Home, in Mesa. They also painted 24 Christmas ornaments and hand-delivered them to the adults and children at the Arizona Burn Center in Phoenix. In addition, they wrote more than 50 Christmas cards as a means of thanking the soldiers stationed overseas during the holidays.

Earlier in the fall, the chapter painted 41 pumpkins as decorations for the elderly at The Good Samaritan Society nursing home.

"Already this month, the FFA chapter is collecting fabric donations to make tie blankets to give to people afflicted with cancer, and is planning to continue their community projects throughout the year," Britney said.

AAEC's Red Mountain public charter school is an early college high school, offering students the opportunity to earn college credits. The school is located at 2165 N. Power Road. For more information, call (480) 854-1504.

EVENT

LAS SENDAS CASINO NIGHT Benefits School Beautification

Submitted by Las Sendas Elementary School

A premier fund-raising and social event to benefit the students and community of Las Sendas Elementary School will take place on Friday, May 6, at 6:30 p.m., at the Vistas Pavilion at Las Sendas Golf Course.

Join your friends and neighbors for a fun-filled night of professional casino games, a live auction, raffles, silent auction and entertainment with a DJ. Tickets include casino cash and appetizers. Child care will be available.

Individual tickets are \$25, and tickets per couple are \$45.

VIP TICKETS include casino cash, appetizers, child care, and one or two drinks. Individual tickets are \$40, and tickets per couple are \$75.

GOLDEN TICKETS, with only 52 dealer cards, are available at \$75 each. The one winning ticket has the opportunity to choose any live auction item. There also will be a 50/50 raffle, as well as a wine/beer raffle.

Incredible auction items will include original art by local artists and students.

Those taking part in this special fund-raising event can play blackjack, roulette, craps and Texas Hold'em.

The Vistas Pavilion at Las Sendas will provide the venue and the food for this fund-raising event. A cash bar will be available.

All proceeds will be used to beautify the Las Sendas Elementary School campus, including upgrades to the playground areas. These improvements will enhance our children's learning environment. They also will provide our community with desirable and attractive upgrades.

All tickets go on sale on March 1, at Las Sendas Elementary School. ■

For more information, call (480) 472-8750. Las Sendas Elementary School is located at 3120 N. Red Mountain Road.



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LOCAL BUSINESS

New Ownership at Bella Blue Boutique Means New Style

By Jamie Killin

Bella Blue Boutique, an apparel shop and staple in the Village at Las Sendas for more than nine years, is now under new ownership, and Frances Carlotta is excited to add her own personal touch to the store.

"I'm going to bring in a little bit of my own flair," she said. "I'd like to incorporate a little more city chic."

While much of the boutique's merchandise will remain stocked with longtime shoppers' favorite styles, Frances is looking forward to adding some new merchandise and more trendy items to Bella Blue Boutique.

"I love putting customers in great clothes," Frances said. "Any size, age or shape will find pieces they love here."

Bella Blue sells what women need to achieve their perfect look, offering everything from apparel to handbags, even jewelry.

Frances describes the boutique's new style as half contemporary conservative and half city chic. This new approach ensures there are plenty of options for everyone, and pieces sure to work for a variety of different occasions.



Some of their most popular brands include Aratta and Dear John. Frances describes Aratta clothing as trendy, with a great mix of fabrics. Dear John makes stylish pants Frances describes as cute and comfortable, with a little stretch to ensure a perfect fit.

Bella Blue Boutique is working on launching a website, and currently has an active Facebook page, where customers can see new merchandise, and keep up on the latest offers.

Current promotions include happy hour specials every Friday evening, which are announced on the Facebook page. Past sales have included *Buy one, get one 50 percent off* and *20 percent off an entire order*.

Even those who are out of town, or who might only live in the Valley part time, don't have to worry about not being able to get the latest fashions. Bella Blue is happy to take orders over the phone, and ship any items.

Bella Blue Boutique will host its grand reopening on Feb. 6, from 5 to 8 p.m. The first 10 customers will receive 20 percent off their total sale. The next 10 will receive 15 percent off their total, and all shoppers who come in during the event will receive 10 percent off their total. Refreshments and appetizers will be served. ■

For more information on Bella Blue Boutique, visit www.facebook.com/BellaBlueMesa, or call (480) 924-1088. The boutique is in the Village at Las Sendas, located at 2837 N. Power Road, near the intersection of Power and McDowell roads. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

EVENT

Memorial Run Honors Special Teacher

By Sharon Wozny

What are you doing on March 14, at 7 a.m.?

Plan on joining friends and family at Red Mountain High School for the second annual W. Steve Rushing 5K Run (square root of 25) in honor of Steve Rushing, a gentleman dearly missed by the students who loved having him as their math teacher and the girls' golf team coach.

In April 2013, Coach Rushing passed away suddenly. He left an empty hole in the lives of many people, including the many colleagues he taught with for more than 25 years. In fact, in 1988, he was one of the teachers who opened Red Mountain High School.

"He was a great dude," Coach Brent Krieg said. "He was well loved by all the students. He talked to students, and made a point of letting them know he cared about each one as a person. He always was inquiring about their interests, and was always encouraging them in whatever endeavor they were undertaking. People flocked to him. He was an all-around wonderful man."

After his passing, Track Coach Krieg and Coach Josh Barge decided to establish a 5K run in honor of Coach Rushing, and include a scholarship for the Red Mountain students, as well. Planning began, and with support of the administration, a course was created around the Red Mountain campus, which includes running past Coach Rushing's classroom. Running stores were contacted, and the dream of a



5K run became a reality.

How can you support this important run? Coach Krieg is looking for corporate sponsors, donations, vendors, volunteers and timers, as well as any support to make this morning a success.

The cost is \$25 in advance, or \$35 the day of the race. The fee includes a T-shirt featuring the race logo. All ages are welcome. You can walk the course, run the course, and cheer in the stadium, while enjoying the event's festivities.

See you at Red Mountain High School, on March 14, to honor a man who gave his all for the students there. "Coach Rushing wouldn't want it any other way," Coach Krieg said. "Why are we running if we are not running for the kids?"

To register for the event, visit the event website at www.mpsaz.org/rmhs/athletics/programs/track/rushing-5k-racewalk/. ■

For more information, contact Coach Krieg at (480) 308-5616. You also can go to bkrieg@mpsaz.org or www.mpsaz.org/rmhs. Click on Athletics, Teams and Track and Field, where there will be a link for the run, which includes all the information needed for registration.

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REAL ESTATE

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL OF YOUR REAL ESTATE TAX DEDUCTIONS

By John Karadsheh

As you prepare your 2014 taxes, here are some ways your home can help you reduce your tax liability, and if your aren't a homeowner yet, consider these great reasons to consider adding homeownership to your list of goals for 2015.



John Karadsheh

MORTGAGE INTEREST

Did you know Americans save about \$100 million in taxes annually from mortgage insurance deductions? In the U.S., homeowners can deduct the interest paid on mortgage balances up to \$1 million and the interest paid on home equity loan or second mortgage balances up to \$100,000. The greatest tax benefit is felt in the first few years of the loan, when the payments are comprised almost entirely of interest.

PRIVATE MORTGAGE INSURANCE

Homeowners who have less than 20 percent equity in their mortgage must typically pay for private mortgage insurance (PMI). PMI is deductible on personal residences and vacations homes, but not rentals. This deduction only is available if the head of household, married couple filing jointly, or single earner's adjusted gross income is less than \$109,000. This provision was set to expire in 2014, but was renewed in the last weeks of the year into 2015.

MORTGAGE POINTS

Did you buy a new home this year? When originating loans, lenders can charge borrowers points, or percentage-based fees in exchange for lower interest rates. Each point equals 1 percent of the entire amount of the loan. For example, on a \$100,000 loan, 1 point would cost \$1,000. If you paid points on a new home purchase, they are deduct-

ible in the year they were paid. Points paid on a home equity loan or to refinance also are deductible, but only over the life of the loan.

REAL ESTATE TAXES

For most homeowners with mortgages, property taxes are collected as part of monthly mortgage payments, placed in an impound account, and then paid by the lender as they are due. Homeowners may deduct the amount of tax actually paid out by the lender to the municipalities. New homeowners can deduct the full amount of property taxes paid upfront at closing.

ENERGY UPGRADES

If you made energy-efficient upgrades, you may be able to claim a percentage of the cost up to \$500 in tax credits. These tax credits are cumulative, so if you claimed \$400 worth of upgrades in 2013, you would only be able to claim \$100 in 2014. Eligible upgrades include the upgrade of exterior windows, heating and cooling systems, insulation and exterior doors. Separate tax credits also are available on geothermal heat pumps, solar water heaters, solar panels, fuel cells and small wind-energy systems. Each item is deductible at a different level (and with restrictions). So, do your research.

SHORT SALES

If you decided to short-sell your home last year, you may benefit from the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act. The act forgives up to \$2 million worth of debt for qualifying individuals. Without the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, the IRS would see forgiven loans as taxable income by the IRS. Congress renewed this act in late December of this past year to cover short sales in 2014. Short-selling a home in 2015 is more of a gamble. If

Congress doesn't renew the act, those who do a short sale will have to pay taxes on the forgiven debt.

EXCLUSIONS ON GAINS FROM SALES

If you lived in your primary residence for two of the last five years, you are eligible for an exclusion on the net sales gain of your home up to \$250,000 for an individual and \$500,000 for a couple. The net sales gain is the selling price less the purchase price, plus any improvements and selling expenses.

VACATION/SECOND HOMES

Mortgage interest payments and property taxes are deductible on second homes. So, too, are other business expenses on rental properties. According to Certified Public Accountant Michael Schulman, "You can't deduct your own homeowner's insurance [on a primary residence], but you can deduct it on a rental property." The same is true for costs for pool service, gardening or maintenance charges for a co-op.

To the extent that this article concerns tax matters, it is not intended or written to be used, and cannot be used, by a taxpayer for the purpose of avoiding penalties that may be imposed by law. This message was written to support the promotion or marketing of the transactions or matters addressed herein, and the taxpayer should seek advice based on the taxpayer's particular circumstances from an independent tax advisor. ■

John Karadsheh is an Associate Broker with Coldwell Banker Trails and Paths. He has been a Multi-Million Dollar producing agent for more than 12 years and is an Accredited Buyers Representative (ABR) and Certified Residential Specialist (CRS). In 2014, John was voted the No. 1 Real Estate Agent in Arizona by Ranking Arizona. You can reach John at (602) 615-0843, or visit his website at www.ArizonaHomesandLifestyles.com.

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6603 E. Snowdon St.	2,047	\$255,000
3808 N. Sawtooth Cir.	2,320	\$256,000
6502 E. Raftriver St.	2,445	\$274,500
3550 N. Olympic Cir.	2,260	\$298,000
4217 N. Everest	2,349	\$323,500
6758 E. Villeroy Cir.	2,544	\$330,000
5955 East Vermillion St.	1,830	\$220,000

Information gathered from the Arizona Regional Multiple Listing Service is deemed reliable, but not guaranteed.

Sales Information Provided By John Karadsheh, ABR, CRS, ASSOCIATE BROKER, Coldwell Banker Trails & Paths. www.BuyAndSellAZ.com

COMMUNITY

Red Mountain Ranch Country Club Offers Members the Best in Golf, Dining and Community

By Jamie Killin

Red Mountain Ranch Country Club (RMRCC) has been serving members in Northeast Mesa for more than 30 years, and now is expanding its list of events and activities to create an even better experience for members and the community.

Many of the upcoming events will include fitness- and wellness-focused activities. RMRCC also is planning to add events, which will allow members to taste the club's delicious food and beverages, while spending time outside and enjoying Arizona's beautiful weather.

"We're in the process of planning events to help further create a sense of community," said Chef Harmon Swartz, who oversees The Player's Grille at RMRCC.

Harmon describes The Player's Grille as having a bar and grill atmosphere, with classic options, such as hamburgers and hot dogs. However, changes to the menu are coming, according to the chef. The Player's Grille is incorporating new, fresh ideas and local products.

Local products and a sense of community are becoming increasingly prominent at RMRCC, where a weekly farmer's market has just been instituted. The farmer's market currently takes place every Sunday, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

The market aims to support the local businesses in town, and will offer the community a variety of products from which to choose.

"Hopefully, we'll have it growing

dynamically," Harmon said. "We want to keep adding lots of new things for people to check out."

Both the farmer's market and The Player's Grille are open to the public.

For members, Red Mountain Ranch Country Club boasts one of Arizona's first golf courses designed by Pete Dye, as well as six tennis courts, a full-size pool and fitness center, all tucked within natural desert landscaping. The country club also has outdoor space and a private reception room available for weddings, parties and other events.

According to Harmon, among the best features of RMRCC are the incredible sights. "The view is pretty much unmatched," he said.

He added the fact the club is centrally located, in a very small but growing community, which only adds to its appeal. ■

For more information about Red Mountain Ranch Country Club, or to view membership options, visit www.rmcc.com, or call (480) 981-6501. RMRCC is located at 6425 E. Teton Circle.



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LOCAL BUSINESS

Pacino's celebrates milestone with NEW AND DELICIOUS MENU ITEMS

Submitted by Pacino's Italian Grill and Bar

Pacino's Italian Grill and Bar is excited to share the good news. We recently celebrated our 21st month of success. All, of course, thanks to you, our loyal patrons, family and friends.

February is going to be a month to remember, as we roll out our new lunch, dinner and happy hour menus. Each is like nothing you've seen before.

You will find so many good things to eat, as well as specials. We also will feature an incredible happy hour menu, which will include \$5 martinis. Happy hour will last all day long on our bar stools, and until 6:30 p.m. in our bar.

Our lunch menu, served Monday through Friday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., was carefully crafted for those who have limited time to eat. Prices range from \$6.95 to \$10.95

Some of the new dishes our chefs have created are Seared Diver Scallops, Potato Gnocchi, Chicken Piccata, Chicken Cacciatore, Grilled Meatloaf, Short Ribs and Frankie's favorite, Chicken Spaccarelli.

We also are expanding our pizza menu, as we answer your call for them. After all, we feel our pizzas are the best around town.

February also brings

us to our sweetheart weekend. Our talented chefs have created an amazing four-course dinner for two for just \$75. Not only is the food going to wow you, but our live entertainment, continuing all night long, will also set the mood. Make your reservations as soon as possible, and enjoy what we have been doing for some 30 years.

Following Valentine's weekend, we will be hosting our monthly four-course wine dinner for just \$40, on Tuesday, Feb. 24. This is an intimate and informative time.

We also have our star-studded entertainment for you every Friday and Saturday night, from 6 to 10 p.m.

We are excited about our upcoming Journey Tribute shows, which are slated for Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21, at 9 p.m. It is absolutely free. Dave Alcantar has been doing his Journey Tribute show for me in California, and he is excited, as we are, about coming to the Arizona Pacino's, and showing what entertainment should be.

Another special we are offering all day is our bottle of house wine and our delicious Tomato Bruschetta or our Cheese Board for just \$20.

Pacino's is the real deal. Frank Spaccarelli, who was raised by second generation Italian parents, was privileged to experience a culinary revolution during the 60s and early 70s. Today, he puts his own twist on his family's recipes, and welcomes you with open arms. ■

Pacino's Italian Grill and Bar is located at 2831 N. Power Road. For more information, call (480) 985-0114.



Alicia & Frank Spaccarelli

EDUCATION

Mesa Student Selected for United States SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

Submitted by United States Senate Youth Program

Senators John McCain and Jeff Flake recently announced the name of a Mesa student who has been selected as one of two Arizona delegates to the 53rd annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), to be held from March 7 through 14, in Washington, D.C.

Grant Laufer, of Mesa, was chosen from across the state to be part of the group of 104 student delegates who will attend the program's Washington Week.

Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program, as stated in Senate testimony, is "to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, learn the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and emphasize the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world."

Each year, this extremely competitive merit-based program brings 104 of the most outstanding high school students—two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity—to Washington, D.C., for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it.

Grant, a senior at Mountain View High School, serves as an elected member of the Mesa Mayor's Youth Committee. He takes great pride in serving as a leader and role model in his school, his commu-

nity and abroad.

In the summer of 2013, he was selected as a Youth Scholar for Turkish as part of the National Security Language Initiative. He also serves as president of his school's Model United Nations team, vice chairman of the school's conservative club and treasurer of its math club. He is undecided on which college to attend, but is certain to pursue a career in foreign policy or business.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to volunteer work, the student delegates generally rank academically in the top 1 percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Today, more than 5,000 strong, alumni of the program continue to excel and develop impressive qualities, which often are directed toward public service. ■

For general information about the United States Senate Youth Program, please contact Program Director Rayne Guilford, at (800) 425-3632, or send an email to rguilford@heartsfdn.org. You also can visit the website at www.ussenateyouth.org.



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RECIPE

Sweet Heart Rolls Sure to Be A HIT ON VALENTINE’S DAY

Submitted by PIEfection

Make this delicious treat on Valentine’s Day for your sweetheart. The Sweet Heart Rolls are sure to be a big hit.

- 1 batch of your favorite sweet roll dough, enough to make 12 rolls. (Store bought is fine if you prefer.)
- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon

GLAZE

- 3 tablespoons cream cheese
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar



Roll out prepared sweet roll dough to 12-by-7-inch rectangle. Spread butter over dough. Sprinkle with brown sugar and cinnamon. Use a pizza rotary cutter to slice the dough into 12 strips. Start from the ends of each strip and roll toward the center. Place on a greased sheet pan, and pinch the center of the dough to create the bottom of the heart. Repeat for all rolls. Bake as directed for your dough, and cool.

Soften cream cheese, and mix with milk until completely smooth. Add vanilla and powdered sugar. Drizzle the glaze over the Sweet Heart Rolls. Enjoy! ■

PIEfection is located near the southwest corner of Power and Brown roads, at 6731 E. Brown Road. To place an order, call (480) 218-PIES (7437). You also can place an order online at www.piefectionaz.com. Store hours are 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The bakery is closed on Sunday.

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LOCAL BUSINESS

Neos Med Spa offers a fast and easy way to lose weight

By Dawn Abbey

Diets are not always the answer when trying to lose weight and be healthy.

“Diets usually don’t work because people are miserable when they diet,” said Brian Connelly, owner of Neos Med Spa, with locations near Mesa and in Scottsdale. “Diets force people into unnatural ways of eating. Once off their diet, dieters often go back to their unhealthy habits and gain the weight right back.”

Also, because dieters feel tired and hungry, they often give up before losing the weight they want. “You can lose up to a pound a week on the supervised weight loss program at Neos Med Spa,” Brian claimed. “Participants eat healthy without starving themselves or feeling hungry or weak. In fact, they feel great.”

If you are carrying around 30 to 40 pounds of excess weight, Brian likens that to having a full backpack strapped on you day and night, sapping your strength and energy. On their program, the average person can lose that amount in four to 10 weeks.

The Neos Med Spa program, supervised by medical director Briana Cain, NMD, includes an easy-to-follow healthy diet and weekly counseling, which helps people change their eating habits without feeling deprived. “People eat for reasons other than hunger,” Brian continued. “Counselors address that. We also teach portion control and how to understand food labels. Our easy, tasty recipes make mealtime enjoyable.” And most of all, the rapid weight loss is instantly encouraging.

In addition, Neos Med Spa provides weekly B-12 shots and administers hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin) hormones. The hCG hormone is a natural hormone the body manufactures during pregnancy.

“When you cut calories, your body goes into starvation mode, and desperately tries to hang on to whatever fat your body has stored,” Brian explained. “On the other hand, during pregnancy, a reduction in calories prompts the body to release stored fats as food and energy to protectively nourish the body. This process works in men, as well as

women, because it affects the fat-burning metabolism.”

Brian humorously refers to the technique as the Dr. TED Diet. “TED stands for Thermo Endorphoric Diet—burning fat while feeling great. Neos Med Spa has helped thousands take off weight during the 13 years we have been in operation,” Brian stated.

To encourage everyone to follow their New Year’s resolutions to lose weight, Neos Med Spa is offering a discount of \$150 for a six-week program. Since Brian feels most of us are more successful if we work with a friend, he also offers an additional \$50 off for joining with a friend.

“A group can be even more fun,” Brian suggested. “Our staff will come out to your home or center to serve a weight-loss group of three to five, like your family, neighbors, tennis partners or whatever. It promotes a real support system, and you can even try out new recipes by preparing a meal together,” Brian said. “Call us for a complimentary consultation or information on any of our services.” ■

For information on weight loss or any other spa services, such as anti-aging, skin care or laser hair removal, call (480) 425-7662. Neos Med Spa is located at 9030 S. McClintock Drive, on the border of Mesa and Tempe, and at 14350 N. Frank Lloyd Wright Blvd., in Scottsdale.



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REAL ESTATE

HOUSING MARKET UPDATE AND LENDER INCENTIVES
2015 IS OFF TO A GOOD START

By Lorraine Ryall, Realtor
CDPE, CSSN, MSSC
Coldwell Banker Trails and Paths

The Phoenix housing market for 2014 was uneventful and pretty slow, with low supply but even lower demand.

December's median sales price for Mesa increased 5.95 percent over January 2014. However, the peak for 2014 was in July, with a median sales price of \$197,900. December's median sales price of \$196,000 is down 1 percent from the summer's peak.

2014 ended out on a high note with December sales ending stronger than expected with more than 11 percent increase over December 2013, which is a good way to start the New Year, and just one of the signs the market may be shifting in the seller's favor. While the buyers still have a slight edge, with more supply than demand, the margin is thinning. There is a clear trend it is moving against them and heading in favor of the sellers. Supply decreased more than normal for December, and demand is showing some signs of life again, after being well below normal in 2014.

December luxury home sales soared. As a result, it was the best December since 2006, with 109 closed transactions across Greater Phoenix for homes priced at \$1 million and above. This was an increase of 10 percent over December 2013.

INDICATORS SHOW 2015 COULD BE A
STRONG SELLERS MARKET

Mortgage applications made big moves recently, increasing 49.1 percent from one week earlier, and showcasing the largest jump since November 2008, according to data from the Mortgage Bankers Association's (MBA) *Weekly Mortgage Applications Survey* for the week ending Jan. 9.

January 2015 Greater Phoenix—In the first two weeks of January, there was a lower than average number

of new listings coming on the market, and there was less supply than December. So far, we have the lowest number of active listings year to date since we started counting in 2000. Demand has started to increase. As of Jan. 15, supply and demand were almost balanced at 83.3 and 82.5 respectively. The key is going to be what will happen with supply and demand over the next few months. With supply already well below normal, and, if demand returned quickly to normal, sellers will regain the advantage, and prices could start to see some upward pressure building again.

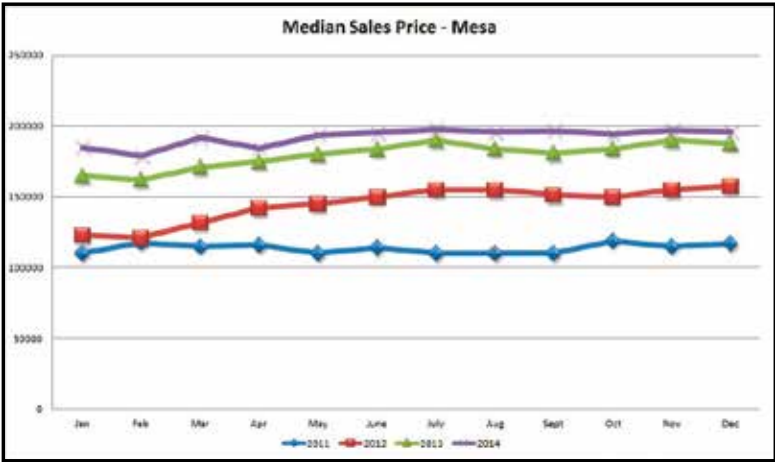
NEW LENDING INCENTIVES HELP
HOMEBUYERS IN 2015

FHA Reduced Mortgage Insurance Premiums—The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) has reduced its annual mortgage insurance premium (MIP) by 0.5 percentage point, from 1.35 percent to 0.85 percent. This was effective on Jan. 26. According to the *White House Fact Sheet* on this announcement, this reduction will translate into an average savings of \$900 annually on their mortgage payment. Existing homeowners who refinance into an FHA mortgage will see similar reductions to their mortgage payments, as well. Here is an example of how much this will save each month in the first year on a \$250,000 loan.

Example:

- Current MI rate 1.35 percent ($\$250,000 \times 1.35$)/12 = \$281.25 monthly MI
- New MI Rate 0.85 percent ($\$250,000 \times .8$ percent)/12 = \$177.08 monthly MI

The new rate will reduce the FHA homebuyer's monthly mortgage insurance by \$104 per month on a \$250,000 average loan amount. That is like giving a buyer another \$20K to \$25K in purchasing power.



Down Payment Conventional Loan of 3 Percent—Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac announced, in December, the return of the 3 percent down payment loan. However, it is only for first time homebuyers. A first time homebuyer is considered a buyer who has not had ownership in a home in at least the past three years. It does not, however, have to be the buyer's first home.

- Down payment—3 percent
- Minimum Credit Score—620
- First Time Homebuyer Requirement—Yes
- Occupancy—Must be primary residence

The consensus of the analysts and several key indicators are all heading in the direction for 2015 to be a stronger year than 2014, and for the market to shift from being a buyer's market to a seller's market. At the time of writing this article, however, we were only two weeks into January, so it is too early to know for sure. Only time will tell, but it's sure looking good. ■

Lorraine Ryall is a Multi-Million Dollar producer and a recipient of the Coldwell Banker International President's Circle Award. For more information, call (602) 571-6799, or visit her website at www.Homes2SellAZ.com.



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LOCAL BUSINESS

Your Cat Probably Does Not Approve of Boarding

By Dawn Dubelbeis
Owner, Critter Caretakers Pet Sitting

As a pet sitting company owner, I'd considered opening my home's second room to cats needing boarding. While I have always felt strongly that boarding cats at a facility is really not the best option for cats, in my mind I thought providing care for them in a comfy room with someone they knew would be OK. An experience this past summer changed my mind.

The air conditioning died at the home of one of our pet sitting clients while we were caring for his two cats. With the indoor temps reaching well over 90 by late afternoon, we knew we could not ethically leave the cats in the home with no AC, even though the cooler evening temps were coming. So, we did what any professional service would do. The sitter brought the two cats to my home until it could be fixed.

The second room had a nice cat condo with two cubbyholes and perches. It also, of course, had a litter box and fresh cold water. Additionally, the sitter brought the girls food and their favorite toys. I should mention I've personally pet sat for this client before, so his one cat knew me well. The girls were relieved to be out of the cat carrier, and, at first, were rubbing against me to say hi, but that was short lived. When they realized they were not at home, they began to sniff around, eyes dilated, bodies tense and tails twitching furiously at all the strange smells. The cat condo didn't get a second glance.

I let the girls sniff around, talked to them softly, and got them some wet food, so they could be additionally hydrated from the few hours in the warm house. Despite most cats loving wet food, neither ate it. In fact, for the rest of the evening, neither cat ate or drank much. I visited them twice more, but they were tucked in the attached bathroom in a corner, eyes dilated, clearly unsure what was going on. They always had come to say hi, but then would go hide in the bathroom.

The next day was the same. The one cat seemed to relax very slightly, but her sister was becoming more stressed. She would hiss and growl at her sister—some-

thing she had never done before, as they are very close, usually sleeping snuggled up to each other. Her sister started giving her a wide berth, no more consoling snuggles. Despite visiting multiple times throughout the day, and trying to engage her in play, she wasn't having any of it. Later that day, she began growling and softly hissing at me. Again, something she had never done in her own home. She normally is the most playful, affectionate cat who enjoys being petted and lying snuggled on top of you. I think had I tried to do that with her here, I would have been swatted. I do not believe she ate the whole time she was there—not even treats. My point is I thought surely in the comfort of someone's home, a person they knew, no less, the cats would be fine. Nope. I believe this applies to taking them to those friends or family members the cat knows well, too. Cats just

get stressed anywhere but their own home. This situation has just reaffirmed my belief—if we, as pet guardians, truly care about the welfare and well being of our pets, then cats should always stay in their home when you go on vacation. Luckily, the AC was fixed by the end of the day, and the girls were home by 7:45 p.m. The first thing they did when they got into the safety of their own home? Eat. If you are considering cat boarding, please reconsider, and call Critter Caretakers to provide your cat care. Your cats will thank you just like our client Merlin. ■

For more information about Critter Caretakers Pet Sitting, Where Your Pets Are Like Family, call (480) 553-0105. You also can visit the website at www.crittercaretakers.com. Join them on Facebook. Go to www.facebook.com/CritterCaretakersPetSitting.



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LOCAL BUSINESS

There Is a Way to Roll Your 401(k) Over To A Traditional IRA

By Donna Kohlase, CLU, ChFC, CASL
State Farm Insurance Agent



When you leave your job, your 401(k) balance can come with you. You may be tempted to keep some or all of the money instead of rolling it over, but that is rarely a good idea. If you cash out your 401(k) plan balance, you generally pay the income taxes due on the entire amount withdrawn, as well as a 10 percent penalty tax, unless you are at least 59 1/2 years old, or unless you are retiring from your employer at age 55 or older. If, however, you want to keep the money in place for retirement, a good strategy to consider is rolling the funds over into an Individual Retirement Account, or IRA.

THE PROCESS IS SIMPLE
Find an IRA investment (such as a fixed

annuity, a bank CD or a mutual fund) appropriate for you. You will need to meet with me, or with your financial professional, to determine the options right for you. Contact the administrator of your former employer's plan. Request the necessary forms be sent to you, so you can make the rollover. (I'll help you fill out these forms.) The funds will arrive in your IRA for investment as you chose in step 1.

A WORD OF CAUTION
The administrator may require the check be mailed to you. Make sure the check is made payable to the new IRA company, and For Benefit of (FBO) your name (Example: State Farm FBO Donna Kohlase). If the check is made payable to you, the plan administrator will have to withhold 20 percent of the distributable amount for federal income taxes. There is no tax due now on this rollover. So, don't pay it. ■

For more information, call (480) 396-2140.
The insurance agency is located at 6836 E. Brown Road, Suite 101.



LOCAL BUSINESS

Determine the source of your car's noise and stay safe



Submitted by H and I Automotive
When your car starts making a strange noise, it usually is an indication a repair is needed. Noises can range from clicks, clunks, grinds, moans and squeaks. If your car is making a sound it never made before, you should have it checked. Proactivity usually will keep the repair costs down, or, at least, you can determine the cost of the repair, and set a budget to have it fixed. So, what can different noises mean? Unfortunately, the list is endless. The best choice is to have the vehicle inspected, and find out exactly what is causing your specific noise to happen. Most shops will perform an inspection for free, or a minimal charge.

If your steering pump starts to make a whining noise, it most likely is due to a low fluid level. When the fluid level becomes low, you should have it checked for a leak. The steering system is made up of three major components, which are the pump, the gear and the lines. Any one of these can develop a leak. If the leak is not corrected in a timely manner, other steering components can be damaged, and the repair costs can go up dramatically. A clunk in the suspension can be

as simple as a worn out rubber bushing. Every component in the suspension system uses bushings to hold it tight and allow the suspension to move. Due to our extreme temperatures, the rubber dry rots over time and starts to come apart. Replacing the bushings can alleviate the need to replace more expensive components in the future. Brake noise is sometimes the hardest to eliminate. Grinding during braking is almost always an indication of worn out pads. However, squeaking can be anything from inferior pad material to road debris caught in the braking system. If your brakes are squeaking, have them inspected. Most service shops do brake inspections at no charge. H and I Automotive is located at 5338 E. Main St. We have been servicing the East Valley since 2009. Our Automotive Service Excellence Certified Master Technicians will give your vehicle a thorough inspection, and make only those recommendations required to make your vehicle safe and reliable. ■

So, next time you hear something that just isn't quite right, give us a call at (480) 985-9279, or visit our website at www.handiautomotive.com.



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LOCAL BUSINESS

Natural Cook Relies on Flavors from Fresh Ingredients

By AnnElise Makin

Lauren Smee, Green Catering Company's young chef, is thrilled by how much the right kind of food can change your life.

Lauren, who grew up in Red Mountain Ranch, started her personal chef and catering business about three years ago. She cooks for figure athletes, fitness models, professionals on the go, patients with special diet needs and busy families.

"One of my most popular dishes is the Smoked Gouda Mac," Lauren said. This upscale Mac and Cheese blends five cheeses with almond milk to satisfy even the most sophisticated cravings. Lauren also has gotten the chicken piccata recipe down to a science. Her variations with salmon, tofu or scallops have been called irresistible.

Chef Lauren's Green Catering Company shops mostly local, and uses organic produce. She relies on incorporating the freshest ingredients available. Her motto is *Keep Calm and Eat Clean*. Her culinary creations are easily the healthiest in the neighborhood—and deliver great satisfaction. Can't beat natural flavors. Delish!

"We all have our favorite foods, but they may be too high in calories, fat, or salt, or they are intolerable to us for other reasons," the young chef reported from experience. Lauren realized she was sensitive to pH balance, gluten, dairy and a few other ingredients. So, she started tweaking recipes with healthier substitutions.

"You can instantly feel better by changing what you eat," Lauren stated. "I can adapt my recipes easily to gluten-free, dairy-free and vegetarian standards." As the nutrition change worked on her, she gained confidence to share her cooking with others.

Like many new moms, this chef was battling weight problems after having a baby. But the natural diet fixed her figure. "After Marlie was born, I steadily dropped 35 pounds just by eating healthy," she said. No *magic* pills or formal exercise routines were involved.

Marlie, her adorable 1-year-old daughter, may have pushed the natural cook across her final doubts into the nutrition business. "It shocks me what junk foods people serve their children," Lauren commented. "Good habits are formed at the dinner table," she said. "Fortunately, I begged

my mother, in vain, for Lunchables."

Lauren discovered her love for cooking in mother Judy Smee's kitchen. House recipes included such interesting dishes as Hungarian sweet-and-sour cabbage soup. It contains sour salt. Anything tastes better with just the right herb and spice combination.

"Food is all about how much care and love you give it," said Judy. Her daughter Lauren grew up around fervent cooking and entertaining activities. "When we have people over, we stir a lot of extra love into each dish."

For the past 10 years, Lauren has explored and improved recipes. She is excited about sharing her culinary discoveries. And her passion shows in her mouthwatering descriptions.

"Look, here is the roasted pear with goat cheese and bacon marmalade drizzled with honey and rosemary," she said while flipping through photos on her phone. "See, here, the Indian spice latkes topped with smoked salmon." I might have taken a bite out of that phone by now. ■

Don't worry. Chef Lauren can cook all these delectables freshly for you again. Just give her a call at (480) 800-7901, or send her an email at lsmee89@gmail.com.



KEEP CALM, EAT CLEAN

Chef Lauren's Green Catering Company provides healthy meals from locally grown produce. Most recipes can be adapted to special dietary needs without sacrificing flavor. Meals can be delivered to home or office.

For more information about meal plans, rates or catering services, please contact Chef Lauren at (480) 800-7901, or send an email to lsmee89@gmail.com. Visit the website at www.GreenCateringCompany.com.

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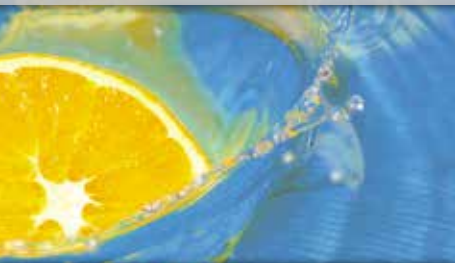
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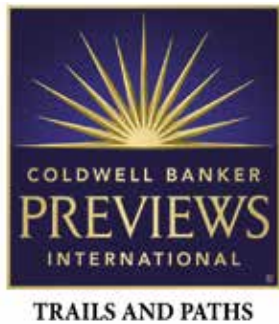
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