

O'ODHAM ACTION NEWS  
**2020 GRADUATION ISSUE**



**CONGRATULATIONS**







**Sistine Lewis**  
Coronado High School  
"Congratulations Sistine!! We are so proud of you and know that you have a bright future before you. You have overcome many obstacles and continue to shine!!"



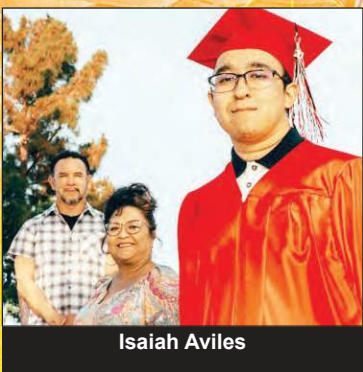
**Matthew Goodwin**  
Coronado High School  
We are very proud of you and know you will continue to do well in the future, if it's continuing your education, art or serving the Lord. Love Grandma J



**Gloria Horton**  
Desert Vista High School  
Gloria, you are such phenomenal human being! We are beyond proud of everything you have accomplished and of the person you have become. Congratulations beautiful, you will do amazing things!



**Nasya Marr**  
Marcos De Niza High School  
Congratulations to our quarantine grad CC!  
This is a start of a new chapter and so many more accomplishments to come. We love you! - Mom & Dad



**Isaiah Aviles**  
Maricopa High School  
Behind you, all your memories. Before you, all your dreams. Around you, all who love you. Within you, all you need. "Best wishes on your graduation, Son!" Mom & Dad



**Jared Nace Wood**  
Mesa High School  
You did it! Keep pushing yourself and let your dreams come true. I'll be standing behind you every step of the way cheering you on. I love you always mom.



**Karisma Galindo**  
Mountain View High School  
Congratulations, Our Mountain View High School 2020 Graduate! You Did It Dim! Yay! We Are All So Proud Of and Love You!  
-Dad, Mom & JR, & All Your Siblings



**Tristen Hayes**  
Mountain View High School  
We are all so proud of you and everything you have overcome and accomplished! We can't wait to see what the future brings. We love you mom, grandma and family.



**Samuel Ernest-John Littlecreek-Ventura**  
Mountain View High School  
We are so proud of you see we told you can do anything if you set your mind to it and you did... We love you...



**Joshua Prieto**  
Mountain View High School  
We are very proud and happy for you Joshua! Continue working hard & do good! Love from All your Family & Friends



**Selina Schurz**  
Mountain View High School  
We are all so proud of you! No matter how hard things got you kept pushing yourself. SMCC here she comes! Happy 18th Birthday Beautiful. Love Mom & Family



**Nicholas Valencia**  
Mountain View High School  
Congratulations Nicholas Valencia!!! Your family & friends near and far are so proud of you. We love you to the moon, stars, and beyond. MVHS CLASS OF 2020.



**Daycee Achin-Santo**  
Westwood High School  
Your life is your story and the adventures ahead of you is the journey to fulfill your own purpose and potential. Congratulations Class 2020!



**Destiny Anton**  
Westwood High School  
You have made us so proud Honey! I know you're going to do wonderful in college. You have many more blessings to come your way. Love, Mom and family



**Damek H. Begaye**  
Westwood High School  
To my son Damek H Begaye. Congratulations son. We are all very proud of you. You are going to do great things in life. Love your mom and family.



**Polo Espinoza**  
Westwood High School  
Congratulations Polo on your graduation from Westwood High School! Next journey-College! We all love you and are so proud of you.



**Henessy Jade Gastelum**  
Westwood High School  
We are so proud of you and would like to wish you the best for your future, you worked so hard. We love you, Love Mom and Family



**Sommer Lopez**  
Westwood High School  
We're happy for the positive moments in life. This is a happy moment we will cherish. We love you Sommer!



**Autumn Richards**  
Westwood High School  
May Creator be with you always, Autumn. We love you! Continue to make us proud! #WarriorPride



**Cody Tanner**  
Westwood High School  
I will miss Westwood, friends, and my teachers. I am proud that I graduated and I am happy that my mom, dad, brothers and sisters were there to support me.



**Mckenzie Charlie**  
Westwood High School  
Congratulations to Mckenzie Charlie on graduating from Westwood High School! We are so proud of you and your accomplishments; we look forward to your bright future ahead. Love, Your Family



**Kaden White**  
Westwood High School  
We are very proud of you today and every day. This is the first step into your adulthood and you can do anything you put your mind to, Love Mom.



**Nathaniel Zuniga**  
Washington High school  
You have always been such a hard worker. I always knew you would succeed. I am so proud of you! The skies the limits! Love You Mom, Dad, Alexis and Marcus



**Liana Olmedo**  
Pinnacle High School  
Congratulations Liana! You've accomplished so much in just 16 years and we are so proud of you! May you continue to do amazing things in life. Love Mom & Family

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020

**ARCADIA HIGH SCHOOL**  
Devin King

**CORONADO HIGH SCHOOL**  
Jocyn Lewis  
Joaquin Suniga

**DOBSON HIGH SCHOOL**  
Lance Alvarado  
Alejandro Francisco

**MOUNTAIN VIEW HIGH SCHOOL**  
Damien Escovedo  
Jeremy Miles  
Maricela Ortiz  
Isiah Wateuma  
Victoria Whitman

**SAGUARO HIGH SCHOOL**  
Chloe Colbert  
Caleb Ivan Makil

**WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**  
Justino Balderrama  
Xanee Miguel  
Lupita Perez  
Chandler Rodriguez  
Morningstar Scabby  
Loryn Wood

\*List provided by the Salt River Education Department.





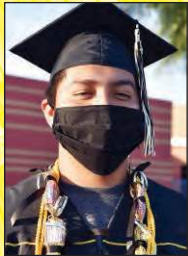
Alyssa Monet Andrews



Anthony Cachora, IV



Andriana Vikki Calderon



Alex Michael Enas



Rhiannon Lee French



Sialik Shandiin King



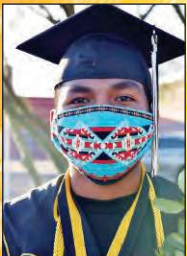
Ki-Ana Love Loring



Josiah Eugene Manuel, Jr.



Rayleen Marie Martinez



Sabin Steven-Tanner Miguel



Erica Vu-Pukhosik Nasafotie



Daniel Jonathan Parley



Hannah Emilia Reyes-Carmelo



Luke John Riena



Kiona Ailani Sumral



Brandon Jacob Tate

## Not Pictured

Khalin Cole Hoskie  
Rudolfo Robledo, Jr.  
Jacob Isaiah Spex



## ACCELERATED LEARNING ACADEMY

Bianca Aguilar-Montoya  
Alexa Armenta  
Fabian Chester  
Kaleb Doka  
Shaeli Doka  
Demetrius Garcia  
Esashia Johnson

Rene Lopez  
Aniceya Miles  
Salavador Morales  
Reise Patrick  
Nicholas Reina  
LeBrina Reyes  
Hayden Rivers

*Honorary ALA Graduate*  
Antonia Alvarado



Lynnyce Carlisle



Gracelyn Lewis



Layla Shaw



Q&A: BEN ANTON

GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY  
Bachelors in Hospitality  
Management

**Tell us about your educational back-ground.**  
I earned my high school diploma from Higley High School in May 2006. I earned an Associate of Science degree in Business Management from Scotts-dale Community College in May 2019. I earned a Bachelor's Degree in Hospi-tality Management from Grand Canyon University in April 2020.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
The most rewarding is being able to use my experience in my assignments and to help fellow peers see assignments from an experienced point of view. I also joined the DECA club at SCC and GCU, and that allowed me to make long-lasting friendships.

**What are your future plans?**  
I am planning to return to GCU this fall to pursue my Master of Business Administration. I will then attend ASU to pursue my Master of Real Estate Development. While I am in school, I will continue to work for our Casino enterprise.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
I hope to complete both master's degrees in three years and then work for an investment company building and planning future luxury resorts in the Southwest region.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My family helped me focus and keep going to finish school. I want to be an example, not only to my family and children, but to all youth. I want to show them it is never too late to go back to school and take advantage of what our leaders put in place for us. Not many people can go to school and come out with little to no student loan debt.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
I had to drop out of college many times due to family reasons, work promotions, and just life. However, I always went back. I had to take a few classes twice to pass them.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
Just because you drop out or fail or make mistakes, do not let those moments define you. Use those moments to learn and grow. The biggest piece of advice I received is "Study to learn, don't study to pass. It lasts longer."

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I would like to thank many of my great mentors from Casino Arizona in the blackjack and slots departments. I would like to thank all our tribal leadership, the Higher Education staff, and the Education board members past and present who continue to support the Higher Education students. Finally, I want to thank my family for all their support and for helping with my children while I was at school.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are Kim Anton and Denise Alley.  
My paternal grandparents are Rita Summers and the late Gerald Anton.  
My maternal grandparents are Mary Secondine and Dennis Alley Sr.



Q&A: ELAYNE LUCERO

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bachelor's of Science in  
Criminology and Criminal Justice

**Tell us about your educational background.**  
I graduated from Westwood High School in 2003. I attended Scottsdale Community College, earning an Associate of Arts degree in 2009. I attended Arizona State University, earning a Bach-elor of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice in 2020.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
The most rewarding experience is showing my sons through true dedication and focus that they can achieve any goal in life. This a true testament to finding yourself, and when there is a will, there will always be a way. Earning my degree was for my sons, and I hope I have inspired them to follow in mama's footsteps because I'm paving a pathway for their own success.

**What are your future plans?**  
My future plans are to enjoy a gap year and then pursue my Master's degree and possibly go to law school. I mean the sky's the limit!

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
I hope to fully finish school, become a homeowner, and establish myself within the tribal government in a respectable position where I can provide as-sistance to my fellow Community members through the legal system.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My sons Kaleb, Xavier and Julian influenced me to pursue my higher education. Being a single parent has many challenges, and I knew from the get-go that I had to step up to the plate and establish a great example for them. I wanted to show my sons what a strong and independent woman can do on her own. I need to give credit to my mom, Veronica Tashquinth, because she was the one who molded my sister Ivory and me into strong women. She paved the way; I just continued the journey with my sons.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
Yes, I faced several obstacles while in school, such as time management and staying focused. To overcome the obstacles, I had to really tighten my schedule, keep track of due dates and take mini breaks for myself to keep my own sanity. It really was overwhelming at times, trying to balance a full-time work schedule with making sure my sons were fed, ready for school and that they did their own homework. I often relied on my mom, sister and



Community resources such as the S.T.E.P. tutoring program and Recreational Services for my sons. It really takes a village to raise children, and my supporters really helped and supported me as I pursued my higher education.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
It is never too late to pursue higher education. We need more Community members with educational backgrounds in leadership roles within our Community. It will take determination, focus and sacrifice, but the end result is absolutely rewarding, not only to yourself but also to your loved ones and the Community.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I want to say a thank-you to my mom, sister, sons, extended family and friends, as well as the SRPMIC, for supporting me as I pursued my dream to further my education.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are Veronica Tashquinth and Pete Lucero.  
My maternal grandparents are Matthew Tashquinth Sr. and Sylvia Pedro.  
My paternal grandparents are Anselmo Lucero and Catalina Valencia.

Q&A: CIERA MCANLIS

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Communications and minored in  
Media Analysis

**Tell us about your educational background.**  
I attended Mountain View High School and went on to attend Arizona State University, where I majored in Communications and minored in Media Analysis.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
My most rewarding college experience was having the opportunity to study abroad not just once, but twice. I have always had this urge to travel and explore the world. Studying abroad gave me the ability to study and also see the world. I learned so much while I was there. What I learned went beyond just what was taught in the classroom; I got to know other cultures and really find myself, since it was my first time leaving home. I've always heard that once you're older it's harder to travel, because you have a job and so many responsibilities, so I knew I needed to take advantage of this precious time, and I'm glad I did.

**What are your future plans?**  
I have always loved working with kids. All my jobs throughout my college career have required working with children in some way, whether it was being the art room teacher at the Boys and Girls Club or being a tutor at Ishikawa

Elementary. During my senior year of college, I realized I had a passion to work with children and wanted to become a teacher. I plan to attend graduate school to better prepare for this role.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
Over the next 10 years, if I accomplish nothing else, I hope I am at least happy. One of the classes I took at ASU, if not the most important one, was called Communication and the Art of Happiness. I took it at a very important time in my life and it really impacted me. It taught me that happiness is something you have to work at. It's not just your circumstances, it's your lifestyle, it's your goals, it's expressing gratitude, its savoring life's joys. I hope in 10 years I've cracked the code and I'm happy living my best life, whatever that may be.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My mom had attended ASU and then later went on to get her master's at Grand Canyon University. I grew up watching my mom go to school. So, when it came time to start applying to colleges, it wasn't really a question of if I was going to go to college, it was more where was I going to go. College also gave me more time to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. Right out of high school, I had no clue what to do next. College gave me an extra four years to find that out, and thankfully I did.



**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
The challenges I faced in college weren't academic challenges. I struggled a lot with my mental health, and it made its first real appearance while I was at ASU. I was going through a lot. I was trying to succeed academically, make time for family, but also pick up shifts at work and still enjoy the social scene of college. It was a very heavy load to carry, and I couldn't do it. After confiding in my

mother, she suggested I talk to someone. That's when I started seeing a therapist once a week. We worked on a lot of different things during my time with her. I still use all of the techniques she taught me for handling my anxiety and stress.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
Going to college was one of my most rewarding experiences. College is where I met all of my best friends who I hope will be in my life for a long time. It's where I realized my passion in life, and it's where I actually learned how to be a functioning adult. I think it's a great place to go when you don't know where to go next.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursue your education?**  
My mom (Blessing McAnlis-Vasquez) is an amazing woman. She does so much for her family and her community. She's such an inspiration to me. If I become half the woman she is, I will consider myself lucky. I couldn't thank her enough for all that she's done for me. I can't count how many papers she's peer-reviewed for me or how many times I've called her asking for her advice on everything from paper topics to boys. I'm forever grateful. Love you, Mom!

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My mother is Blessing McAnlis-Vasquez.



Q&A: LISA MIGUEL

**SCOTTSDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Associates in Communications and Associates in General Studies**



**Tell us about your educational background.**  
In 2005 I graduated from Carrington College as a Registered Medical Assistant. In 2008 I graduated from Carrington College as a Licensed Massage Therapist. In 2013 I graduated from Gateway Community College in Office Technology. In 2020 I graduated from Scottsdale Community College with Associate degrees in Communications and General Studies.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
All my experiences have been very rewarding, especially graduating in the programs I have studied and completing my goals I have set.

**What are your future plans?**  
I will continue working at Casino Arizona Talking Stick Resort and continue to build our landscaping business while I continue my education to get my Bachelor's Degree in Communications.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
I would like to work with Community members, offering trainings and workshops.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My mom and dad, the late Jacqueline Torres and Maximo Torres, were great role models. They gave me a strong work ethic and encouraged me to continue my education and never give up on what I want in life.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
Yes, I have struggled with ADD. I usually get extra tutoring, and I'll have notes taken or record my classes.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
It's so rewarding and anyone can do it, it just takes dedication and hard work. I think people would be surprised at what they can accomplish if they really want something.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I would like to thank my husband, Roland, and my kids, Jade, Xavier and Aleczander, for their support and encouragement. Casino Arizona Talking Stick Resort's 20/20 program allowed me to continue my education while working. I thank Matthew Garza, Raynette Nahkai and Rebecca Tenorio for all their help and encouragement.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are the late Jacqueline Ann Torres and Maximo Torres. I was adopted as a young child; my maternal grandparents are the late Bernice Vohave-Morgan and the late George Baptisto Morgan. Virginia Elenore Vohave-Lewis was Jacqueline's mother. Virginia and my grandmother Bernice were sisters.

Q&A: ARISTINA SANCHEZ

**SCOTTSDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Associates in Arts**



**Tell us about your educational background.**  
I started attending Scottsdale Community College (SCC) right out of high school in 2005, and since then I have attended Tohono O'odham Community College and Collins College. I finally buckled down in June 2017 and finished my Associate of Arts degree in December 2019.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
The most rewarding part of my college experience was having the privilege of taking multiple American Indian Studies courses at SCC. Learning about our people and the history of Indigenous people across the world really opened my eyes to my purpose and motivated me to become more educated on the subject so that, in turn, I can educate those around me and empower them.

**What are your future plans?**  
I will be attending Arizona State University in the fall to obtain a Bachelor of Arts in Public Service and Public Policy. Law school is always in the back of my mind, but I have a few years to decide!

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
Regardless of where my educational journey takes me, I want to be thriving alongside my fellow Community members and serving in a position within the tribal government that will afford me the chance give back to the Community that has given me so much opportunity.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
I decided to go back to school for myself. I was never a great student in high school, and I really wanted to test myself to prove that I could be an exceptional student. I finished with almost all A's and B's! Also, [I wanted] to set an example for my kids to show them how important education is at any age.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
Working full time, being a mama and volunteering for different programs in the Community while being in school was definitely challenging. The most important thing to me was making sure that I never let my studies disrupt my family life, so the majority of my classes were taken online. I utilized my education leave from my job to do my studies during the day, and if I had work left over, I would finish it late at night. I just kept telling myself that I could not and would not fail. I had to make sure to manage my time efficiently and spread my work out so that I wouldn't become overwhelmed.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
It's never too late to start a new goal! Have realistic expectations and don't bite off more than you can chew. I found that, as an adult learner with a job and family, it's easier to take one or two classes at a time until you're in a routine. The time will pass anyway, so it's better to try to get the most out of your classes and really grow as an individual, and not think of the courses as a list to check off.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I'm so thankful to my entire family, especially my partner Manne, for never letting me doubt myself and encouraging me during trying times. I also want to thank the SRPMIC Higher Education staff for getting me on track, and thanks to the Community for providing the opportunity for me to go back to school.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are Aristeo and Michaelle Sanchez. My maternal grandparents are the late Michael Senich and Norma Phillips Senich.

Q&A: ARIAL BEGAY-SMITH

**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Bachelor of Arts in Communication**



**Tell us about your educational background.**  
Graduated from Salt River High School in 2009. Graduated from Scottsdale Community College (SCC) in 2013 with an Associate Degree in Business. Graduated from SCC in 2014 with an Associate Degree in Arts. Graduated from Arizona State University in 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
Honestly, the most rewarding experience I had was this final semester. My classes were primarily about understanding different ways to communicate. I was learning new information and also implementing that with my family, so they were learning with me. I could see the difference from the beginning of the semester to now, and we have all gotten better at communicating. Also, another rewarding experience was getting an "A" on a paper and receiving encouraging words from my professors about the assignment, especially if I procrastinated and wrote the paper the day before.

**What are your future plans?**  
I plan to go to graduate school. Since I was a junior in high school, I always had a plan to get into business school and earn an MBA. I am currently studying for the admissions test and filling out my application. Hopefully, I will be able to get in for the spring or fall semester in 2021.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
In the next 10 years, I hope to have my master's degree. I am hoping that I could attain enough expertise to become a judge, or maybe even chief judge. I want to gain experience within the legal office or with other governmental departments to know how the Community can strive to be better for what our people need.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My mom and dad taught me that college was not an option, it's expected; so that was my mindset growing up. They also explained that education is the key to everything and it could open doors to new opportunities. Also, if I want to make a change in the world, then I need to know what I am talking about.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
Yes, I faced some literal obstacles, such as finding parking on campus so I could get to class, or making it to class on time because the construction was making traffic slow. On a serious note, my biggest obstacle was that I really struggled with keeping a balance within all aspects of my life. I am a mother, spouse, sister, daughter, co-worker and student. Sometimes the different roles clashed, and it was challenging. I began to stop taking care of myself mentally, emotionally and physically just so I could provide more to everyone else, but they noticed because I was not my normal self. I learned that I needed to have a schedule and I can rely on my family and friends for help because I was getting burned out trying to do it on my own. It worked. It was not as overwhelming as before, and everyone was less stressed—except for finals week, when everyone was 100% stressed out. My mom would tell me how she could not wait until that week was over so she could finally get some sleep and not dream about me taking tests.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
My advice is just do it. It will be hard, but it will also be worth it. There is a community/family that will support you, there are resources to help you, and having confidence in yourself will get you through it. I believe we are all born to make an impact in the world. It's up to you to determine the size of the impact.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
First and foremost, I want to thank my family. You have helped me in every way, from making dinner to being the subject of my assignments. I am forever grateful for you all. To my friends, thank you for listening to me vent about school and giving me words of encouragement. To my co-workers and managers, thank you for working with me and giving advice when I needed it. To the Community and Higher Education [program], thank you for providing this opportunity for me to pursue a higher education. Lastly, Tiare, Cameron and Tristan, thank you for being the best children ever. I hope I made you proud.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are LaRue Jackson (Smith) and the late Michael Begay. My maternal grandparents are Larry Smith and Delphina Burton-Seota. My paternal grandparents are Raymond Begay and Jenny Begay.



THINKING ABOUT GOING TO COLLEGE?

The Salt River Higher Education Program Provides Financial Aid, Scholarship, recruitment, Retention and advising services to Community members interested in furthering their education.

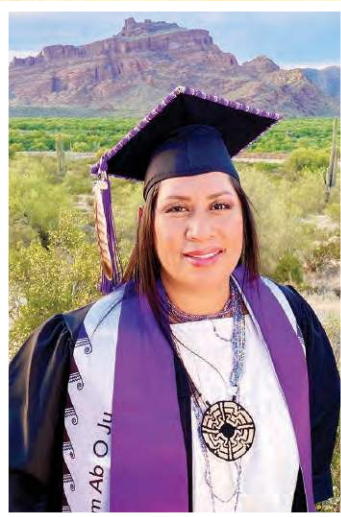
QUESTIONS CALL (480) 362-2547 OR VISIT [HTTPS://HE.SALTRIVERSCHOOLS.ORG/](https://he.saltriverschools.org/)



Q&A: TASHA SILVERHORN

GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY  
Bachelors of Science in Applied Management

**Tell us about your educational background.**  
I graduated from Westwood High School in May of 2002, and right after that I took a month off. In July I started at Collins College in Tempe to pursue an Associate Degree in Visual Communications (Graphic Design). I finished in February 2004 and went on to do my bachelor's degree, but I met my husband fell in love and fell off course. I attended Scottsdale Community College, taking a class or two here and there, from 2005 to 2014. In 2017, I signed up for Grand Canyon University's Cohort Program that was offered to SRPMIC members, and I graduated in April 2020 with my Bachelor of Science in Applied Management.



**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
I wasn't a great student growing up; I knew I needed a certain amount of credits to graduate, and I wasn't that much of a better student in college but I got my associate degree. But going to GCU, I was more willing to learn; I was very interested in learning new things and I felt better prepared this time around. The most rewarding experience was earning all A's and B's, and I have been on the Dean's List since attending GCU. Also, with COVID-19 cancelling all the graduation celebrations, my husband organized a graduation celebration parade for me, and that was one of the most incredible things. I didn't expect it, and it was amazing to see my family and friends come through to congratulate me. I also received a lot of encouraging messages and kind words from people on my social media. Those were the most rewarding experiences.

**What are your future plans?**  
I would like to attend Arizona State University to receive my Master of Science in Business Journalism or return to GCU for a Masters in Communications. I want to receive my masters either way.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
I would like to be the manager of *O'odham Action News* or work in a managerial position or director in Community Relations and maybe run for Council.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
A lot of people influenced me to pursue my higher education. Every year when I would see the graduation issue of *O'odham Action News* come out, I'd love to read about those who finished their higher education. I would read their stories and think, 'Wow, I can do that too.' I just had to stop saying it and do it. My cousin Tasbah Adams was one of my biggest inspirations to go back and go to the GCU Cohort Program. She was going and told me about it, so I went along and we made it this far.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
When I returned to *O'odham Action News*, I was writing articles and had my deadlines. I also had essays just about every week, and I got tired of writing. But the writing eased up and I had to do math, and that was very hard. When I see numbers and letters mixed together in a math equation, I would almost have a panic attack. I struggled in my math class for two weeks before asking a good friend of my family to help. Thankfully I asked, because he broke it down for me, and after a few hours I understood. I studied my hardest for that class and came out with a B.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
Do it! I would encourage all who are interested in pursuing an education to try because you get to learn new things, meet people and hopefully have a good career at the end. School might scare people, but there is always online schooling, and with the technology we have today you can find so many resources to help you through. Just a few years out of your life can help benefit you in the future.

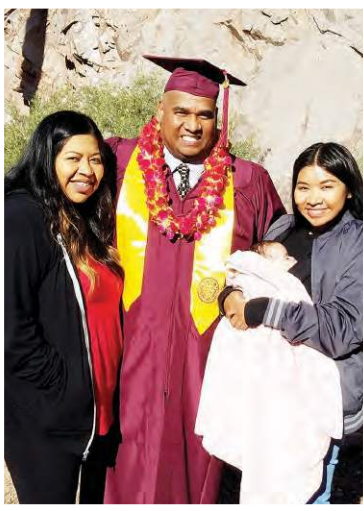
**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
My family, and my husband, sister Marcia, daughters Alva and Thaila for giving me the time and space that I needed when I was working on assignments. Also, thank you to all those who encouraged me and supported me, listened to me when I had questions or helped me on assignments. Also, a big thank-you to my Community and the Salt River Higher Education program, because if it wasn't for these two, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to continue my higher education and get where I am today.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are Lauren Butler and Terrance Villalpando. My maternal grandparents are the late Melva Butler (Lewis) and Timothy Butler. My paternal grandparents are Gretta Federico-Collins and the late Amos Villalpando.

Q&A: THEODUS TONEY, III

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bachelor's in Criminology and Criminal Justice

**Tell us about your educational background.**  
I graduated from Westwood High School in 1986. I attended Scottsdale Community College in 1986-1987 for a short time. I also graduated from R.S.I. (The Refrigeration School) in 1989 in the Electrical Applications program in hopes of becoming an electrician. In 1992 I was accepted to be a firefighter with our Community. While learning the roles and duties of being a firefighter, I decided to go back to Scottsdale Community College in 2000 to pursue an associate's degree in Fire Science, and I received it in 2006. As I was thinking about my future plans, I realized I wanted to pursue a Criminal Justice degree. I graduated with an Associate Degree in Administration of Justice Studies in 2015. While taking other courses at SCC that would transfer my courses taken to Arizona State University, it helped me to petition for a general Arts degree in 2016. I transferred to ASU in fall 2016 to pursue my Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice online. I graduated and received my degree in December of 2019.



**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
It definitely was a very rewarding experience getting my Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from ASU. My most rewarding college experience(s) took place during the 2019 Undergraduate Commencement ceremonies at ASU during the week of December 16-19. I had the opportunity to attend and participate in five awesome ASU graduation ceremonies! It was very rewarding, and I was grateful and honored to be present to hear many encouraging and inspiring words from various student, guest and professor speakers. I wanted to attend as many of the ceremonies as possible, as I could feel my late parents' spirits alongside me with the presence of my family members and friends who were able to come out and support me. It was the most rewarding feeling of accomplishment that I ever felt before. I'm very happy, proud and humble to know that I have made my late parents, family, friends and my Community very proud of me.

**What are your future plans?**  
After I retire from the Salt River Fire Department, I would like the opportunity to continue working in my Community. I would be honored to work in law enforcement as a crime scene technician or possibly in our Community court system.

**What do you hope to accomplish in the next 10 years?**  
Within the next 10 years, I see myself serving my Community and striving to make a difference. Also, I'll be enjoying any free time with my family, especially my grandchildren. I would also like to explore and travel to places I have never been to.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
My late parents, along with my family, have been the biggest influence in pursuing my higher education. My future work plans in life also influenced me to further my educational goals to contribute my higher education to gain new job skills for future employment in my Community.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
A huge obstacle that many college students face while attending college/university is how to balance their jobs and schoolwork at the same time. For me, working at the fire department was always a challenge because of my work schedule. I would have to do a lot of shift trades with other firefighters so I could attend classes. So, by doing multiple shift trades, sometimes I would end up working 48- or 72-hour work shifts, which left me little time to do classwork and homework assignments. I struggled through this hectic schedule until I started taking some online courses at SCC and got used to it. When it came time to transfer to ASU in 2016, I enrolled in the online program, which was very challenging in itself because the classes are seven weeks long and go by fast! You also don't have the luxury of a classroom setting in which you can engage with other students and form study groups. You also don't have a teacher or professor readily available to help you with any questions. So I overcame this situation by enrolling in online classes and becoming comfortable. This allowed me to be more flexible and focus on my course work.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
Search out what your personal interests are. Set goals, either for future job opportunities or to gain skills. The most important part is to start attending college, stay focused, and never give up on reaching your educational goals. Because you are never too old to go to school—if I can do it, anyone can do it.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I would like to thank my late parents for always encouraging me to go to college. Also, my wife, Felipa, and my family and friends, who always supported and believed in me. They pushed me to stay focused on my goals when, at times, college was overwhelming and challenging. They helped me to balance my work life, family life and college life. I am also so grateful for my support system within the Salt River Education Department and their staff, as they helped me out tremendously throughout my college experiences. They helped me attain my educational goals. Thank you so much!

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are the late Theodus Toney II and Marilyn Rowena Toney (Thomas). My paternal grandparents are the late Theodus Toney Sr. and Mineola (Minnie) Davenport. My maternal grandparents are the late Anthony Thomas and Reba Nora Thomas.

Q&A: Tetsuo Yoneuchi

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bachelor in Digital Culture (Film)



**Tell us about your educational background.**  
My background in education was Kyrene De Las Brisas Elementary School, Aprende Middle School and Corona del Sol High School. My Arizona State University Digital Culture undergrad degree started in a different concentration, but I switched to film, which was a great decision.

**Describe your most rewarding college experience(s).**  
My huge college experience was filming a short film for a class. I had the hardest time trying to get everything done, and so many issues kept popping up, but we managed to pull together a film that was actually pretty good. Plus, I made some good connections with film friends.

**What are your future plans?**  
I plan on trying to expand my network while improving my skills in the various areas I want to be good in. I do want to become a strong screenwriter, as this became a passion in the past year.

**Who or what influenced you to pursue your higher education?**  
While my parents were the ones who pushed me into college, I actually did want to go to college myself to gain skills in the world.

**Did you face any obstacles while attending college/university? If so, how did you overcome them?**  
My main obstacle was myself. I slowly realized throughout my long years at college that I had huge self-doubt and confidence issues. Numerous times I froze up when things got tough, and I sometimes couldn't finish my assignments. My girlfriend helped me through the last year with talking out my problems, as well as showing me to a therapist. It's been a blessing, as now I can more often turn around much quicker to accomplish the tasks I want and need to.

**What advice would you give people considering higher education?**  
My main advice is that there will be struggles. Sometimes things happen, like a pandemic. Just learn to be flexible, as anything can happen. And also make sure to pay attention to your mental health, as it is more important than anything.

**Is there anyone you would like to thank for their support as you pursued your education?**  
I would like to thank my parents and family for supporting me throughout my long journey. I want to thank my friends and my girlfriend, who encouraged me and helped me when things got bad.

**Who are your parents and grandparents?**  
My parents are Takehiro and Susan Yoneuchi. My maternal grandparents are Richard French and Sally Seimatawa. My paternal grandparents are Tsunetaka and Junko Yoneuchi.



# Graduates Honored Through Graduation Celebration Parades

BY TASHA SILVERHORN  
O'odham Action News  
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As the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on thousands of high school and college graduation ceremonies around the world, many graduates instead have been acknowledged by family and friends through special graduation celebration parades.

College graduates Tasha Silverhorn and Elayne Lucero were given graduation celebration parades.

Silverhorn, who graduated from Grand Canyon University with a bachelor of science degree in applied management, was surprised with a graduation celebration parade on Thursday, April 30.

"This year I was looking forward to my graduation ceremony, which was supposed to be at the end of April. I purchased my cap and gown, and a dear friend beaded my cap [in] purple and white. I was excited to walk [across] the stage and have my family there," said Silverhorn. "But I must say it was way better having all my family and friends there [in the parade] to help me celebrate my accomplishment. It was so unexpected, and I was even crying from all the love and support I felt from everyone. Even from the ones who couldn't make it out, who sent congratulatory messages through social media."

Lucero graduated from Arizona State University on May 11, receiving her bachelor of science degree in criminology and criminal justice.



Selina Schurz stands in her front yard as many of her family and friends drive past and congratulate her on successfully graduating from Mountain View High School. Photo courtesy by Susanna Guerrero

On Tuesday, May 12, several Salt River Police Department trucks led a line of vehicles as they went past Lucero's home, located in the Community, for her graduation celebration parade. Cars full of her family and friends cheered for her as she stood with her family, who were all wearing ASU T-shirts. Lucero wore her maroon cap and gown.

"The graduation parade was an exciting moment! It was an honor to be recognized and celebrated for my academic achievement by 'social distancing' with my loved ones," said Lucero. "Thank you to my sister Ivory, my best friend Darla, the Office of the Prosecutor, and the Salt River Police Department for putting together an unforgettable

2020 graduation ceremony for yours truly."

The number of graduation celebration parades increased as high school graduation week began. Some schools provided a full parade in which students lined the streets and family and friends honked their horns and cheered for the graduates. SRPMIC high school graduates who received graduation celebration parades included high school seniors Daycee Achin, Henessy Gastelum, Mckenzie Charlie, Selina Schurz and many more.

"I was overwhelmed with joy and excitement that I started crying had no idea this was planned for me," said Gastelum. "I thought I was just going to do a photo shoot."

On Friday, May 22, cars decorated in black and yellow lined up along Highland Avenue between Center Street and Country Club Drive as families held up signs reading "Congratulations Salt River High School Seniors" as they drove through the street passing the Salt River High School Class of 2020. Students lined the sidewalks along with the Texas Roadhouse mascot as families shot confetti and congratulated the SRHS seniors and a few Accelerated Learning Academy graduates.

"It makes me feel good that our Community can come together," said Salt River High School senior Sialik King about all the support the seniors received during the Drive-Through Parade.

King also gave some reflection and advice to those who are continuing with high school.

"It goes by quickly. When I was a freshman, I would say, 'I want to graduate already.' I even said that a couple of times as a senior. But it's crazy to see how fast [high school] has gone by; it feels like yesterday was my first day here at Salt River High School [and I was] trying to find my classes," said King. "To the younger students, just work hard for everything you have and take advantage of everything you are given."



Westwood High School graduate Daycee Achin overwhelmed with emotion after cars drive passed her as they show her with gifts and congratulatory shouts from their cars.



Arizona State University graduate Elayne Lucero stands outside her home with her family waving at cars as they come recognized and congratulate her on most recent achievements.



Mckenzie Charlie is surprised with a graduation parade celebration at her aunt and uncles' home for graduation from Westwood High School. Photo courtesy by Amy Davila



Grand Canyon University graduate Tasha Silverhorn and her family after a surprise graduation parade celebration.



Westwood High School graduate Henessy Gastelum's photo shoot was really a surprise graduation parade celebration. Photo courtesy by Esperanza Guerrero



# CONGRATULATIONS 2020 GRADUATES!



**Anthony Cachora, IV**

Salt River High School  
We are sooooo proud of you my son! Love You Bunches....



**Azias Padilla**

Basis Scottsdale Primary West  
Momma is very proud of you, always stay positive on your Journey through life there always be many challenges, learn from them and it will make you stronger! Love Mom



**Jace Briones**

ECEC  
Congratulations on your promotions at ECEC. We love you and will always support you. Kindergarten Here we come. Love always your family THE BRIONES and Granny Lauriee M.



**Nadia Trujillo**

Salt River Elementary  
I'm so proud of you on accomplishments being on student council, photography and film class, and doing the morning announcements; I can't wait to see what to come next year.



**Ty King**

Noah Webster  
"The hardest thing to do is work hard when no one is watching." -Ray Lewis. Congratulations, we're so proud of you. Love- Mom, Dad, Miles, Matt and Khloe



**Alva Jean Silverhorn**

Noah Webster  
"You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." - Christopher Robin (Winnie the Pooh) Congratulations Love - Mom, Dad, Marcia & Thaila



**Ryan Candelaria**

Abraham Lincoln Traditional School  
Congratulations Ryan Candelaria! We are very proud of you! Continue to work hard as you enter high school. Love your family!



**Sayla Valenzuela**

ECEC  
"Kindergarten Here I Come"



**Zaniah and Jacob Kuwanvama**

ECEC  
Congratulations to Zaniah and Jacob the Kuwanvama, we're all so proud of you. Next year off to Kindergarten. Thanks to Salt River ECEC we appreciate all you do for the kids.



**Elyanna Lopez**

ECEC  
Good job baby you did it we are so proud of you. We can't wait and see what the future has for you. We love you so much. Mommy, Daddy and all the family



**Hennellie Tatum-Taylor Blie**

ECEC  
Hi friends! I miss you all and wish I can see you guys again. I miss my teachers and my school. I can't wait to go back to school. -Hennellie



**Ava Rose Reyna**

ECEC  
"Mommy I'm going to Kindergarten!" Love my Mommy watching me from Heaven.



**Jade Winter Silversmith**

Sequoia Lehi Charter School  
All your hard work, accomplishments, patience and love. We Love you, Congratulations!!! Love Mom, and all your Family.



**Christopher Joseph Osife**

O'Connor Elementary  
You're off to kindergarten and we're so excited for you! We can't wait to see all you'll learn and all you'll achieve in school. Love momma, daddy, and Nanna.



**Maisum (May) Lewis**

ECEC  
Mismus is excited to go to kindergarten to learn how to count to 1,000 and she is going to miss her teachers and playing with friends at ECEC.



**Jordan Phillip Romo**

ECEC  
You are off to kindergarten, learn all you can. Jordan your journey is just the beginning! We are all very proud of you. Love, Mom, Dad, brother's and sister's



**Isaac Martinez**

ECEC  
Good job, Isaac. We love you and know you are very excited to start kindergarten! Love always, Your family



**Ezalea Silversmith**

ECEC  
Congratulations Ezalea we are so proud of you baby Kindergarten here you come I know you gonna be good cause your one smart baby. Dad & mom & everyone love you



**Nathaniel Dallas Alejandre**

Congratulations to our son Nathaniel attending ASU in the fall, majoring in Computer Science & Minor in Cultural Preservation. Mom and Dad are proud of your accomplishments.



**Saleya Lewis**

Salt River ECEC  
Congratulations on your graduation to kindergarten my sweet pea! You are growing into a very enthusiastic artist and full of possibilities. Dad and I are so proud of you!



**Benita Francisco**

Salt River Elementary  
We are so proud of your accomplishments; this is the beginning of great things to come new doors to open. We love you Grandpa & Grandma and the girls.



**Amelia Garza**

Salt River Elementary School  
You did it! We are so proud of you, we will be here in every step you take, keep reaching for that goal. Love Grandma and Grandpa and the girls



**Vanessa Francisco**

Salt River High School  
We are so proud of your accomplishments, we are here beside you all the way if you fall we are here to pick you up. Love your family



**Ezriel Burke**

"Congratulations Ezz, we are super proud of you! You make our hearts happy. Love how smart you've become keep it up baby boy!" Love always, Mom & Dad & Jase!



**Aiyana Rosemarie Taylor**

ECEC  
Kindergarten here I come! There's nothing getting in my way! With love and pride today and always, love all of us!



**Kevin Zotigh**

ECEC  
Our little Mister Kevin Zotigh mom and dad are so proud of all your accomplishments you have blossomed so much into such a loving boy, we love you.



**Raquel Daniels**

Colorado State University  
Congratulations Raquel! We are all so proud of you. After the long hours and hard work, we can't wait to see your next steps. Love All your family!



**Adrian Barajas**

ECEC  
Congratulations to our little graduate, Adrian Barajas! Daddy, Mommy, Gracelyn and your whole family love you! Kindergarten, here he comes!



**Aaron Ozuna**

Aaron Ozuna going on to the 1st grade!



**Dealia Ann Manuel**

Pima Traditional School  
Congratulations Dealia Ann Manuel on your promotion from Kindergarten at Pima Traditional School!! We all love you our sweet girl! 1st grade here we come! Love Mommy Daddy and brothers!!



**Alyssa Monet Andrews**

Salt River High School  
Congratulations to our daughter Alyssa Monet Andrews. Class of 2020, SRHS. We are very proud of you! Love Mom and Dad



**Ava Fall Schaaf**

Carson Jr. High  
Congrats! Another milestone! Good luck at Westwood High School, have fun in marching band and enjoy your first year in the International Baccalaureate Program, you Smarty! We love you!



**Victoria Elmer**

Noah Webster School  
Victoria you did it! Keep up the good work. Mommy is so proud of you for getting honor roll four quarters in a row. Love you!



**Audrina Prieto**

WooHoo! Audrina! Official 7th Grader! Proud of you! Keep on doing your best! #Classof2026 Love You from All Your Family and Friends



**Demetrius P. Garcia**

Accelerated Learning Academy  
Congratulations Son you did it! We are all so proud of you. Wishing you the strength to face challenges with confidence along with wisdom throughout your journey. Love, Mom

