

# O'ODHAM ACTION NEWS

"Telling the Stories of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community"



The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

Page 9



JANUARY 15, 2026



Community Garden technician Jared Butler helps guide Community Garden Supervisor Jeffrey Wilson as he operates a compact utility tractor at the Community Garden.

## Community Garden Awarded Recycling Grant, and Other Updates

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO

O'odham Action News

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The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) awarded the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community a \$62,000 grant for fiscal year 2026. The funding is part of the ADEQ Recycling Grant program, which supports public education to encourage participation in recycling and source reduction and to learn about proper solid waste disposal.

Monies for the recycling grant program are derived from landfill disposal fees and fund the following grants: Waste Reduction Assistance, Waste Reduction Initiative Through Education, and

*Continued on page 8*

## SRPMIC Rings in the New Year with Family Celebration

### 3 Takeaways:

- More than 3,000 people showed up to ring in the new year with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.
- DJ Reflekshin and Molina Music provided live entertainment for visitors to enter 2026 on the dance floor, while people packed the carnival rides outdoors.
- The O'odham Piipaash Social, led by SRPMIC Vice-President Ricardo Leonard, was a hit in the Salt River Community Building.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO

O'odham Action News

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The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community took the final hours of 2025 to new heights with the annual New Year's Eve Family Celebration, which was held on the Community Building grounds.

*Continued on centerspread, pages 10-11*



## Amaya Anton and Hamilton High School Flag Football Win State Championship



SRPMIC member Amaya Anton holds her team's 6A Conference flag football championship trophy after Hamilton's win on Nov. 24. Photos courtesy of Benjamin Anton and maxpreps.com.

## Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises Rally to Donate to Food Bank



Over 20 food boxes were donated to the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Food Bank, compliments of staff from the Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises. Photos courtesy of Jason Samletzka.

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE

O'odham Action News

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The shelves at the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Food Bank received a special holiday donation recently, compliments of staff and management from Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises.

On Dec. 17 and 23, staff from Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises delivered 20-plus food donation boxes, complete with nonperishable food and goodies. All items were collected and processed by the food bank staff and then distributed to families in the Community this holiday season.

*Continued on page 19*

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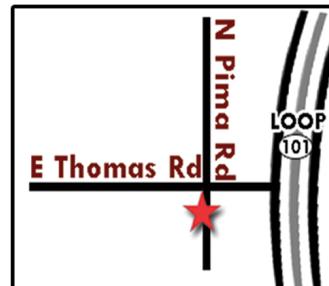
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## Getting to Know the Child Find Program

The program operates under the SRPMIC Education Division and offers free developmental screenings for children up to 5 years old.

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE

O'dham Action News

[juan.ysaguirre@srpmic-nsn.gov](mailto:juan.ysaguirre@srpmic-nsn.gov)

Early childhood is a formative time that shapes how children develop as they grow into toddlers, tweens, teenagers and adults.

Here in the Salt River Pima-Mari-copa Indian Community, future generations of children now have even more resources and services available to them, helping to ensure their successes as they grow older.

The Child Find program, a grant-funded program, is available to Community students and Native American children from birth to 5 years old. This is a critical period, as studies show that by the time a child reaches age 5, the brain is nearly 90% developed.

The program operates under the Community's Education Division and offers free screenings for children to determine if there are any developmental delays in hearing, vision, speech and motor skills.

It's important to identify and treat developmental delays early. According to a study conducted by Brigham Young University, once parents receive specialized training, they can help their children with autism improve their social and communication skills. The study enrolled parents who received 90 minutes of intervention training every week. The results were published in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* in 2022.

### Meet the Team

The Community's Child Find program has four staff members: Cameron

#### 3 Takeaways:

- 90% of a child's brain development occurs by the age of 5.
- The program is available for all Native children up to age 5 years.
- The Child Find program offers a Measuring Milestones screening, which helps identify any possible delays in a child's development.

Kizziah, program coordinator; Cassandra Yazzie and Valencia Yazzie, parent educators; and Maria Chappy, program clerk.

"We conduct approximately 250 screenings per year, with about half of those being first-time screenings and half being interval screenings for children that routinely get screened every few months to make sure they are meeting their expected developmental milestones," shared Kizziah.

She continued, "Approximately 10% of all children screened are deemed eligible for services through the Arizona Early Intervention Program for ages birth to 3, or developmental preschool for ages 3 to 5."

According to Kizziah, the program's Measuring Milestones screening process allows for parent input and provides a child-friendly environment that creates a safe space for children to showcase their abilities and any developmental delays they might be experiencing.

Once a screening has been completed, Child Find staff review the data. If any delays are identified, the team will connect the families/guardians with the appropriate early intervention services.

Screenings can be conducted at the Child Find office, which is located at the Early Childhood Education Center,



Meet the Child Find Program team. From left to right: Cassandra Yazzie, parent educator; Maria Chappy, program clerk; Valencia Yazzie, parent educator; and Cameron Kizziah, program coordinator.

next to the cafeteria. Screenings also take place at the River People Health Center pediatric clinic.

"We also can conduct screenings in your home, or in an alternate Community setting," shared Kizziah.

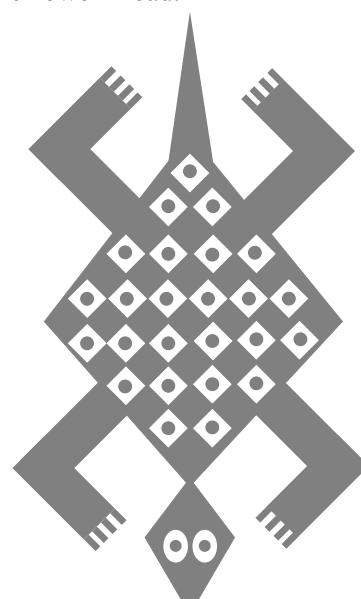
#### Upcoming Appearances

On March 19, the Child Find team will be in person at the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center in Mesa for a presentation that will detail the program's protocols. The event starts at 5:30 p.m. and ends at 7:30 p.m.; dinner and childcare will be provided.

Locally, the team will continue to appear in the Community at various events. They encourage families/guardians to reach out to them with any questions they might have.

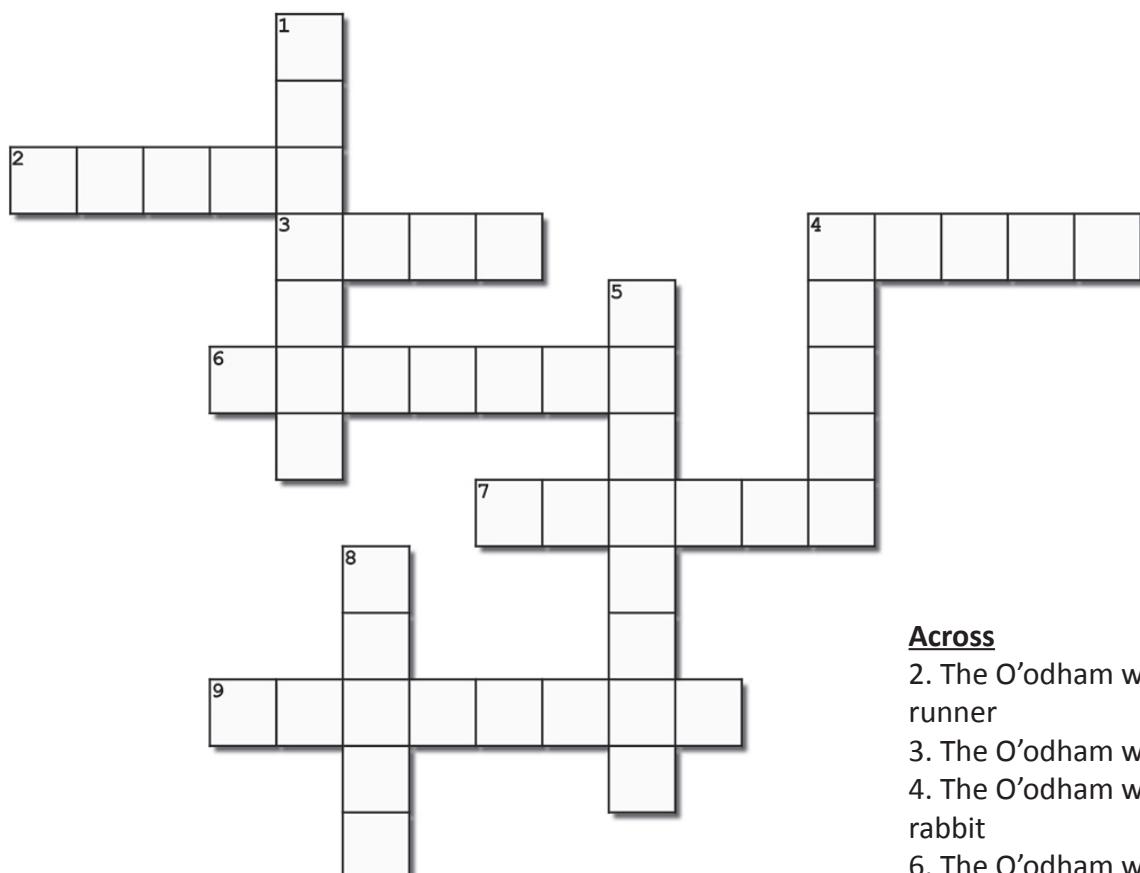
"We want to get as many children screened as we can," said Kizziah.

Contact the Child Find program office at (480) 362-2257 or stop by Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., to





# Can you solve the crossword puzzle?



## O'odham Words

Vipismal (hummingbird)  
Kakaicu (quail)  
Tadai (roadrunner)  
Koji (pig)  
Cu:ví (jackrabbit)

## Piipaash Words

Chiyer (bird)  
Ch'or (hawk)  
Qwaqt (horse)  
'iikway (cow)  
Xnarxnar (turtle)

### Across

2. The O'odham word for roadrunner
3. The O'odham word for pig
4. The O'odham word for jackrabbit
6. The O'odham word for quail
7. The Piipaash word for bird
9. The Piipaash word for turtle

### Down

1. The Piipaash word for cow
4. The Piipaash word for hawk
5. The O'odham word for hummingbird
8. The Piipaash word for horse



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## News and Events In and Around Indian Country

BY DALTON WALKER

*O'odham Action News*  
dalton.walker@srpmic-nsn.gov

### Former U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell Dies

The legendary Ben Nighthorse Campbell has died.

The trailblazing statesman passed away on Dec. 30, 2025, at age 92 from natural causes.

Campbell served in Congress for many years, representing his Colorado homelands for multiple terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. He was a citizen of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and the first and only Native person to chair the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

The longtime Democrat switched to the Republican Party in 1995 and served nearly 10 more years in Congress.

### Phoenix Indian Center Announces Leadership Awards

Nine people were recently recognized by the Phoenix Indian Center for their leadership in 2025.

The winners of the annual Arizona American Indian Excellence in Leadership Awards were the following:

- Kent C. Ware Lifetime Achievement Award: Steve Darden (Diné/Cheyenne)
- Phyllis J. Bigpond Lifetime Achievement Award: Sheryl Jo Lewis (Mono)
- Changemaker Award: Melody Lewis (Mojave/Tewa/Hopi)
- Changemaker Award: Denella Belin (Diné)
- Business of the Year: Photography by Roshan
- Friend of the Community: Kim Covington
- Volunteer of the Year: Elisia Manuel (White Mountain Apache/Mexican)
- College Student of the Year: Tasheena Egan (Diné)
- High School Student of the Year: Tateum Elthie (Diné/White Mountain Apache/San Carlos Apache)

### UNITY's 25 Under 25

The UNITY (United National Indian Tribal Youth) 25 Under 25 national recognition program is accepting applications.

Young leaders under the age of 25 will be recognized later this year for embodying UNITY's mission of living a balanced life and strengthening their spiritual, mental, physical and social well-being. The 25 honorees will be recognized during UNITY's upcoming national conference, which is in Oklahoma City in July.

UNITY only hosts this award recognition every other year. Details on how to apply can be found on UNITY's website, [unityinc.org](http://unityinc.org).

### Pascua Yaqui Tribe Partners with University of Arizona

The stadium home of the University of Arizona Wildcats football program has a new name.

The university and Casino Del Sol, a Pascua Yaqui Tribe enterprise, have signed a 20-year naming rights agreement. Under this partnership, the stadium is now known as Casino Del Sol Stadium. The agreement is valued at \$60 million, according to a news release. It includes new exterior and interior branding, field logos and other promotions.

### Native Youth Artist Opportunities at Heard Museum Market

The deadline for Native American students in grades 7-12 to showcase their work at the Heard Museum's annual Indian Fair & Market is March 2.

The Youth Art Show & Sale is part of the Heard market and awards ribbons and cash prizes. It is free for Native youth to enter. Visit the Heard Museum website for details ([heard.org](http://heard.org)). The Heard Museum Guild Indian Fair & Market is the museum's largest event of the year. It takes place March 7-8 in Phoenix.



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Located in the heart of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community's Entertainment District, The Pavilions at Talking Stick is a must-visit destination for families, foodies, and thrill-seekers alike.

### iFLY Indoor Skydiving

Fly like a pro—no plane needed! Perfect for kids, adults, and adrenaline junkies alike. [iFlyWorld.com/Phoenix](http://iFlyWorld.com/Phoenix)

### Bam Kazam

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### Slick City Action Park

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### Pickleball at The Picklr

Join a league or just swing by—this indoor pickleball facility is a dream for players of all ages and skill levels. [ThePicklr.com/Scottsdale-North](http://ThePicklr.com/Scottsdale-North)

### Bounce, Skate, and Tumble at KTR

A massive indoor playground for active kids and teens—and there's even a toddler zone with dedicated mini zones. [KTR-Centers.com/Scottsdale](http://KTR-Centers.com/Scottsdale)

### Bowl in Style at Mavrix

Mavrix combines modern bowling with upscale dining. This family-friendly venue offers a summer season pass with perks. [Mavrix Summer Season Pass](http://MavrixSummerSeasonPass.com)

### Octane Raceway

Octane Raceway is a high-speed dream. Enjoy electric kart racing, axe throwing, virtual reality gaming, and more. It's high-speed, high-stakes action. [OctaneRaceway.com](http://OctaneRaceway.com)

### Take a Swing at D-Bat Scottsdale

Swing into summer with batting cages, camps, and lessons for all ages. [dBatScottsdale.com](http://dBatScottsdale.com)

### Mini Golf with a 3D twist!

For something different, head indoors to a glow-in-the-dark, immersive mini-golf course that's perfect for families. [Imagine3dMiniGolf.com](http://Imagine3dMiniGolf.com)

### PopStroke

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The Community Garden crew. Left to right: Community Garden Technician Jared Butler, Supervisor Jeffrey Wilson and Coordinator Stetson Mendoza.

**Recycling Research & Development.** According to the ADEQ, the program provides funding to Arizona's political subdivisions (cities, counties), private enterprises, nonprofit organizations and tribal governments.

The awarded grant funds will go toward the SRPMIC's Community Garden Composting System project, under the guidance of the Cultural Resources Department (CRD).

"We're very thankful for the ADEQ, who supplied this grant. This is going to really help build soils here in the Community," said CRD Community Garden Supervisor Jeffrey Wilson (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma). "The compost that we generate will go to the Community Garden, but also some of it will go to individuals and families who want it, at no cost, to help them with their gardens at home so they can grow food themselves and be self-reliant again."

Wilson said that the grant will go toward two composting stations: one in the Community Garden and the other at the Round House Café.

"The one at the Round House Café is going to have a high-tech system where the vegetable waste comes in the top and compost comes out the bottom. It's incredible. We're going to reduce food waste in the Community," said Wilson.

"In a very basic sense, everything

starts with the soil. That's where the plant draws its water and nutrients from. So, if you don't have healthy soil, you won't have healthy plants. The organic matter or compost that we develop here helps the soil hold water, hold nutrients and release nutrients. Once you're able to do that with the soil, you'll be able to successfully grow crops here in this warmer climate that we have year-round."

The Community Garden will also partner with the SRPMIC Food Bank to collect food waste.

#### Food Sovereignty a Priority

Wilson grew up in West Texas and earned bachelor's and master's degrees in horticulture at Texas Tech University. He also received his Ph.D. in plant breeding at Texas A&M University. His expertise in plants and their relationship to the earth assists the Community as it moves toward the goal of food sovereignty.

"Food sovereignty is not just a buzzword. It's a real thing, because we're in a situation in this Community where we have access to land, we have access to water, and those are the two things that have been taken away in the past to subjugate the Community and make it dependent on the [federal] government," said Wilson.

"We want to improve the soils so that more food can be produced on

#### 3 Takeaways:

- More than \$60,000 was awarded to the SRPMIC Community Garden Composting System project, which promotes new composting initiatives with the Round House Café and Salt River Food Bank.
- The Community is moving closer to its goal of food sovereignty.
- The Community will partner with local and global colleges and universities to sequence of the genome of several different types of devil's claw for the first time, using a potential USDA grant.

Community land. And we want to do it here in the garden and we want to do it with the farming strategy team that we have to take [land] out of land lease, and we want individuals to be able to grow their own food because, as we've seen recently, [food stamp] benefits can be taken away just like that."

Wilson continued, "The Community has farmed these lands for thousands of years, and we want to get people involved in farming and growing crops, vegetables and fruits again. It puts the power back in the hands of the Community to determine their own destiny when it comes to what they eat, how they eat and the whole nine yards."

Wilson said that taking away seeds is another way to weaken the sovereignty of Native communities. He noted that plant breeders have been successful over the last hundred years or so increasing the sugar content of vegetables and fruit crops to please consumer palates.

"These crops have been held in the Community for hundreds or thousands of years and are extremely nutritious. They taste great—I can vouch for that," said Wilson, referring to traditional plants like tepary beans, mesquite and devil's claw. "If they're eaten by Community members, it will [improve their] health and reduce diabetes because they're not full of sugars."

As a Community member, Community Garden technician Jared Butler said food sovereignty is a must. He said that the Community's way of life, or himdag, was interrupted.

"I think it's very imperative that we educate the people and that we grasp onto the teachings that are still lingering here after all these thousands of years," said Butler.

"The knowledge of our ancestors stays here within the people."

#### Devil's Claw Genome Sequencing

Wilson said the Community hopes to secure USDA funding for research into the devil's claw, a traditional plant that grows in the wild within the Community. The grant application has been submitted; Wilson said they may not hear anything about the status until May or June.

Traditional uses of devil's claw include basket weaving and consumption as food.

The Community has partnered with Scottsdale Community College, the University of Arizona and the University of Copenhagen to get the first sequence of the genome of several different types of devil's claw.

"The devil's claw has been in this Community for thousands of years. It was domesticated by the O'odham, and we want to keep it in the hands of the Community," said Wilson. "We feel like there is going to be research done on it in the future because it does have a lot of promise as a commodity, not just for [basket] weaving, but also as food."

Important characteristics to be studied include the plant's measurements, claw length and how the weaving characteristics of the claw are inherited. Others are the color and the roughness of the texture of the claw and the composition of the seeds.

"The devil's claw produces a healthy seed oil with good fatty acids and protein composition that's heart healthy," said Wilson.

"We think it's a great project, and it's really, to my knowledge, the first Native American or Indigenous-led agricultural research project of its type in the United States."

## What does Health & Wellness mean to you?

The 5-in-5 Initiative, created by SRPMIC in partnership with the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, is a Community-wide effort to increase the quality of life, and life expectancy for SRPMIC members by five years.

To begin, we want to hear from you. Tell us what health & wellness mean in your daily life. Your insights will guide future programs, services, and outreach designed to strengthen the wellbeing of all Community members, and future generations to come.



Volunteer for a focus group  
(honorariums and refreshments will be provided)



Take the short survey  
(participants will be entered into a raffle for a gift card)

Every voice helps. Every voice matters.

## Attention SRPMIC Dialysis Patients

If you are an enrolled Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community member dialysis patient at any dialysis center, please note:

If you were not able to attend, or missed the annual dialysis Christmas party, please call to update your information to

Toni Harvier at (602) 587-9133, or email [toni.harvier@srpmic-nsn.gov](mailto:toni.harvier@srpmic-nsn.gov) so we can include you in next year's invite.



I am glad that Senior Services has this program for us seniors who can't manage everything for ourselves...They are a great asset to us.  
— Wanda White Eyes

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# The Native American Boarding School Coalition Makes Arizona Stop

The coalition recently visited the Gila River Indian Community as it works to collect and archive boarding school survivors' stories.



Lacey Kinnart welcomed survivors and their families to the four-day gathering in Gila River.

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE  
*O'odham Action News*  
juan.ysaguirre@srpmic-nsn.gov

When you look at it one way, all Indigenous people who were forced to attend federal boarding schools are not alumni, they are survivors.

This was one of the main focal points for the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition's recent stop in the Gila River Indian Community, held at the Wild Horse Pass Casino and Resort in Chandler from Dec. 14 to 18.

So far, the coalition's oral history project has visited nearly 20 reservations throughout Indian Country since it began in March 2024 to document survivors and their stories. The final stop will be in Oklahoma in June.

## They Took Funding Away

In the weeks prior to the Gila River visit, the coalition, also known simply as NABS, was discussed at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law during the annual William C. Canby Jr. Lecture in November. The guest lecturer was Deb Haaland, who served as secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior from 2021 to 2025.

During the question-and-answer discussion, O'odham Action News asked Haaland what the Trump administration has done to help NABS meet its objectives. "What has the current administration done? They took funding away," said Haaland.

She continued, "They took funding away toward

our oral history project that was being worked on between the Smithsonian and the Department of the Interior. This current administration is working hard to bury anyone's past that doesn't uplift the current president. It's sad, but that's why all of us have a big job to do."

Haaland also shared that many of the NABS key points the coalition created together are "probably collecting dust somewhere" because "the current administration doesn't want to lift the issue at all."

She shared that one key goal that was completed was President Joe Biden's apology to Indian Country.

She said, "Boarding schools have touched everyone here inside this building. We have an obligation in that sense. Right?"

Currently, the Bureau of Indian Affairs section of the Department of the Interior's official government website does not present or list any NABS data or research.

## NABS in Gila River

It's important to understand that the NABS healing circles and oral history interviews are sacred. For many, the recent NABS stop in Gila River was the first time that some survivors openly discussed the traumas they experienced when they were children.

On day one of the four-day stop, many survivors and their families hesitated to approach the NABS welcoming booth; however, once they were greeted by NABS staff, the survivors quickly learned they were surrounded by supportive relatives.

During the visit, NABS established in-person healing circles as well as oral history interview rooms which allowed for one-on-one recordings. As part of the NABS guidelines for their oral history stops, each survivor is provided with a ceremonial gift, a monetary stipend, an official headshot and more.

"We are here at our 16th stop, with seven more stops planned," said Lacey Kinnart, NABS oral history program co-director. Kinnart is an enrolled citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, as well as Potawatomi and Odawa.

Kinnart shares duties with her colleague Charlee Brissette, who is an Anishinaabe and Odawa woman, also from the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

She and Brissette were joined by additional NABS staff as they spent four days understanding more about boarding school survivors living in Gila River and the traumas that impacted them.

During the opening ceremony, NABS hosted traditional dancers and singers in the Whirlpool Room of the Wild Horse Pass Resort. Yellowbird Productions



Charlee Brissette continually reiterated that these healing circles are closed off from the public to allow for true healing spaces to be established for survivors and their families.

performed the Apache rainbow dance, and Gila River elder Robert Stone provided the opening blessing with a song.

For three days, NABS recorded and archived stories from boarding school survivors. Guests shared meals, hugs and healing behind closed doors.

"Our goal is to create a permanent oral history collection that will be housed in the Library of Congress, where it will be accessible to the public," said Kinnart.

NABS' next scheduled stop will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico, at the end of January as the coalition looks to wrap up their oral history project this summer.

"Our final stop will be in Tulsa, Oklahoma," revealed Kinnart. "That last stop in Oklahoma is a full circle because that's where we started back in March of 2024 and Oklahoma had the most federal Indian boarding schools, with close to 100."

The entire NABS staff is Indigenous, reaffirming that Indian Country can and will continue to take care of its own, even if the Trump administration does not want to assist with implementing healing resources for survivors of boarding schools.

Those looking to begin or continue their healing journey can visit the NABS website, [www.boardingschoolhealing.org](http://www.boardingschoolhealing.org), as well as the National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive.

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## O'odham Piipaash Word Search

V	I	G	X	C	H	I	Y	E	R	B	I	U	F	D	T	H	S
J	M	O	N	X	B	G	R	T	C	U	C	H	W	W	L	F	F
G	L	D	A	E	G	H	H	S	K	K	A	K	A	I	C	U	R
E	E	S	R	V	Y	N	G	A	K	K	F	J	T	D	E	Z	R
K	H	C	X	I	B	F	N	L	P	I	I	P	A	A	S	H	K
B	I	O	N	P	Q	S	B	T	O	O	O	Q	E	O	D	Y	I
D	R	U	A	I	K	T	X	R	Q	W	A	Q	T	O	H	J	K
Y	Z	N	R	S	O	P	B	I	E	K	T	N	R	D	G	W	N
P	P	T	I	M	J	T	O	V	F	A	O	M	T	H	E	I	E
U	J	R	F	A	I	H	T	E	D	Z	F	L	E	A	D	V	G
U	F	Y	T	L	Q	N	I	R	S	F	G	P	Y	M	N	D	B
L	E	V	W	O	R	Y	D	G	L	T	R	G	H	W	I	S	M

Find the following words in the puzzle.  
Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘

GOD'S COUNTRY  
SALT RIVER  
VIPISMAL  
XNARXNAR  
PIIPAASH  
KAKAICU

CHIYER  
O'ODHAM  
QWAQT  
KOJI  
LEHI  
OAN

# SRPMIC Rings in the New Year with Family Celebration

Festivities started at 10 a.m. with a New Year's Eve Pie drive-thru giveaway event across the street at the Salt River Ballfield. The ballfield parking lot was filled with cars within a few hours, and that lasted for the rest of the night.

Starting at about 4 p.m., families filed in for the midway carnival, arts and crafts booths, and food trucks. Scattered rain showers were expected throughout the rain-or-shine event, but the little drops were no match for the Community's big plans.

Over 3,000 people attended the event throughout the day, according to events manager Yvonne Schaaf. Wristbands for the carnival rides were \$5 each.

Every year the Salt River Community Children's Foundation orders 3,000 wristbands to sell for the carnival. All funds received go directly back into the foundation to support children of the Community. This year, thanks to a sponsorship from Messenger's Mortuary, the foundation was able to order an additional 500 wristbands.

"This allowed us to offer a 'buy 3 get 1 free' promotion while supplies lasted," said Salt River Community Children's Foundation Vice-Chair Angelica Valadez. "In addition, we donated to a variety of programs in the Community, such as Social Services' 'Shop with Public Safety' event."

Some from the sibling tribes also came for the fun.

"Guests came from other sibling communities--the Gila River Indian Community, Tohono O'odham Nation and the Ak-Chin Indian Community--to enjoy the annual event," said Schaaf.

"We also had a few local city guests drive out to enjoy!"

Schaaf noted that the event was a success with the help of a variety of departments, including Salt River Police Department, Salt River Fire Department, Health and Human Services Environment-

tal Health, Public Works, Tribal Council and Community Relations.

Community Relations Events specialist Adrian Sixkiller said that the added

safety precautions this year ensured a great family friendly environment.

As visitors entered the carnival, they heard the excited screams of people seeking thrills on skyward rides like Vertigo and experienced the dazzling lights and all the best music jams on the Zipper or the Rockstar.

While the sun was setting, the gym was popping with a set by DJ Reflekshin, followed by waila music from Molina Music.

A stone's throw away in the Salt River Community Building was the O'odham Piipaash Social, which is led every year by Vice-President Ricardo Leonard. Leonard and other traditional singers used a cardboard box in the middle

of a circle to form a beat. Piipaash songs were performed at the same time as O'odham ones, while Community members watched, socialized and enjoyed a meal.

At 9 p.m., free New Year's Eve party favors were handed out to visitors. The sounds of noisemakers and party horns echoed throughout the midway.

When the clock struck midnight, the ceremonial balloon dropped and the sky was blanketed with dazzling fireworks, ringing in 2026.



# 2026



# 2026 Features New Laws in Arizona

Beginning on Jan. 1, several new laws went into effect in Arizona. Here is an overview of new rulings regarding minimum wage, education and school nutrition, plus one with ties to the Arizona Diamondbacks.



Several new laws have gone into effect in the state of Arizona.

BY JUAN YSAGUIRRE

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## Minimum Wage Increases

The Industrial Commission of Arizona announced that the minimum wage in 2026 will increase by 45 cents to \$15.15 per hour. The increase was based on studies conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index, which found an increase in inflation from August 2024 to August 2025.

Flagstaff establishes and maintains its own minimum wage, thanks to residents who voted for that in a 2016 election. In 2026, Flagstaff's minimum wage will increase by \$3 to \$18.35 per hour. The city also eliminated "tip credits," which means staff must be paid a full minimum wage by their employers.

Two decades ago, the minimum wage in Arizona was \$5.15. In 2007, after Proposition 202 passed, the minimum wage increased to \$6.75 per hour.

## New Funding Avenues for the Arizona Diamondbacks

Updates and upgrades are coming to the Arizona Diamondbacks, beyond their 40-man roster.

A new law for 2026 directs millions in public sales tax funds to go toward facility upgrades at Phoenix's Chase Field, including air conditioning, the retractable roof and other key parts of the stadium. A bipartisan bill was passed in 2025 and signed by Governor Katie Hobbs, who said it was a responsible use of taxpayer dollars and would prevent the Diamondbacks from leaving Phoenix for a new stadium elsewhere.

The law stipulates that the new sales tax funding can be used only to fix, renovate, maintain or improve Chase Field.

## Removing Ultralabelled Foods from Schools

Arizona schools are emphasizing a menu of natural and organically grown foods while shying away from ultralabelled foods.

The new law calls for the removal of ultralabelled "junk" foods from Arizona public schools. Specific additives like potassium bromate, propylparaben, titanium dioxide, brominated vegetable oil and artificial food dyes (including yellow, blue, green and red dye) are now prohibited from being served, sold or allowed during normal school hours.

The Arizona Department of Educa-

## 3 Takeaways:

- Arizona's animal cruelty laws expanded their definitions to include birds, reptiles and more.
- The Arizona Diamondbacks will upgrade stadium features and amenities without increasing taxes.
- Public schools are eliminating ultralabelled foods.

tion is required to create and maintain compliance with the new law. Public schools in the state have until the 2026-27 school year to be fully compliant with the new ruling.

## Tobacco Sales Raise to Age 21

A new Arizona law states that those wishing to purchase tobacco products, including vapes, must be 21 or older. Previously, individuals could purchase/possess these products at age 18.

Anyone under age 21 who purchases or is found to be in possession of tobacco/vape products could be charged a fine or sentenced to community service. Additionally, the smoke shop could receive a reprimand for the violation.

The only exception is for those serving in the military, who can still purchase and be in possession of tobacco/vape products if it's approved by their military branch and the individual has their military ID card.

Arizona state law now matches federal law regarding purchasing tobacco/vape products at age 21.

## Updated Animal Cruelty Laws

In 2023, Jerry, a chocolate Labrador, was rescued in Chandler after authorities found him and 54 other dogs living in atrocious and inhumane conditions. After the "Chandler 55" were rescued, the need became clear for new animal cruelty legislation and guidelines.

S.B. 1658 defines animal cruelty as knowingly or recklessly failing to provide medical care when the animal needs it, failing to provide adequate shelter, and not providing clean food, water or shelter. Additionally, the new

law now includes birds, reptiles and amphibians (covering parrots, lizards, snakes, etc.).

Jerry and many of his four-legged friends attended the bill-signing on June 27 of last year.

This year's primary election is scheduled for Aug. 4.

The general election for statewide offices (governor, legislators), federal offices (U.S. Representatives and Senators) and more will be held on Nov. 3.

The Nov. 3 general election will give Arizona voters the opportunity to fill a newly established position: lieutenant governor. The lieutenant governor ruling was authorized after the passage of Proposition 131 in the 2022 election. Until now, the secretary of state has been first in line to take over if the Arizona governor was unable to serve; now, the lieutenant governor will be first in line. The position will start in early 2027.



# Vaila and Soda Night with SRS Security

BY ZOE HERNANDEZ

O'odham Action News

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In the O'odham language, vaila or waila means dance. Vaila is also known by many as chicken scratch, a type of music and social dance that brings everyone together for a good time. For many Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community members and those of sibling tribes, vailas are significant throughout their whole lives.

There are several bands throughout Salt River who play chicken scratch today.

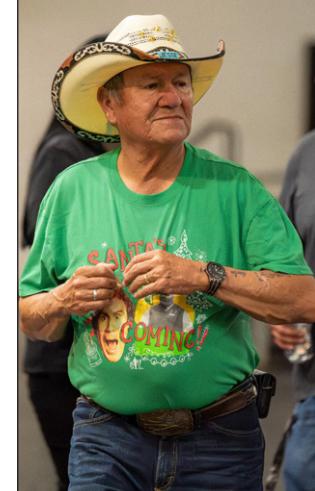
Molina Music performed at the Salt River Schools Vaila Night, which included dinner, soda with security and a turkey giveaway. The security team hosts their social event Soda with Security often during the school year. The vaila was hosted by the Education Native Language and Culture team along with the Safe Schools and Security team on Dec. 18.

The event was designated for learning about holiday well-being and situational awareness. Although

the night was intended to be informational, guests still had a blast.

SRS staff graciously donated frozen turkeys to be raffled off throughout the night. A cumbia contest got the crowd moving, with the winner receiving a free ham.

The night ended with cheers from guests throughout the last song, concluding a successful event.



# Lacrosse Makes its Way to the Ske:g Himdag Ki:



Students race towards the game ball in hopes of scoring for their team.



Two players go head-to-head for the game ball. Who will win this battle?

BY ANDREEA MIGUEL  
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Lacrosse is a popular game played by many people across the globe. It originated from Native Americans and is referred to as the "Creator's Game." The Haudenosaunee Nationals organization continues to make noise on the world stage, in both men's and women's leagues, and lacrosse is enjoying increasing popularity in the college sports world.

Now, lacrosse is available for Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community youth at the Skeg Himdag Ki:. From the end of October to mid-December, students had the opportunity to learn and play the game with the Arizona Lacrosse Academy.

The Arizona Lacrosse Academy is a non-profit organization based in Phoenix that is dedicated to bringing this game to youth in the Valley. In partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale, Jason Andersen and Jeff Wilson, directors of the academy, wanted to introduce lacrosse to the kids in a clinic style. Plans began to bring the idea to life but were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As time went on and life began to return to what it used to be, the lacrosse idea kicked back into gear. This time it was a little different, though; instead of teaching in a clinic style, Andersen and Wilson decided they wanted to form teams of kids from the Red Mountain, Barker and Lehi branches of the Boys and Girls Clubs.

However, they came across another dilemma.

"When we first got started, the only leagues available for youth were way out west: Peoria, Maricopa, West Phoenix, North Phoenix," said Sheila Scott, sports league director for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale. "They didn't have any [in the] east [Valley] or in Scottsdale, so the staff decided they would drive the kids to the games [themselves]."

In the beginning, parents would make the drive to watch the kids play, but unfortunately attendance fell off because the drive was just too far. After two years of this came the decision to create a small lacrosse league here in the Community between the Lehi, Red Mountain and Barker branches. That way long drives wouldn't be necessary and it would become easier for parents to attend games. It was also easier for the youth to participate.

Now, the kids could learn the fine points of lacrosse closer to home. They practice with each other on Tuesdays and play scheduled games on Thursdays.

"The best part is when they really start to develop and understand the game and how it works," said Scott.

"Thank you to all the supporters we have, Jason and Jeff, and their donors, and [thanks to] the parents who let their kids stay late and learn and [for] coming to games," Scott added. "Thank you for all the support to make this happen."

Expect more lacrosse in the fall.

Evening views for parents, players, and coaches as evening games take place at the Skeg Himdag Ki:.

Coach celebrates as his team scores a goal against the opposing team.

All smiles for this cheerful player on the field.

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Pastor Merrill Jones

(480) 234-6091

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Worship Service, 10:45 a.m.

Sun. Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m.

Wed. Devotion Night 6:30 p.m.

SOAR Group 2nd & 4th Friday, 7 p.m.

Mon. night Prayer Meeting, 6 p.m.

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Pastor Annette Lewis

annette.f.lewis@gmail.com

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Rev. WinterElk Valencia

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saltriverassemblies.com

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**REDEEMER APOSTOLIC CHURCH**



# Scholarship for Healthcare Students

## **Scholars:**

Healthcare students who have shown interest and previous self-study of medicine that is indigenous, ancestral, ancient, natural, food-based, nutrient-based, botanical, alternative or integrative are welcome to apply.

Indigenous healthcare students who plan to practice on indigenous lands are urged to consider this opportunity to explore the medicine of the ancestors, and are urged to apply. One student will be selected to receive the scholarship each term.

## **Sponsors:**

First Nation Medical Board, together with Nature Works Best Medical Clinic and Dr. Colleen Huber are funding this scholarship. Colleen Huber, NMD, CTP is a Naturopathic Medical Doctor and Certified Tribal Practitioner.

### **When:**

Each semester, one day per week, during daytime business hours.

### **Where:**

Dr. Huber meets with patients on tribal land, at the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC).

### **Award and Certificate:**

Scholars will receive a stipend for the semester of \$2,000. A Certificate of Completion will be provided at the last weekly meeting of the semester.

## **Learning experience:**

Aside from patients' visits and consults, pending each patient's permission, scholars will be assigned reading and further self-directed research on topics related to biochemical, metabolic and pharmacological impacts of medicinal plants and foods native to the region of and surrounding SRPMIC, central Arizona and the desert southwest generally, and how those plants are used medicinally today and in centuries past. Emphasis will be given to exploring the root causes of disease, treating the whole person, and First Do No Harm.

Send your CV and Letter of Interest to [Office@NatureWorksBest.com](mailto:Office@NatureWorksBest.com)

## LEGAL NOTICES

### JUVENILE COURT

JURISDICTION: SALT RIVER PIMA MARICOPA

INDIAN COMMUNITY COURT

ADDRESS: 10040 EAST OSBORN RD.

SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85256

CONTACT: (480) 362-6315

ALL JUVENILE COURT CASES REPORT TO COURTROOM #3 ON THE 1ST FLOOR.

FAILURE TO APPEAR CAN AFFECT YOUR RIGHTS

Jim, Chelsea - Adjudication Hearing Case: JV-24-0239/JV-25-0178, Court Date: February 26, 2026 2:30 p.m.

Spex, Brittany Arless- Adjudication Hearing: JV-25-0209 Date: February 5, 2026 at 9 A.M.

### CIVIL COURT

JURISDICTION: SALT RIVER PIMA MARICOPA

INDIAN COMMUNITY COURT

ADDRESS: 10040 EAST OSBORN RD.

SCOTTSDALE, AZ 85256

CONTACT: (480) 362-6315

CIVIL COURT CASES REPORT TO COURTROOM #1/#2 ON THE 1ST FLOOR.

FAILURE TO APPEAR CAN AFFECT YOUR RIGHTS

Andrews, Elijah Wade - Entry of Default Judgement/Order to Show Cause Case: CV-25-4582 Court Date: February 2, 2026 at 9 AM

Benitez, Roberto Lopez - Divorce Hearing Case: CV-25-4713 Court Date: February 12, 2026 at 9 AM

Carlos, Laila Athena - Entry Default Judgement Hearing Case: CV-25-3178 Court Date: February 9, 2026 at 9:30 AM

Clark, Coralie - Restraining Order Hearing Case: CV-26-1176 Court Date: February 23, 2026 at 11:30 AM

Encinas-Apodaca, Mariah Lynn - Restraining Order Hearing Case: CV-26-0725 Court Date: February 17, 2026 at 11:30 AM

## PROPOSED TRUANCY CODE CHANGES

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Council has approved proposed changes to the Truancy Code to move into the public comment period. This document explains what these changes accomplish and how they could benefit Community Members and families. Clean and redline copies of the changes are available for review.

- Cultural parenting circles
- Family counseling
- Help accessing benefits, childcare, and healthcare

### 5. THE CODE ADDS REASONABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR PARENTS, BUT ONLY IF SUPPORTS ARE REFUSED OR INEFFECTIVE.

Consequences are fair and tied directly to helping children succeed.

- Support always comes first.
- If a parent refuses support, or if the supports are not effective in solving the attendance issue, the Court may order:
  - Community service
  - Parenting classes
  - Weekly check-ins
  - Fines
  - Education-related service projects
  - Other consequences connected to school attendance

### 6. THE NEW CODE STRENGTHENS CULTURAL VALUES AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.

Reflects Community values and promotes collective responsibility.

- Encourages elder mentorship, community service, and cultural workshops.
- Increases connection between families, schools, and tribal programs.

### 7. THE GOAL: BETTER ATTENDANCE, STRONGER FAMILIES, AND SAFER FUTURES.

Improves student success and family stability across the Community.

- Reduces barriers to school attendance.
- Encourages trust between schools and families.
- Promotes healing rather than punishment.
- Ensures fairness and due process.

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC COMMENT

Community Members are invited to read the proposed laws and submit comments or questions.

Public Comment Period ends March 3, 2026.

How to Comment: You may access draft ordinance materials and make your Comments to the Office of the General Counsel at the following link: <https://srpmicnsn.gov/government/ogc/proposed-ordinances/>. Additionally, the ordinances will be presented at several Council district meetings, and comments can be provided in person.

Finally, you can email your comments directly to Chief Prosecutor Alane Breland at

Alane.Breland@SRPMIC-NSN.gov

## Salt River Public Works Department Memorial Services & Cemeteries

"Providing a hospitable place to honor loved ones at the end of life's journey."

### MAIN OFFICE LOCATED AT

Memorial Hall

9849 East Earl Drive

Scottsdale, AZ 85256

Monday-Friday

8 AM- 5 PM

For Any Questions Call: (480) 278-7050

### CONTRACTED MORTUARIES

Bunker Family Funerals & Cremation  
(480) 964-8686

Whitney & Murphy Funeral Home  
(602) 840-5600

## PUBLIC WORKS NOTICE

SRPMIC Council has approved the nightly closures of the Salt River and Lehi Cemeteries due to continued vandalism.

The Salt River and Lehi Cemeteries will be closed from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. If you have any questions, please contact Memorial Services at

**(480) 278-7050**

## DEFAULT NOTICES

### ENOS, YVONNE RISA

### ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE

CV-15-0120

### IN THE MATTER OF: R.V.F. (D.O.B. 9/25/2014)

To: Yvonne Risa Enos

YOU ARE HEREBY ORDERED to appear before the above-entitled court on the 29th day of January 2026 at 11:00 AM, in Court Room #1, and show cause why you should not be held in contempt for failing to appear for a Annual Guardianship hearing on September 3, 2025 and October 23, 2025 after being duly served.

FAILURE TO APPEAR will result in a Bench Warrant issued for your arrest for Contempt of Court from (§6-41) of the Code or Ordinances.

ORDERED this 2nd day of December, 2025.

JANAYA JOHNSON, JUDGE, SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY COURT

### JUAN, HATTI LOUISE

### DEFAULT NOTICE

CV-25-4591

Country Club Cars v. Hatti Louise Juan

To: Hatti Louise Juan, RESPONDENT

1. A Civil Complaint has been filed against you in this Court and your immediate attention to this fact is urgent if you do not want judgment entered against you.

2. The Court record reflects that you have failed to respond to defend by filing an answer, motion to dismiss, request for extension of time or other responsive pleading and you have failed to attend hearings at the Court called for this matter.

3. If you do not defend against this suit within Thirty (30) days from the date the Process Server hands you this or you are served with it otherwise as permitted under the Community Code, the Court may enter default judgment against you.

4. A default judgment may have serious, adverse, and irreversible consequences against you.

5. If you want to defend against the claim and avoid default judgment entered against you, you must file a written answer, motion to dismiss or other responsive pleading within thirty (30) days from when you are served with this Notice. The Court will not extend time for your response and you must make your response in writing, no oral responses will be accepted

6. If you do nothing, the Court may give Judgment for what the Complaint demands. (Section 5-16.1, Judgment by Default)

DATED: December 16, 2025

CLERK OF THE SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY TRIBAL COURT

### JUAN, HATTIE LOUISE

### ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE

CV-25-4591

To: Hattie Juan

YOU ARE HEREBY ORDERED to appear before the above-entitled court on the 17th day of February 2026 at 9 AM, in Court Room #2, and show cause why you should not be held in contempt for failing to appear for a Civil Complaint Hearing that was heard on December 16, 2025 at 11:30 AM after being duly notice.

FAILURE TO APPEAR will result in a Bench Warrant issued for your arrest for Contempt of Court from (§6-41) of the Code or Ordinances.

ORDERED this 16th day of December 2025.

ARISTINA V. SANCHEZ, JUDGE, SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY COURT

### PEREZ, JANELLE

### DEFAULT NOTICE

CV-25-4593

Country Club Cars v. Janelle Perez

To: Janelle Perez, RESPONDENT

1. A Civil Complaint has been filed against you in this Court and your immediate attention to this fact is urgent if you do not want judgment entered against you.

2. The Court record reflects that you have failed to respond to defend by filing an answer, motion to dismiss, request for extension of time or other responsive pleading and you have failed to attend hearings at the Court called for this matter.

3. If you do not defend against this suit within Thirty (30) days from the date the Process Server hands you this or you are served with it otherwise as permitted under

the Community Code, the Court may enter default judgment against you.

4. A default judgment may have serious, adverse, and irreversible consequences against you.

5. If you want to defend against the claim and avoid default judgment entered against you, you must file a written answer, motion to dismiss or other responsive pleading within thirty (30) days from when you are served with this Notice. The Court will not extend time for your response and you must make your response in writing, no oral responses will be accepted

6. If you do nothing, the Court may give Judgment for what the Complaint demands. (Section 5-16.1, Judgment by Default)

DATED: December 5, 2025

CLERK OF THE SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY TRIBAL COURT

## WASHINGTON, EDWARD LYNN

### DEFAULT NOTICE

CV-25-3181

Country Club Cars v. Edward Lynn Washington

To: Edward Lynn Washington, RESPONDENT

1. A Civil Complaint has been filed against you in this Court and your immediate attention to this fact is urgent if you do not want judgment entered against you.

2. The Court record reflects that you have failed to respond to defend by filing an answer, motion to dismiss, request for extension of time or other responsive pleading and you have failed to attend hearings at the Court called for this matter.

3. If you do not defend against this suit within Thirty (30) days from the date the Process Server hands you this or you are served with it otherwise as permitted under the Community Code, the Court may enter default judgment against you.

4. A default judgment may have serious, adverse, and irreversible consequences against you.

5. If you want to defend against the claim and avoid default judgment entered against you, you must file a written answer, motion to dismiss or other responsive pleading within thirty (30) days from when you are served with this Notice. The Court will not extend time for your response and you must make your response in writing, no oral responses will be accepted

6. If you do nothing, the Court may give Judgment for what the Complaint demands. (Section 5-16.1, Judgment by Default)

DATED: December 18, 2025

CLERK OF THE SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY TRIBAL COURT

## WEBSTER, CRYSTAL

### DEFAULT NOTICE

CV-25-4594

Country Club Cars

To: Crystal Webster, RESPONDENT

1. A Civil Complaint has been filed against you in this Court and your immediate attention to this fact is urgent if you do not want judgment entered against you.

2. The Court record reflects that you have failed to respond to defend by filing an answer, motion to dismiss, request for extension of time or other responsive pleading and you have failed to attend hearings at the Court called for this matter.

3. If you do not defend against this suit within Thirty (30) days from the date the Process Server hands you this or you are served with it otherwise as permitted under the Community Code, the Court may enter default judgment against you.

4. A default judgment may have serious, adverse, and irreversible consequences against you.

5. If you want to defend against the claim and avoid default judgment entered against you, you must file a written answer, motion to dismiss or other responsive pleading within thirty (30) days from when you are served with this Notice. The Court will not extend time for your response and you must make your response in writing, no oral responses will be accepted

6. If you do nothing, the Court may give Judgment for what the Complaint demands. (Section 5-16.1, Judgment by Default)

DATED: December 8, 2025

CLERK OF THE SALT RIVER PIMA-MARICOPA INDIAN COMMUNITY TRIBAL COURT

## Attention Winter Graduates

We want to celebrate your achievement in our June 2026 Graduation Issue!

Email us at [oan@srpmic-nsn.gov](mailto:oan@srpmic-nsn.gov) with your name, photo, school attended and field of study (if applicable) to be included in our Special Graduation Issue.

Open to graduating Community Members and their immediate families. Further deadlines and details for O'odham Action News Graduation Issue will be shared at a later date.

# Shannon Reina Demonstrates Traditional Foods with ASU Students

## 3 Takeaways:

- Shannon Reina demonstrated making white Sonoran wheat tortillas, O'odham s'oam bavi bowls, and more, for Arizona State University Humanities Lab students.
- While Reina presented the food, cultural anthropologist and chef Amber Sampson described the sensory elements of the presentation.
- The students enjoyed the freshly cooked traditional food at the end of the demonstration.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO

O'odham Action News

chris.picciuolo@srpmic-nsn.gov

"Let's do the frybread clap!" exclaimed Salt River Schools Food Service Program Manager Shannon Reina as she demonstrated preparing a traditional meal with Arizona State University students, faculty and cultural anthropologist chef Amber Sampson at the Accelerated Learning Academy kitchen on Dec. 6.

The class clapped along gleefully with Reina, or "Chef Shannon," as the students addressed her, pretending to knead frybread dough with their hands. Reina improvised how to cook a white Sonoran wheat tortilla on a plank over a grill as a nod to how her husband's White Mountain Apache family makes it, directly over the coals.

"That is the beauty of Native culture. We work with what we have," Reina shared with the class.

"We are very resilient."

She also demonstrated the O'odham version of a burrito bowl, the s'oam bavi bowl. S'oam means brown in O'odham and bavi means tepary bean. This recipe comes in handy for the students during extracurricular activities, according to Reina. Other traditional foods demonstrated were Hammas Ko'okol lol, which means fried chili, and an 'olas pilkañ (wheat berry) parfait.

The students' visit was part of their humanities class project. In their Growing Biodiverse Cultures class, they spent a semester learning about how the unique plant biodiversity of a region informs Indigenous food culture, according to Audrey Bunnell, student worker at the Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University. Bunnell and Sampson were instrumental in organizing the visit.

"My project partners and I felt that a cooking class led by an Indigenous chef would be a joyful, hands-on vehicle for people to learn about local Indigenous foods and feel empowered to cook and consume the unique, desert-adapted foods that hail from the place in which they live, and that's really how the concept



Salt River Schools Food Service Program Manager Shannon Reina, a.k.a., "Chef Shannon" (middle), with ASU students, faculty and ASU cultural anthropologist and chef Amber Sampson pose for a group photo in the ALA kitchen on Dec. 6. The visitors were treated to delicious traditional foods demonstrated by Reina.

for this project was born," said Bunnell.

Bunnell said her class has studied communities in Italy fighting to preserve ancient fruit trees, the vast significance of chiles to communities across Mexico, and communities in Puerto Rico trying to reclaim their food sovereignty after centuries of colonial exploitation and recent natural disasters.

"However," Bunnell said, "through my recent experience with Slow Food Phoenix, I've learned that this is not at all a faraway movement. This work to restore, protect and preserve Indigenous foodways is happening right here at home by people like chef Shannon Reina, and I wanted to create a space for people to learn about how valuable (and, frankly, delicious) our local Indigenous foodways are."

Bunnell and Sampson are on the board of directors of Slow Food Phoenix, a grassroots organization that works to protect local food traditions, support sustainable farming and help people understand where their food comes from and why it matters.

Sampson said that in her decade of experience in the food industry she has noticed a gap in the food system regarding how food is produced and the knowledge behind that.

In working with Reina for the demonstration menu, Sampson described the sensory elements of the demonstration with the students while Reina presented the food.

"In breaking it back to those foundations, that's how people retain traditional knowledge," said Sampson.

"When I talk to Shannon as an anthropologist and I interview her, I often ask her, 'How did you learn

this?' and 'Who taught you this?' For a lot of people, there are nonverbal sensory skills that they learn in the kitchen. For example, I knew that the tortillas were ready because I could smell them, because I could see the crisping edges, because I could feel with my fingers that they no longer feel like dough. That is a sensory skill that people learn in traditional cooking that is kind of lost as people are removed from their food systems."

Sampson's undergraduate professor was Dr. Julian Vitullo, who teaches at the ASU School of International Letters and Cultures and co-directs the Humanities Lab at ASU. Vitullo, who also attended the demonstration, instructs the Growing Biodiverse Cultures lab with Dr. Maria Cruz-Torres.

"My experience with Chef Shannon is just wonderful. I love the way she blended embodies learning with her storytelling," said Vitullo.

"[It is wonderful] just knowing that there are people like Chef Shannon who are so focused on passing down traditional knowledge about traditional food products from her own culture, but also on the health and well-being of the future generations of her community."

At the end of the demonstration, the students lined up to serve and eat the freshly cooked s'oam bavi bowls out in the ALA cafeteria.

Stay tuned for an upcoming OAN Podcast interview with Reina about cooking for the future of the Community and what she is serving hot off the stove next.

## 2026 SRPMIC REFERENDUM ELECTION

**Amendment to Change Taxable Gaming Per Capita Payments to Tax-Free General Welfare Payments**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026**

POLLS OPEN: 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

District I (Salt River)

SALT RIVER COMMUNITY BUILDING

District II (Lehi)

LEHI COMMUNITY BUILDING

## AT-A-GLANCE DATES TO REMEMBER

**COMMUNITY MEMBER ONLY MEETING**

**JANUARY 13, 2026 (SALT RIVER)**

**JANUARY 22, 2026 (LEHI)**

**JANUARY 31, 2026 (SALT RIVER)**

**DEADLINE TO REQUEST ABSENTEE BALLOT**

**JANUARY 23, 2026**

**DEADLINE TO PROVIDE ADDRESS CHANGE TO OFFICE OF MEMBERSHIP**

**JANUARY 26, 2026**

### ELECTION QUESTIONS

(Regarding voting or election day matters)  
Erica Harvier 480.362.7466 | Ardell Moore at 480.362.7465  
Email: SaltRiverElections@srpmic-nsn.gov

### SPECIFIC GENERAL WELFARE QUESTIONS

Office of the General Counsel  
Niccole King, Simon Goldenberg or Theresa Rosier at 480-362-7450

# Amaya Anton and Hamilton High School Flag Football Win State Championship



#41 Amaya Anton gets in the zone, winds up and punts a football for state champions Hamilton High School. Photos courtesy of Benjamin Anton and maxpreps.com.

BY CHRIS PICCIUOLO

O'odham Action News

chris.picciuolo@srpmic-nsn.gov

The Hamilton High School varsity girls flag football team in Chandler won the 6A Arizona Interscholastic Association Flag Football State Championship game for the second year in a row on Nov. 24, in a close 7-0 decision vs. Red Mountain High School.

Hamilton absolutely dominated the league all season, going 21-0. With

Hamilton got out to an early 7-0 lead in the first quarter and never looked back. Both teams played

strong defense, and Red Mountain handed Hamilton their toughest matchup of the year.

"The championship game was so unreal. Like it was on a whole other level," said Anton.

The bus ride back, she said, was "surreal."

"Everyone was so happy and excited! Everyone was just so proud of everyone," said Anton.

"We were all chanting [the seniors']

names because we felt so happy that they were able to experience that two-time championship."

Anton's experience in flag football is recent. Having played club soccer for years, she gained interest in flag football through one of her best friends.

"We became really close this year, and I was looking for a new sport to get involved in and ease my way back into school," said Anton.

"I found 'flag' and ended up loving it."

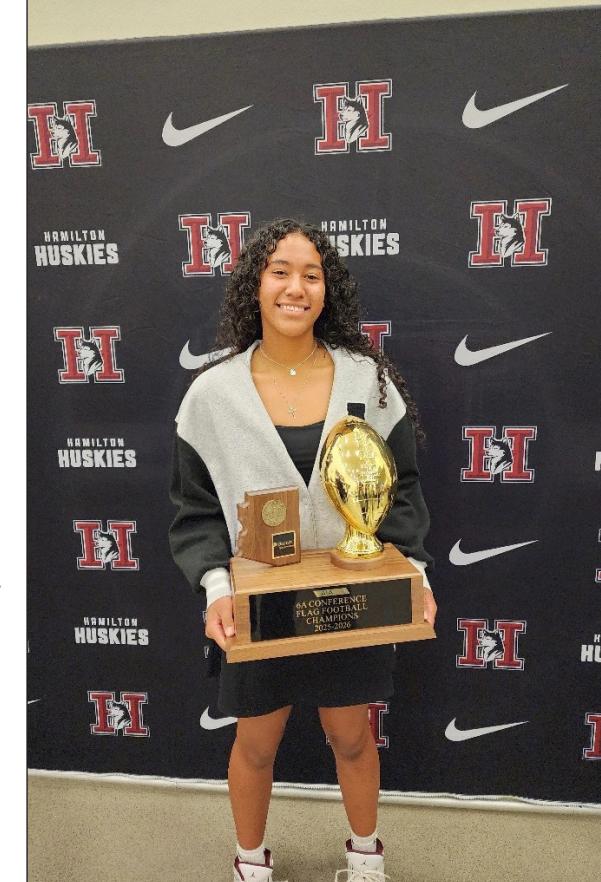
Anton said that her experience this season was positive. Every one of the girls had been supportive, from the other freshmen to the seniors.

"The coaching staff was amazing. My teammates were amazing and supportive, and we were all new to the sport, but it ended up being a great season for us," said Anton.

In the future, Anton sees herself continuing to participate in sports, whether it is through flag football, sports psychology or sports medicine—but she really wants to be a professional soccer player.

"I just really love being involved with sports. And I want to continue to be able to play in college and play as long as I possibly can," said Anton.

The soccer season just started for Anton, who is on the JV A squad as a goalkeeper. The Salt River Children's



Amaya Anton shares a moment after the championship game, holding Hamilton High School's 6A Conference flag football championship trophy after Hamilton's 7-0 win on Nov. 24. Photo courtesy of Benjamin Anton.

Foundation helped pay for her participation this year.

"I know it's a lot of fees that everyone is helping me pay. And I appreciate it so, so much because it allows me to be able to continue to do what I love and continue to develop," said Anton.

Anton is the eldest of four siblings; the other three are Emilia, Naomi and Mateo. Her parents are Benjamin and Alesia Anton.

## Fall & Winter Virus Season

Learn more about each of the viruses, how to protect yourself, and what to do if you're sick.



**FLU** is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs.

Everyone 6 months and older should receive a seasonal flu vaccine.

Vaccine available at Wellness Center



**COVID-19** can be very contagious and spreads quickly. Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill.

Everyone 6 months and older should receive an updated COVID-19 vaccine. Staying up to date greatly reduces the risk of hospitalization or death.

Vaccine available at Wellness Center



**RSV** usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but it can be serious for babies and older adults.

Talk to your healthcare provider about RSV vaccination if you're:

- 50 years or older
- A parent/caregiver of children 0-19 months
- Pregnant



If you're sick, report it to  
SRPMIC Public Health 480-362-2603

## JAN DISTRICT MEETINGS

### WEEKLY COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

#### • EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

Wednesdays @ 3pm

#### • REGULAR MEETINGS

Wednesdays @ 5pm

#### • WORK SESSIONS

Thursdays @ 10am

**29 THU** **CM BUTLER** | DISTRICT A, District I  
6:00 pm | SRPMIC Council Chambers  
10091 E. Osborn Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85256

**17 SAT** **CM ANTONE** | DISTRICT B, District I  
9:00 am | SRPMIC Council Chambers  
10091 E. Osborn Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85256

**26 MON** **CM Fulwilder** | DISTRICT D, District I  
6:00 pm | ALA Lecture Hall  
4827 N. Country Club, Scottsdale, AZ 85256

**15 THU** **CM Carlos** | DISTRICT E, District I  
6:00 pm | Skeg Himdag Ki, Room #56  
11725 E. Indian School Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85256

**20 TUE** **CM SCABBY/CM DALLAS**  
DISTRICT F&G (LEHI), District 2  
6:00 pm | Lehi Community Building  
1231 E. Oak Street, Mesa, AZ 85203

**17 SAT** **CM SCABBY/CM DALLAS**  
DISTRICT F&G (LEHI), District 2  
Quarterly Meeting  
10:00 am | Evergreen Neighborhood Center  
12275 E. Fairmount Ave., Scottsdale, AZ 85256

SRPMIC Council District Meetings website: <https://tinyurl.com/SRPMICCDMS>  
Council Secretaries Office: 480-362-7469 | <https://tinyurl.CouncilSRPMIC>

District Meeting dates, times, locations and agenda items are subject to change or cancellations.

names because we felt so happy that they were able to experience that two-time championship."

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"We became really close this year, and I was looking for a new sport to get involved in and ease my way back into school," said Anton.

"I found 'flag' and ended up loving it."

Anton said that her experience this season was positive. Every one of the girls had been supportive, from the other freshmen to the seniors.

"The coaching staff was amazing. My teammates were amazing and supportive, and we were all new to the sport, but it ended up being a great season for us," said Anton.

In the future, Anton sees herself continuing to participate in sports, whether it is through flag football, sports psychology or sports medicine—but she really wants to be a professional soccer player.

"I just really love being involved with sports. And I want to continue to be able to play in college and play as long as I possibly can," said Anton.

The soccer season just started for Anton, who is on the JV A squad as a goalkeeper. The Salt River Children's

### REQUIREMENTS

- MUST HAVE AN APPOINTMENT
- INCOME OF \$58,000 OR LESS
- SOCIAL SECURITY CARD FOR TAX FILER & ALL DEPENDENTS OR ANY OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT WITH SS#
- COPY OF DRIVER LICENSE OR GOVERNMENT ID (TAX FILER & SPOUSE)
- ALL TAX DOCUMENTS (W-2, 1099'S, ETC.)
- IRS CHILD TAX CREDIT LETTER, IF APPLICABLE
- BANK ACCOUNT/ROUTING NUMBER (FOR DIRECT DEPOSITS)

## SALT RIVER VITA TAX PROGRAM

- ✓ SENIORS/DISABLED PRIORITY
- ✓ NO FILING BACK TAXES / ITEMIZED TAXES

### CONTACT 480.362.7540

LEAVE YOUR FULL NAME & PHONE NUMBER  
• A VITA VOLUNTEER WILL PROMPTLY RETURN  
YOUR CALL WITH FURTHER DETAILS

**LOCATION** ADMINISTRATION OFFICE  
TWO WATERS BUILDING A, 3RD FLOOR, SUITE 300

CALL TODAY!  
2026  
FEB. 7 - APR. 12



## Salt River Rodeo Committee's 2026 SPRING HORSE CAMP

March 13, 14 & 15, 2026

Application Pick up: Round House 11am 1/20/2026

Deadline return: Round House 11am 2/3/2026

Contact Angie Silversmith 480-242-1432

or  
Andrea Stepp 480-232-3485

Limited to 35 Participants



## Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises Rally to Donate to Food Bank

Part of the food bank protocols now involve home deliveries for those with limited transportation methods or who are home-bound.

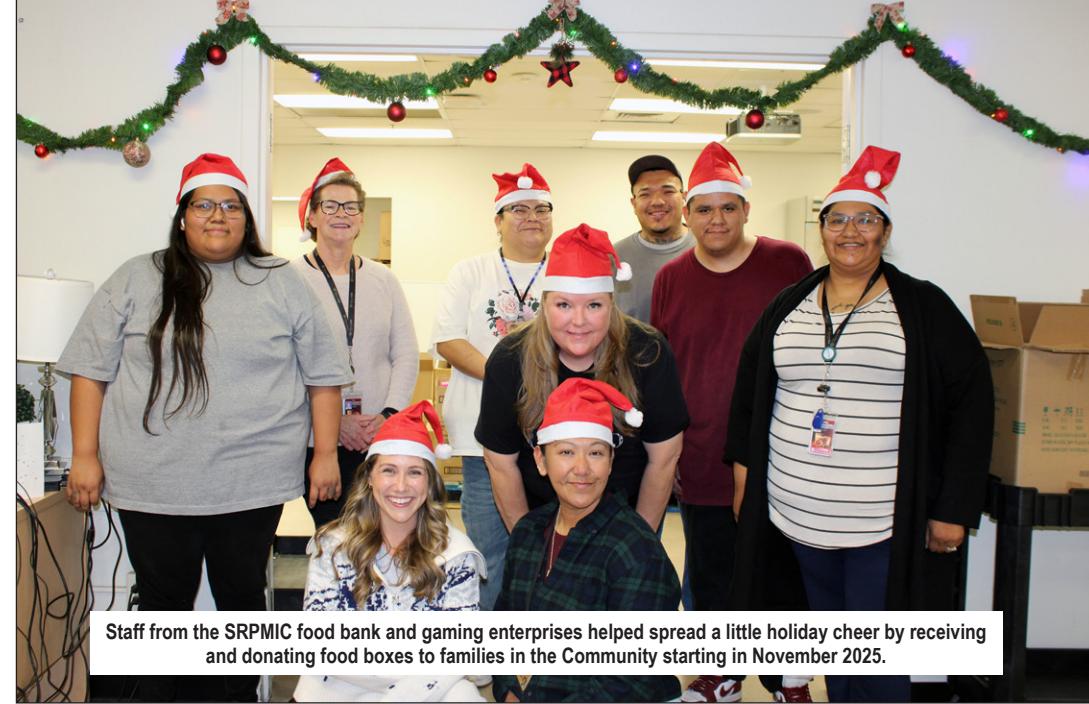
The donation drop-off was the second time the gaming enterprises staff hosted a food bank donation drive. The first was when the Trump administration temporarily ended SNAP benefits in the United States this past November.

After grouping together to come up with a plan to help, six individuals volunteered their time to help assist with the collection and drop-off.

Food Bank manager Helena Garza showed her appreciation to the gaming enterprise team's efforts and for their donation drop-offs over the last two months.

"Hunger doesn't always look the way people expect. It often looks like a senior who can't leave their home," said Garza.

She added, "We started with no deliveries. Today, we're bringing food directly to about 80 homes every week. This work isn't just a job, it's service. You feel it in your heart."



Staff from the SRPMIC food bank and gaming enterprises helped spread a little holiday cheer by receiving and donating food boxes to families in the Community starting in November 2025.



The shelves at the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Food Bank were stuffed with delicious foods during the 2025 holiday season.



The Salt River Community Gaming Enterprises volunteered their time and efforts during the holiday season to ensure families in the SRPMIC had warm and delicious meals to enjoy.

**ECEC FAMILY MATH EVENT**  
Families of enrolled ECEC students are invited to attend the Noodles & Numbers Math Night Wednesday, Feb. 4, from 4-6 p.m. at the ECEC. The free event will be filled with food, fun, family activities, and fantastic resources! Mac & Cheese will be served while supplies last, so get there early! Questions? Call the ECEC at 480-362-2200 or visit ECEC.SaltRiverSchools.org.

**SALT RIVER**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION CENTER

**COMMUNITY MEMBER ONLINE MEETING**  
JOIN US FOR A PRESENTATION FROM THE STRATEGY P TEAM

**Proposed Name Change of**  
**Salt River Pima-Maricopa**  
**Indian Community**

*Our name is part of our story and your input helps decide how that story is told.*

**JANUARY 17, 2026 | 10AM**

**Link:** [www.tinyurl.com/SRPMICnamechange](http://www.tinyurl.com/SRPMICnamechange)  
**Meeting ID:** 260 507 234 848 47  
**Passcode:** Gg2WD38D

Text your Questions to 602.816.3131

**PIIPAASH MATASHEEV**  
**BINGO**  
**FOOD SALE & RAFFLE**

**January 31, 2026 | 2PM**  
**Lehi Community Building**

**PIIPAASH MATASHEEV**

### Bingo Cards

\$1 a card or \$10 a pack

### Food Sale Menu

Steak, green chili, tortilla \$10/\*\$15  
Indian Taco \$10/\*\$15  
Red chili popovers \$7/\*\$12  
Bean & cheese popovers \$6/\*\$10  
Baked goods, Nachos  
Singles/\*Combo (chips, drink, cookie)

### Raffle

Ticket/prize categories starting at \$5  
Prizes include a Harkins movie pack, cash, TV, and more!

### Contact Info

Ardell Moore, (480) 362-7465  
Emily King, (480) 362-7400

All proceeds directly benefit the Piipaash Matasheevm events

Alcohol and drug free event.  
PMC not liable for thefts, injury, or damages.





**Salt River Materials Group** is a leading supplier of cement, pozzolans and aggregates in Arizona and the Southwest U.S for the over 60 years. **SRMG** has a wide variety of career positions, and we invest in our employees through extraordinary benefits, training and development opportunities to allow our employees to grow in their careers.

## BENEFITS

### Life Disability

### Long & Short-Term Disability Insurance

**PTO** (Paid Time Off) & **PSL** (Paid Sick Leave)

**Bereavement Leave** - immediately available upon hire date.

**Holiday Pay** - 7 observed and paid holidays, 2 floating holidays!

**Health** - extensive medical, dental, vision and prescription drug coverage.

**Supplemental Programs** - Everyone Health, Teledoc (24/7 medical/mental health services), GRAIL - pre cancer screen (based upon eligibility)

**Health Club Membership** - Health club membership for employees.

**401(k)** - A retirement savings plan with multiple investment options and **6% matching dollar for dollar** contributions.

**Tuition Reimbursement** - SRMG will pay up to 100% of tuition and books.

**Employee Local and National Discounts** - Theme Parks, Sporting Events, Plays & Concerts, Vehicle & Home purchases and much more!

**Green Vehicle Program** - Employees may receive up to \$1500 each calendar year for 3 years for the purchase of fuel-efficient vehicles.

**Home Energy Efficiency Incentive** - Employees may receive up to \$100 each calendar year for the purchase of energy efficient compact light bulbs (CFL's) and LEDs or an Energy Audit performed by SRP or APS.

### Does Salt River Materials Group have preference in hiring?

**Yes**, Salt River Materials Group (SRMG) is the commercial trade name for marketing activities of Phoenix Cement Company and Salt River Sand and Rock. Phoenix Cement Company and Salt River Sand and Rock are independent divisions of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRP-MIC).

However, all qualified individuals are encouraged to apply. During the hiring process, management will determine a prospective employee's ability, skill, competency and other qualifications needed for the job. When all these are equal between a qualified Community Member, a qualified Native American and other qualified candidate, preference will be given to the qualified Community Member, then a qualified Native American and then other qualified candidate.

**SRMG**  
VIEW JOB OPENINGS  
& APPLY ONLINE

FIND US ON



### MISSION

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND  
SOLUTIONS WITH QUALITY  
PRODUCTS AND EXCEPTIONAL  
PEOPLE

### VALUES

PROFITABILITY THE RIGHT WAY...  
INTEGRITY, ACCOUNTABILITY,  
EXCELLENCE

VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
[www.srmaterials.com](http://www.srmaterials.com)

Check us out at...  
[www.srmaterials.com](http://www.srmaterials.com)



Exceptional People...Exceptional Benefits...Exceptional Company  
Phoenix Cement Company and Salt River Sand & Rock,  
dba Salt River Materials Group,  
both divisions of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### ONGOING

**DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP**, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. in room 3104 (Cloud), 3rd floor of RPHC. This free, confidential, and safe group of individuals support one another by utilizing their collective experiences and learned wisdom. This gathering is for adults diagnosed with diabetes. For more information, contact (480) 362-3355.

**REZ READERS**, Third Thursdays through December. Looking for a good book and a nice place to talk about it? Then come join Community Recreational Services and Salt River Tribal Library for the new Rez Readers Book Club. A club where we will focus on native authors and themes for fiction to some non-fiction reads and engage in some great conversations as we all share our insight, thoughts and experiences throughout each book. Starting October 16th, Rez Readers will meet every 3rd Thursdays, October - December from 5:30pm to 7:00pm. Copies of the books will be available for check out (while supplies last). Questions Contact 480-362-6600/Triballibrary@SRPMIC-nsn.gov

**TAI CHI FOR SENIORS**, Tuesdays, 9-10 a.m., Ske:g Himdag Ki: Senior Room. This ancient Chinese martial art uses slow and continuous movements to improve the mind and body. For seniors 55+ and adults with adaptive needs.

**LOVE AND HARMONY COUPLES GROUP**, Tuesdays | 4:30 PM - 6:00 PM | Behavioral Health Services, River People Health Center 10901 E McDowell Rd. Scottsdale AZ 85256. Ready to strengthen your relationship and build deeper connection? Join our Couples Group, based on Dr. John Gottman's The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work. Learn practical tools to: Improve communication; Resolve conflicts;

Deepen intimacy; Navigate challenges around family, work, and more. Call (480) 362-5707 to learn more or sign up today.

**NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP**, First and Third Wednesdays of each month from 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. at RPHC 3rd Floor, Room 3104. Contact (480) 362-6948 for more information.

**WELLBRIETY 12 STEP AND MEDICINE WHEEL**, Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 a.m. - 11 a.m. at RPHC. Wellbriety is a Native American recovery fellowship that blends spiritual practice with the 12-Step program. Its approach to recovery focuses on healing and is rooted in the Teachings of the Medicine Wheel, the Cycle of Life, and the Four Laws of Change. Wellbriety emphasizes creating new thought patterns, attitudes, and feelings about sobriety based on traditional concepts and Native American teachings.

**TALKING CIRCLE FOLLOWING WELLBRIETY**, Wednesdays and Fridays 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Following the Wellbriety session, participants are invited to join the Talking Circle to share insights and experiences related to living in recovery and honoring traditional practices, including fellowship, community, and connection.

**WARRIOR'S SUPPORT CIRCLE**, 2nd Thursday Warrior's Support Circle is a talking circle aimed at offering our Veterans a safe space to meet and share their life experiences, challenges, and successes. The circle offers a free, confidential space for members to take steps towards recovery by gaining insight from others and learning more about PTSD, adjustment issues after reintegration into the civilian world, and to discuss general challenges that accompany service in the military.

**CRAFT COMMUNITY REINFORCEMENT AND FAMILY TRAINING**, Support group for

families of loved ones battling substance abuse/addiction/dependence. Fridays 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. at RPHC Room 3106 (3rd Floor) For More Information please contact Shea Hinton at (480) 362-2739.

**HELPING HANDS HALF OFF FOR SRPMIC MEMBERS**, Every Friday Community members get 50% off at Helping Hands. Open 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., closed 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. for lunch at 10213 E. Osborn Rd. Call 480-362-5625 for more information.

**BEADING CIRCLE**, Wednesdays 5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m. at Salt River Tribal Library inside Ske:g Himdag Ki: Open to enrolled SRPMIC members and Ske:g Himdag Ki: members. Call 480-362-6600 for more information.

**CREATIVE WRITING GROUP**, Every 1st Thursday of the Month, 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. at Lehi Community Building Room 109. In partnership with SCC, Creative Writing Group provides a creative environment to learn and explore prompt writing, literary discussion, and guest writers/authors. All genres and levels welcome. Open to adult Community Members and Ske:g Himdag Ki: members. For more information, call 480 362-6600.

**JANUARY 'AUPPA HIOSIG MAŞAD XLY'A SHENTHIK**

**15 ADULT WIOA ORIENTATION**, 9 a.m. at Two Waters Building B Room B102 - X'aa Cottonwood. Learn about WIOA Eligibility requirements; program services for enrolled participants; guidance toward obtaining career goals through education & training. Contact: Salt River WIOA Program (480) 362-7950

**17 ONLINE COMMUNITY MEMBER ONLY INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 2026 REFERENDUM ELECTION**, 10 a.m. Community

members are invited to attend upcoming informational meetings regarding the 2026 Referendum Election. See ad on page 15 for complete details on how to attend!

**19 MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY**, Offices closed. Please plan accordingly.

**22 COMMUNITY MEMBER ONLY INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 2026 REFERENDUM ELECTION**, 6 p.m. at Lehi Community Building. Community members are invited to attend upcoming informational meetings regarding the 2026 Referendum Election. See ad on page 13 for more information!

**23 GIRLS SKATE CLINIC**, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Ske:g Himdag Ki: for ages 6-17. Community Recreational Services Adaptive Recreation invites girls of all skill levels to roll in, learn, and have fun at our Get on Board Girls Skate Clinic! Whether you're brand new or already shredding, this clinic is all about confidence, movement, and community in a supportive, inclusive environment. Registration Opens: January 2, 2026 Register at <https://sugeni.us/eSEc>

**24 SRPMIC O'ODHAM PIIPAASH DAY**, Save the date! Additional details will be shared as the event date gets closer.

**31 COMMUNITY MEMBER ONLY INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 2026 REFERENDUM ELECTION**, 9 a.m. at Salt River Community Building. Community members are invited to attend upcoming informational meetings regarding the 2026 Referendum Election. See ad on page 13 for more information!

**31 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACCEPTANCE WALK/RUN**, 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Salt River Ballfields. Join Community Recreational Services Adaptive Recreation for the 4th Annual 2026 International Day of Acceptance Walk/Run on Saturday, January 31st at Salt River Ball Field, with registration at 9:30

a.m. and the walk beginning at 10:00 a.m. This event brings families together to show support for individuals with disabilities and strengthen a caring, inclusive Indigenous community. Participants can connect with local organizations offering helpful information and resources. Molina Music will be performing live, CRS Food Truck will be serving Walking Tacos and the 1st 200 participants to register on-site will receive a free event tie-dye shirt. For more information, call (480) 362-3390.

**31 PIIPAASH MATASHEEV COMMITTEE BINGO RAFFLE, & FOOD SALE**, 2 p.m. at Lehi Community Building. All numbers called in English. Bingo: \$1 game sheet (3 games per sheet; play them all at the same time or individually). Raffle Items: Big screen tv, bikes, \$100 cash, Harkins gift basket and many more items. Ticket price varies per item. Food Sale: Steak with green chili and tortilla, Indian Taco, Red Chili popovers, Bean & Cheese popovers, and assorted baked goods. Family friendly fun for all ages. Contact: Ardell Moore at (480) 362-7465

**FOR THE LATEST DISTRICT MEETINGS SCHEDULE, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW:**

