



Typical rock band practice session



2019 Music from the Heart event



Telehealth session with a client and therapist

music program supports school readiness by promoting socialization, communication, and pre-academic skills.

adaptable and safe, it can address the various needs of each individual with minimal or no side effects.

In 2018, HOH was awarded a grant from Trends Charitable Fund that helped finance successful programming at multiple Title I schools and community centers throughout Chandler, Tempe, and Scottsdale. This allowed HOH's board-certified music therapists to assess the unique strengths and needs of each client, then provide personalized treatments that included creating, singing, moving to and/or listening to music. Because music is extremely

From May 25 to May 27, HOH will be hosting Rock Together: A Virtual Community Music Festival, a free three-day virtual event featuring local artists. Performers with developmental differences – including autism, Down syndrome, and other special needs – will each perform a song of their choosing with their band. The concert will be live-streamed on social media platforms. Find out more at HigherOctaveHealing.org.

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community impact By Anika Attaluri

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Higher Octave Healing (HOH) was founded in 2010 to enhance awareness of the benefits of music therapy and increase access to services. Across the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, the nonprofit helps over 500 individuals each week, increasing clients' quality of life through the power of music.

HOH continuously runs various programs to empower the community through music therapy. In their signature Music Therapy Rock Band program, teens and adults with developmental disabilities learn to rehearse as a band and perform while learning life skills, such as planning, decision-making, teamwork, coping, and independence. The Melodies for Us parent-child developmental

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PUBLISHER Jen Petruzzella
480-755-7917
jen.petz@n2pub.com

DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Lisa Barth
602-692-0192
LBarth13@yahoo.com

ADVERTISING SALES Steve Petruzzella
602-315-7888
steve.petz@n2pub.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Anika Attaluri
anika.attaluri@gmail.com

Christin Valentini
christin@twinaz.com

Elizabeth Gaffney
elizabeth.gaffney01@gmail.com

Saloni Biyani
saloni.biyani2002@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHER Corinna Barber
Cori Anne Photography
602-363-9539
CoriAnnePhotography.com

CONTRIBUTORS-AT-LARGE The residents of Ocotillo

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Neighborhood Sponsor INDEX

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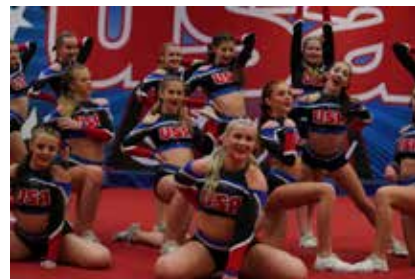
Dear friends,

Throughout the year, there are a variety of neighbors who submit an assortment of stories and photos for *Ocotillo Living* magazine in many different ways. No matter how the pages of our open-sourced publication are filled, we love to share your positive news.

One of the simplest ways to see your favorite people and places in the magazine is via nomination. This month, our cover family, Lucas Ozga, Higher Octave Healing, and SoHo63 were all brought to our attention by you, our readers. Each of these extraordinary community members were recommended via email to jen.petz@n2pub.com. Our team took care of all the details from there.



Get to know the Leonards on pages 14-16. Photo by Cori Anne Photography.



Meet the local girls of USA Glam on pages 18-20.



It's Snowy in May as our featured Precious Pet on pages 32-33.

Other times, we have a Chandlerite who sends over pics from their phone or shares professional photographs. Our writers help them round out their article and, presto, their pup, home, favorite teacher, local sports team, or beloved nonprofit appears in an upcoming edition of *Ocotillo Living*.

From the precocious middle schooler to the professional journalist, we have enjoyed submissions from a diverse range of Ocotillo residents. Some submit one time, while others participate on a monthly or quarterly basis.

If you'd like to help steer the direction of the magazine, we'd love to hear from you. Please email over your nominations, photos, stories, or let us know if you'd like to play a larger role in putting together your neighborhood newsletter. No ideas or people are too big or too small.

Also, please continue to keep in mind the businesses who sponsor *Ocotillo Living* when you're looking for a top-notch product or service that's neighbor-approved. All of us small business owners greatly appreciate your support.

All the best to you and yours,



Jen Petruzella
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SoHo63



Tribeca Terrace is an open-air courtyard illuminated by overhead bistro lights and the glow of a fireplace.

A hip and historic event venue in Downtown Chandler

By **Christin Valentini**
sponsor spotlight

On any given day, the enormous windows of the hip, yet historic SoHo63, located in Downtown Chandler, can be spotted with hand and nose prints from passersby, peeking in to see what's inside. "I guess that's why I keep my Windex bottle nearby," laughs Megan Schmidt, SoHo63's vivacious and energetic Chief Curator and Co-Owner. But when she hears, "Wow! This place is beautiful! I had no idea we had such a gem Downtown," the daily window cleaning is worth it.

SoHo63 is Chandler's destination for weddings, parties, corporate events, and celebrations of all types. The 12,000-square-foot venue opened its doors to the public in August of 2013. It is a family-run business that hosts events of up to 400 people, every day of the week, at various hours and **every event is custom.**

"Our weddings and events have received amazing reviews," Megan shares. "My team is incredible! They are conscientious, considerate, and work with every client to assist them in achieving their goals and bringing their vision to life. My staff is dedicated to creating a perfect and memorable celebration for every client."

SoHo63 features four very different venue spaces to meet every client's needs. Tribeca Terrace is the venue's open-air courtyard. This space can, if desired, flow into Grammercy; a beautiful,

ornate contemporary ballroom. The rustic Brix on Boston room is a tribute to the building's history, featuring the original 1920 tin-ceiling and exposed adobe brick walls. A small black and white tile engraved with O.S. Stapley and Co., the first business located on the SoHo63 site, can also be found in the room. Rounding out the amazing venue options is a stunning room called The Plaza. Its ambiance is created by 100 flickering wall candles gently concealed by crystal curtains.

Megan is very proud of the incredible venue she and her team have created. She says they all call work their home. She adds, "Personally, I am so blessed for what I do. I love this industry and I am excited every day to come to work." One of the best pieces of advice she can give to anyone planning an event or wedding is to come in with an honest budget and to have a few different dates in mind. Getting stuck on one single date can limit event options.

Outside of work, Megan embraces the local community through her participation in the Downtown Chandler Community Partnership, where she



The Plaza is an exquisite indoor ceremony location.



The historic Brix on Boston is a contemporary library that's ideal for social gatherings and cocktail hour meetings.



sits on the board, as well as her involvement in the Chandler Chamber of Commerce. She also brought together a group of leaders in the event industry to share business strategies, solutions, and loan and grant opportunities to assist in recovering from lost business this past year.

To find out more about SoHo63 and how they can assist you in creating your perfect event, give them a call or visit them in Downtown Chandler. Megan and her staff look forward to working with you.

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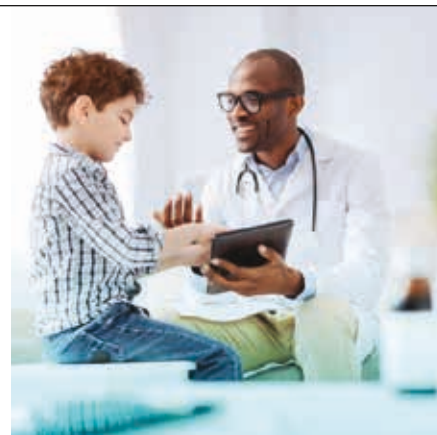


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craft beer culture

By Christian Chandler
Photo submitted by the Crown Plaza Hotel

YOU'RE Bacon me Crazy BRUNCH CRAWL

Hello, Ocotillo Friends!

One thing I have missed over the past year is a good old-fashioned pub crawl. Even better is a pub crawl with tasty food; but to really bring it home, how about a pub crawl with breakfast AND lunch offerings? Fortunately, Downtown Chandler decided to mesh all three and will be the site of the third-annual You're Bacon Me Crazy Brunch Crawl, which will take place on Saturday, May 15, from 10 am to 2 pm.

The self-guided crawl features 14 of Downtown Chandler's favorite brunch spots. Participants may enjoy a \$7 food-and-drink special at each location with the purchase of a \$20 admission ticket. Registration will be staggered, with 10 am and noontime slots, and will take place outside at the Crowne Plaza. Rather than dining in, participants have the option to utilize the City of Chandler's Dine in the Park program in portions of Dr. A.J. Chandler Park and the Courtyard, which allows individuals to enjoy beer or wine from sealed to-go containers.

The following is a list of the featured restaurants and their specials. I'm particularly looking forward to The Perch's salmon bruschetta and coffee blonde pairing as well as Pedal Haus' maple-bacon Dutch donut paired with one of their award-winning beers.

PARTICIPATING RESTAURANTS

- **Over Easy** Mimosa or juice with a waffle dog
- **Downtown Chandler Cafe & Bakery** Biscuit and gravy with home fries; bacon, coffee, or fountain drink
- **Murphy's Law** Hungover fries with a frosted shot
- **SanTan** Chicken on a biscuit with bourbon berry lemonade
- **The Perch** Salmon bruschetta with Platinum Coffee Blonde
- **Bourbon Jacks** Loaded breakfast tots with a frosted float
- **The Local Chandler** Candied bacon-maple donut and a mimosa
- **Crust** Breakfast sandwich with a mimosa, bloody Mary, sangria, or beer
- **The Stillery** Beignets and a mimosa
- **Ghett'Yo Taco** Burrito and michelada
- **Crowne Plaza San Marcos Resort** Stuffed French toast or breakfast slider with a mimosa
- **The Hilton Garden Inn** Smoked pulled pork soft tacos with a bacon twist, Margarita
- **La Ristra New Mexican Kitchen** Chilaquiles and mimosa
- **Pedal Haus Brewery** Maple-bacon Dutch donut and beer

For more information, visit
DowntownChandler.org/BrunchCrawl.

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the Leonard family



family spotlight
Images by Cori Anne Photography

Cori Anne
photography

The Leonards are a family of five who have lived in Chandler for 25 years. They have enjoyed watching the city “grow into a wonderful, family-oriented place to live and play.” As theirs was the second house built in their neighborhood, they know almost everyone in the area.

John and Lanna are both from the East Coast. Since she is from Boston, and he is from Long Island, the sports rivalry is strong.



The two met through the fire department when they were beginning their careers in Scottsdale as reserves. John still works 24-hour shifts in firefighting services as a captain for Gilbert Fire. With the three kids in their teenage years, Lanna left her 48-hour shifts and 21-year career as a firefighter paramedic with the Chandler Fire Department to be home for the family. “Our schedules didn’t make much time for family. To keep our children’s needs first, we never worked the same day. John and I didn’t see much of one another other than family vacations. If I wasn’t at the station, I was volunteering at the kids’ schools or on a soccer field,” says Lanna.

With all three kids active in soccer, the Leonards converted their garage into a full gym and indoor arena. Lanna continues, “It really helped when we couldn’t leave the house for a while. We played soccer throughout the night without breaking anything in the house.”





Heath, a junior at Hamilton, “set the standard of hard work both in the classroom and on the field. He hopes to see his soccer career take him to a college that doesn’t have the hot weather of AZ.” His siblings each followed his lead in soccer, starting the sport as soon as they could kick a ball.

Jaidan is a sophomore at Hamilton, plays soccer, and enjoys art. She would like to become a physical therapist, working with children and athletes with prosthetics.

Fourteen-year-old Bren is the youngest. He is in eighth grade, has a passion for soccer, and is the comedian of the family.

Rody is a Labrador who thinks he’s human. He “wants to go everywhere and be in the pool 24-hours a day, even in the winter.”

The family recently fostered 5-week-old puppies for Freedom Tails Rescue. Regarding the experience, Lanna shares, “It was a lot of work with the puppies so young, but everyone helped, and the puppies all found wonderful homes.” Lanna also volunteers by managing soccer teams and is the booster VP with Hamilton Soccer.

Although their hearts are in Chandler, the Leonards love their vacations and bring home an ornament from each place they visit. “There’s a whole world out there, and we believe it’s important to know other cultures, languages, foods, and adventures. We will drive countries end to end, climb mountains, visit volcanoes, ski, and see new animals and bugs we never heard of. It’s all about the adventure and letting our children know that there are no restrictions. If you want it, go get it,” concludes Lanna.



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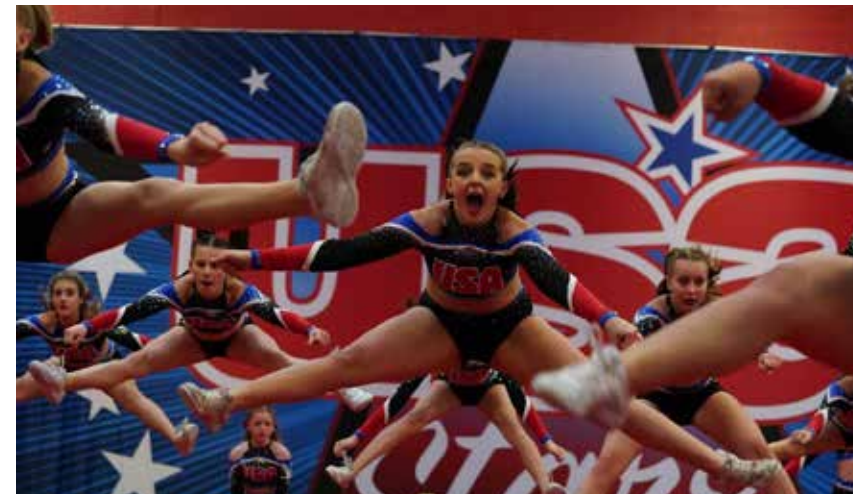


athletes of the month By Christin Valentini

USA GLAM ALLSTAR CHEER TEAM



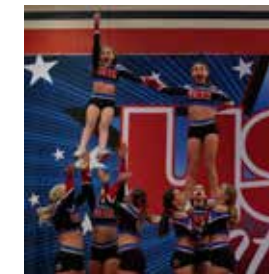
Teamwork, confidence, strength, and commitment are just a few of the traits of the amazing young women who make up the USA Glam Allstar Cheer Team. The team is part of USA Youth Fitness Center and have been cheering together since May 2020. The young ladies of Glam range in age from 12-16 and compete in the Senior 2 Division. They are coached by India Graham, Michael Spencer, and John Yenny.



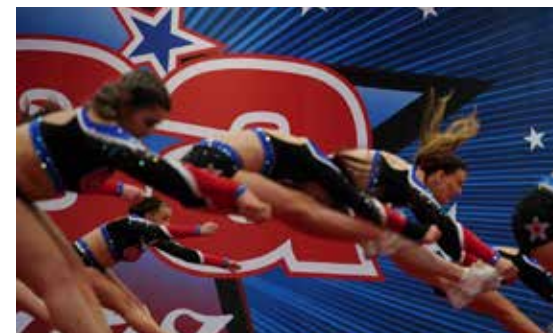
Jump section doing toe touches



Mckenzie Cull in her basket toss



Glam in their pyramid section. Kendall Taylor is braced to Abby Wilkerson for her shotgun toss.



Pikes in the jump section of the routine



Dancing in the last 30 seconds of their routine



A creative twisting dismount at the end of their second elite stunt section

To compete at this level, every member of the team needs to have mastered their back handspring in several forms: standing, running, straight jump back, back walkover, round off, and a front walkover round off. The team practices for two hours, three to four times a week. Each girl is committed to perfecting her own individual skills and mastering group skills. Based on individual strengths, each girl is placed as a base, back spot, or flyer to perform team stunts. Competitive cheerleading is a lot of fun, but it's also a lot of work and requires great athleticism. Each teammate must be able to tumble, stunt, dance, and cheer.

Talent keeps the girls of Glam at the top of their division, but their upbeat energy and positive attitude set them apart. Prior to every performance, the girls form a dance circle to shake out nerves and give the team good vibes. The girls are supportive of one another. Whether a routine runs perfectly or a mistake happens, they walk off the floor as one. The girls of Glam are always striving to improve and learn what makes a routine score well. Together with their coaches, they break down and analyze each section to refine their performance.

Trust and teamwork are huge components of competitive cheerleading. Fortunately, the girls of Glam have built strong friendships and treat one another as family. It is said that cheer friends become your best friends. Through friendship and trust, the team is able to attempt and then execute more difficult skills at each competition. For Glam, trust is threefold – it's trust in your

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Right before the girls hit their last structure in pyramid

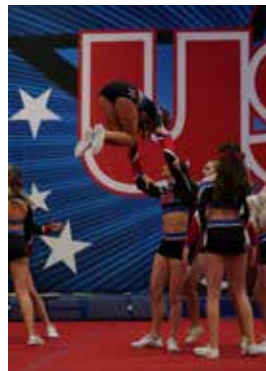
teammates, trust in your coaches, and trust in yourself. By combining these, the girls are able to push past their comfort levels and build explosive routines.

The young ladies of Team Glam have placed either first or second in every competition they've performed in this season. They currently rank third on the West Coast Leaderboard

in scores and will conclude their 2020-'21 season by competing in the Summit Championships in Florida. With their high energy, enthusiasm, and dedication, this group is bound to soar to the next level.



Taryn Pfaff, Bella Barth, and Abby Wilkerson in extension during their elite stunt



Sienna Berry's stunt group showing a creative entry before starting their second elite stunt section

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allison larys

teacher of the month

By Elizabeth Gaffney

TotSpot Preschool Lead Teacher

In her kindergarten classroom at TotSpot Preschool, veteran early childhood teacher Allison Larys teaches her young charges that they are unique learners and are “capable of doing amazing things!” She fosters a love of learning and helps kids and parents to see that learning is like a puzzle where all the building blocks and layers fit together to create something magical.

Larys studied and trained to be a teacher at St. Mary’s College of Notre Dame, earning a degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Spanish, Bilingual Education, and English as a Second Language. Her first job teaching was with the Scottsdale school district. “Funny story: I had never been to Arizona [growing up], and I received a phone call from a Scottsdale principal who



The Larys family



hired me over the phone. I flew out to Arizona the next day [from the Midwest] and began teaching the following day,” she remembers. During her tenure in Scottsdale, she helped create and start a Bilingual and English as a Second Language At-Risk Preschool and an ESL/Bilingual kindergarten.

After teaching in Scottsdale for four years, Larys switched districts to be closer to home. “Back then, all the freeways didn’t exist, and traveling from Ahwatukee to Scottsdale was not fun.” She found a new home at Kyrene de la Estrella where she taught all-day kindergarten (back when half-day was the norm). While teaching at Estrella, Larys got married, started a family, and left the classroom to stay at home and raise her children. Fourteen years after leaving the classroom, one move to Chicago and then back to Arizona, Larys wanted to return to teaching. She spent some time substituting in Kyrene and Chandler but felt the pull of having her own classroom. She found her new home with TotSpot Preschool as a lead teacher in kindergarten.

When not at school or pondering how best to meet her young students’ needs, Larys can be found with her husband supporting her own kids at the hockey rink or the dance studio, cooking, hiking, or just having fun together. But her heart is never far from the classroom; nor is her impact. In fact, a former kindergarten student of hers reached out a few years ago after tracking her down on Facebook. This former student wrote, “Because of you, I became a teacher,” reinforcing the truth that you never know the impact you will have on a child. That sounds like a pretty magical moment.

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Typical rock band practice session



2019 Music from the Heart event



Telehealth session with a client and therapist

music program supports school readiness by promoting socialization, communication, and pre-academic skills.

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In 2018, HOH was awarded a grant from Trends Charitable Fund that helped finance successful programming at multiple Title I schools and community centers throughout Chandler, Tempe, and Scottsdale. This allowed HOH's board-certified music therapists to assess the unique strengths and needs of each client, then provide personalized treatments that included creating, singing, moving to and/or listening to music. Because music is extremely

From May 25 to May 27, HOH will be hosting Rock Together: A Virtual Community Music Festival, a free three-day virtual event featuring local artists. Performers with developmental differences – including autism, Down syndrome, and other special needs – will each perform a song of their choosing with their band. The concert will be live-streamed on social media platforms. Find out more at HigherOctaveHealing.org.

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community impact By Anika Attaluri

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Higher Octave Healing (HOH) was founded in 2010 to enhance awareness of the benefits of music therapy and increase access to services. Across the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, the nonprofit helps over 500 individuals each week, increasing clients' quality of life through the power of music.

HOH continuously runs various programs to empower the community through music therapy. In their signature Music Therapy Rock Band program, teens and adults with developmental disabilities learn to rehearse as a band and perform while learning life skills, such as planning, decision-making, teamwork, coping, and independence. The Melodies for Us parent-child developmental

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legally speaking

By Amber L. Guymon, PLLC

divorce MYTHS abound



Every time I tell someone that I practice family law, it never fails that they ask me to dispel some grand myth about divorces. I want to set the record straight on the five most common divorce myths:

- **The kids will pick where they live.** No. Children have a voice, not a choice. The judge will consider the kids' desires if they are of "sufficient age and maturity." Even then, it is one factor among many the court will consider before ordering parenting time.
- **We still split equity in our home, even if I'm not on the deed.** If your name does not appear on the deed to your marital residence (or rental properties), your spouse may walk away with more than one-half of the equity.
- **Equal parenting time means no child support.** The Child Support Guidelines consider factors other than parenting time in calculating a support amount, like incomes and insurance costs. Thus, one may share equal parenting time and pay a substantial amount of child support every month.
- **My divorce is the same as my cousin's, right?** No, you cannot obtain divorce advice from family and friends. No two cases are the same, and our judges weigh various factors in making spousal maintenance awards and custody determinations. Thus, you cannot anticipate your outcome from what happened in your cousin or friend's divorce. Doing so will only set you up for failed expectations.
- **Keeping attorneys out will save me time and money.** Not so. You don't know what you don't know. People often make unfor- given mistakes in their final documents or give up far more

than they should. Thus, by saving several thousand on attorneys now, you can cost yourself far more in the future.



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kids 2 kids

By Anika Attaluri

Lucas ozga



Life is filled with unexpected twists, but it's important to stay strong, fight with everything you've got, and never give up. When Lucas Ozga, a third-grader at Hull Elementary School, was diagnosed with cancer in late-2019, he was initially worried about losing his hair and not being able to see his friends. Even though it was difficult, Lucas fought vigorously by undergoing chemotherapy and lumbar punctures in an attempt to eliminate the cancer. Despite these efforts, at the end of 2020, Lucas learned that his cancer had returned.

As for next steps, Lucas will be receiving a bone marrow transplant from his brother. To back Lucas and his brother on their journey, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, along with the Chandler Police Department and Fire Department, held a parade. The community



Lucas the fisherman



Gizzy Mo Mo and Lucas

coming together made Lucas feel especially loved and supported, reinvigorating his goal to beat cancer once and for all.

Lucas's family means everything to him, so, naturally, he loves spending time with them. His fondest memories include visiting Disneyland with his grandparents and traveling to Chicago, where most of his family lives. On his birthday, Lucas got a puppy from his mom, which he named Gizzy Mo Mo. The pup's unconditional love comforts Lucas and has helped him get through hard days.

When he's not playing with his dog, Lucas is often found fishing with his mom. They frequently visit the little lake near their house, where Lucas has caught various fish. In fact, Lucas once caught 17 fish within an hour. His Make-A-Wish is to travel to Hawaii so that he can experience deep sea fishing.

When Lucas was last hospitalized, he participated in a game of bingo and won. Instead of choosing a prize for himself, Lucas remembered the little girl he met earlier at the hospital and chose an American Girl doll to gift to her. Lucas has a heart of gold and his strength inspires everyone around him.



He's always one to make others laugh

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A young patient enjoying a performance at the hospital



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making a difference By Anika Attaluri



HEALING THROUGH ART AND CONNECTION

Partners that Heal is the brainchild of the 2009 partnership between The Phoenix Theatre Company and Phoenix Children's Hospital, through which artists performed skits for children and families in hospital waiting rooms and classrooms. Since then, the Partners That Heal project has expanded to serve over 60,000 patients in hospitals and care facilities across the Phoenix Metropolitan Area. Using a unique national model that weaves together dance, music, puppetry, and improvisation, Partners That Heal brings humanity to highly stressful situations by reducing patient anxiety, improving patient-provider communication, and increasing patient compliance with treatment regimens.

When COVID-19 hit, Partners That Heal did not hesitate to pivot the program to a virtual tablet delivery system in order

to support the community and frontline health heroes. With patients becoming increasingly isolated and health center staff facing high burnout, it was more important than ever for the program to continue to bring comfort, consolation, inspiration, and connection. By meeting this intensely challenging situation, the artists learned the value of human connection. Pasha Yamotahari, Partners That Heal's Artistic Director, notes that "as long as you allow yourself to be vulnerable to someone on the other side of the screen, you quickly create trust, brighten communication, and ignite imagination." This digital iteration has proven to be just as impactful as in-person interventions, and demand continues to increase on a weekly basis as word of the program spreads through hospital networks. Partners That Heal is a life-changing experience that brings smiles and inspires hope.

Partners That Heal continues to serve those in need and frontline healthcare workers to give them the opportunity to find respite from our current challenges and a moment to laugh. If you would like to learn more about Partners That Heal and how to support their programs, please visit PhoenixTheatre.com.

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Daryl Cook
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Like all Chandler kids, the falling of the fresh, powdery snow is an event that's rare for resident Maggie Han to experience. However, nearly eight years ago, Maggie's heart was filled with joy when she met her own version of white fluff.

After tirelessly begging her parents for a dog all of her life, the Han family finally welcomed Snowy in 2012. Appearing to resemble a ball of snow, Maggie decided to name her new puppy Snowy. He also has large eyes that are always curiously scanning his environment and a cute button-shaped nose that pops out against his creamy, wool-like fur. Besides these adorable features, Maggie instantly knew that Snowy was the dog for her as he doesn't shed and was the cutest, most obedient puppy she had ever met.

Maggie's first memory of Snowy was when they brought him home and she watched him run around the house and backyard, quickly becoming familiar with his new surroundings. Like other Maltipoos, Snowy is a very small dog, so he usually trips and falls multiple times on his sprints. Regardless, Snowy has remained energetic and full of life, never letting a few falls deter him from fetching his ball and chasing after his toys.

Snowy also enjoys a good game of hide and seek. Maggie says, "It's so fun watching him try to find us and looking in all the different places around our home, including the toilet." Snowy loves playing with any stuffed animal that he can fit in his mouth; in fact, he has a new favorite every day. When he's in the mood to lounge around, Snowy will sunbathe on the patio during the summertime or hunt for pillows to sleep on around the house.

A Windfall of Love

Whenever the Han family takes Snowy on a walk, he urges them to pause at this green patch to run around, play a thrilling game of fetch, and enjoy the breeze of the morning air.

precious pets

By Saloni Biyani

Snowy



Snowy may be small enough to hide amongst the bushes, but his adorable personality will always shine through.



Snowy has always enjoyed exploring nature. This particular walk turned to admiring and playing in the fallen leaves.

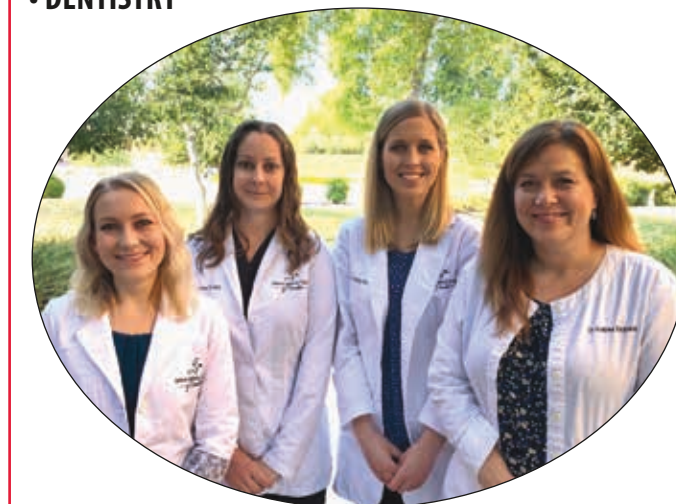
While Snowy may look similar to other puppies of his breed, he has a defining lovable and gentle personality. He can be bursting with energy or completely calm, and he's always sweet to anyone or any dog he meets.

Maggie may not have seen the cascade of a slushy snowfall this winter, but she has something better year-round: a lifelong best friend, Snowy.



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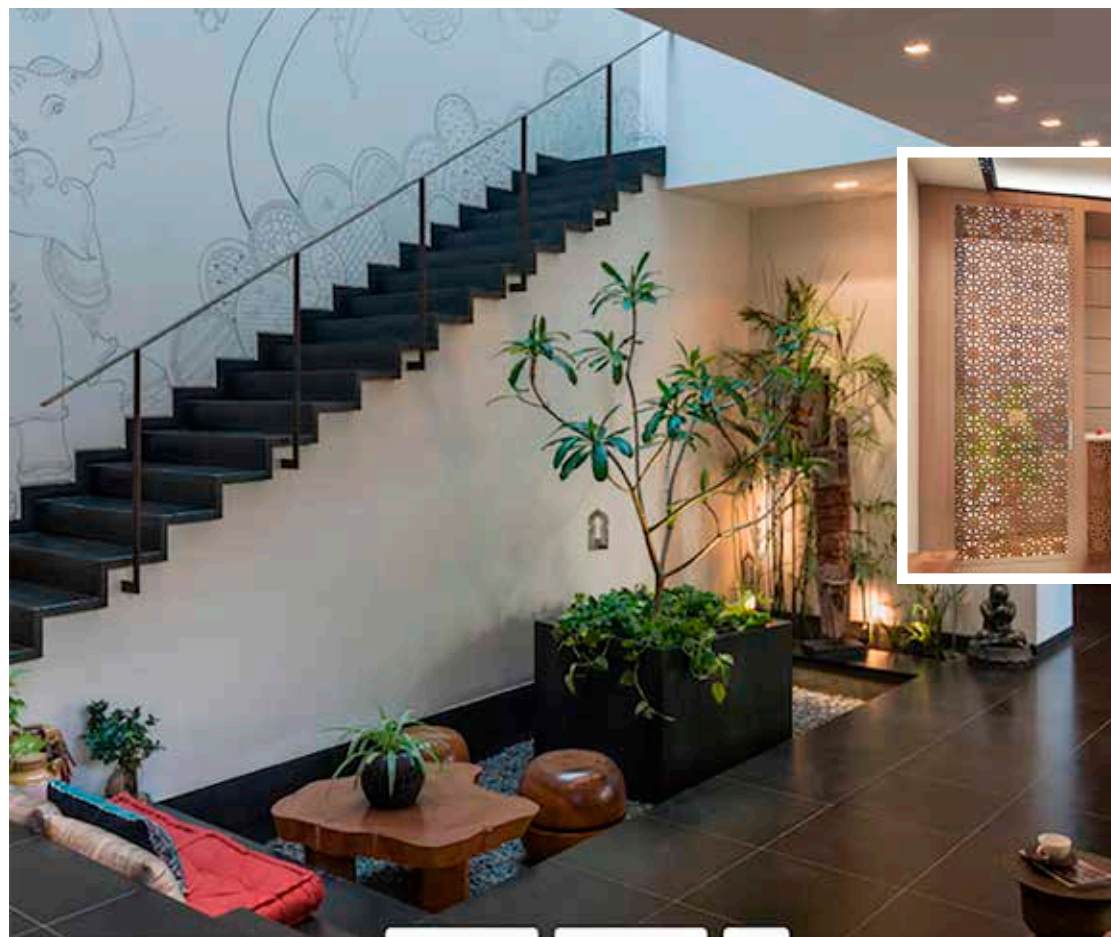
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Entrance with Zen garden

home of the month

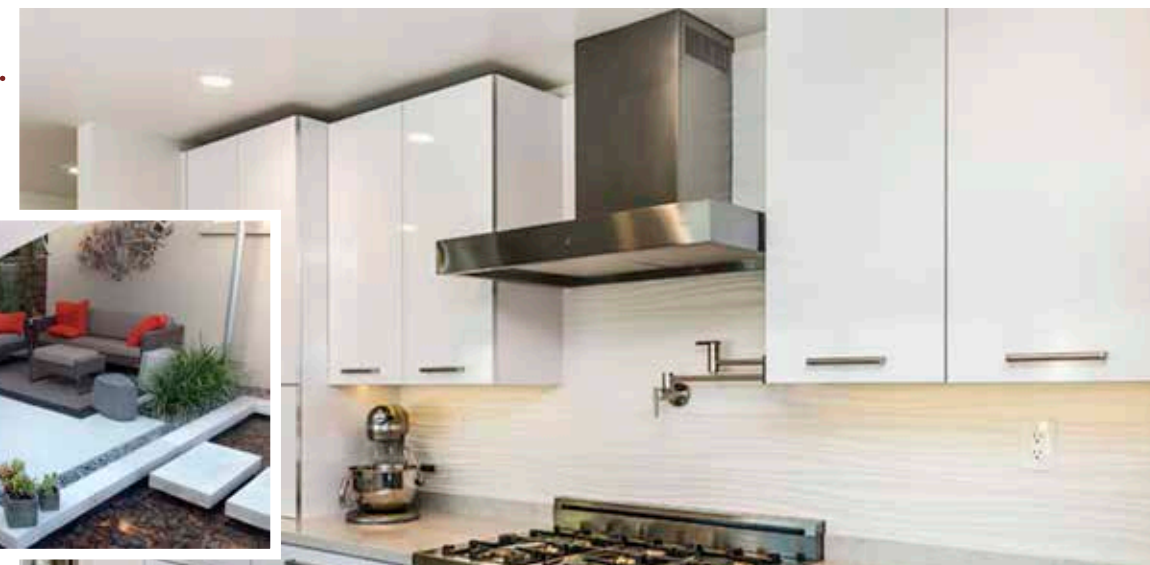
By Saloni Biyani



Shrine with natural and adjustable lighting



This well-loved outdoor space is an oasis of comfy and classy.



Part of the open-concept living room, the kitchen reflects a modern ambiance with bright white tones and glossy finishes.



The youngest daughter's bedroom is finished with a false ceiling with cove lighting.

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contemporary *in style* HOME *at heart*

Located in a community of high-end homes, this residence showcases a contemporary style of living. With its serene, sophisticated, and sleek architecture, each house truly resembles a work of art. Displaying an adherence to a simple yet stunning modern aesthetic, this custom-built home is no exception.

The first aspect of this house that encapsulates contemporary flair is its exterior. Expansive glass windows cover the house from top to bottom, and the futuristic vibe is enhanced by the adornments of industrial metal.

Captivating the eye, there are sky-high ceilings that top twenty feet. The decision to implement this method of construction was

not a spontaneous act, rather the interior designer followed a simple mantra: "When you elevate the height of your home, you elevate your life." This house also incorporates multiple stories with staircases that all follow a linear pattern. They are colored with a jet black tone and finished off with a matte polish which aligns with the neutral color palette present throughout the home. In order to appeal to the standard contemporary design, the owners also kept a consistent straight-edge theme, so there are no curves or arches present in the room, instead, every line is clear cut with precision.

While this house closely follows the general trend of contemporary style homes, there are several factors that are quite unique to this space and those living in it. For example, the family desired to amplify the beauty already present in their house by tying in their Indian heritage. So, in their current floor plan, they allocated a prayer room that's minimalistic in design and radiant in spirit. Additionally, the family planted a garden indoors, dedicating a Zen space that relaxes and stimulates a positive feeling within the home. There's a glass canopy that extends past the roof of the house and into the backyard in order to make the two separate areas seem interconnected. They also incorporated certain components from the Zen garden in their outdoor sitting area in order to bridge the gap between the two environments. Ultimately, the contemporary facade along with its striking individuality is representative of more than just a style, it is a place that sparks joy in the hearts of those living it.

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financial fitness

By Shauna Osborne

SAVING FOR COLLEGE: THE SCOOP ON 529 PLANS

All over the country this spring, students are walking across the stage, accepting their diplomas, and graduating from high school, their eyes fixed brightly on the future. Their next steps might include a gap year and travel, learning a trade, joining the military, or attending college; each of these options has a set of financial considerations to contemplate, particularly the higher education route, which, according to *Forbes*, is the most expensive it's ever been – an average of \$25,290 per year for in-state, \$40,940 per year for out-of-state, and \$50,900 per year for private! Thinking about how you're going to pay for college down the road? Keep reading for pros and cons of one popular option, the 529 plan:

What is a 529 plan?

A 529 plan is a tax-advantaged education savings plan intended to cover expenses associated with college and, in some cases, K-12 tuition and apprenticeships. The two major types of 529 plans are savings plans and prepaid tuition plans, and rules for 529 plans vary by state.

Advantages

There's a lot to like about saving for education expenses with a

529 plan. First, they can be used for an array of qualified education-related expenditures, including tuition, fees, room and board, books, computer equipment, and supplies. They are excluded from state and federal taxes, and many states even offer a state income tax deduction or state income tax credit for 529 plan contributions. They are flexible, offering the same benefits to all families regardless of location or income, and have high maximum contribution limits.

Disadvantages

On the other hand, some shortcomings to 529 plans do exist. Funds *must* be used for *qualified* education expenses, which means that non-qualified distributions, such as for transportation, applications and testing, or sports fees, for example, are subject to income tax and a 10% penalty. There are also some fees, upfront costs, and account minimums associated with 529 plans, which may not be feasible for some families.

529 plans are an attractive choice when planning for students' educational future, with pros and cons that must be weighed carefully by each family. Happy saving!



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2375 E CLOUD DR	CIRCLE G AT RIGGS	\$1,595,000	\$1,502,500	03/30/21	5	4.5	6,109
3371 E SAGITARIUS CT	BELA FLOR	\$1,390,000	\$1,390,000	03/17/21	4	4.5	5,008
1161 E BIRCHWOOD PL	ANATOLIAN	\$1,179,000	\$1,230,000	03/10/21	6	4	4,306
1641 S JAY PL	EDEN ESTATES	\$1,150,000	\$1,175,000	03/31/21	5	3.5	4,436
2697 E TAURUS PL	CIRCLE G AT RIGGS	\$1,140,000	\$1,140,000	03/09/21	5	3.5	4,227
4404 E VIRGO PL	VASARO	\$1,250,000	\$1,100,000	03/15/21	5	4.5	4,140
13316 E STONEY VISTA DR	CIRCLE G AT RIGGS	\$1,095,000	\$1,095,000	03/05/21	5	3.5	3,992
5342 S SAN SEBASTIAN PL	SAN SEBASTIAN	\$1,060,000	\$1,060,000	03/05/21	5	3.5	4,383
2139 E CEDAR PL	TIERRA LINDA	\$965,000	\$1,000,000	03/03/21	5	3.5	3,835
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741 W HACKBERRY DR	OCOTILLO EAST	\$725,000	\$775,000	03/05/21	4	2	2,429



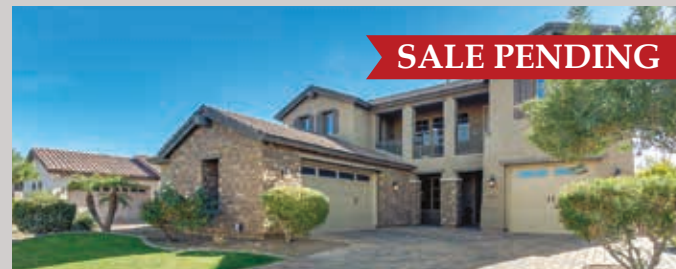
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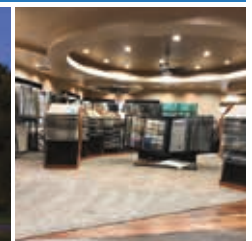
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