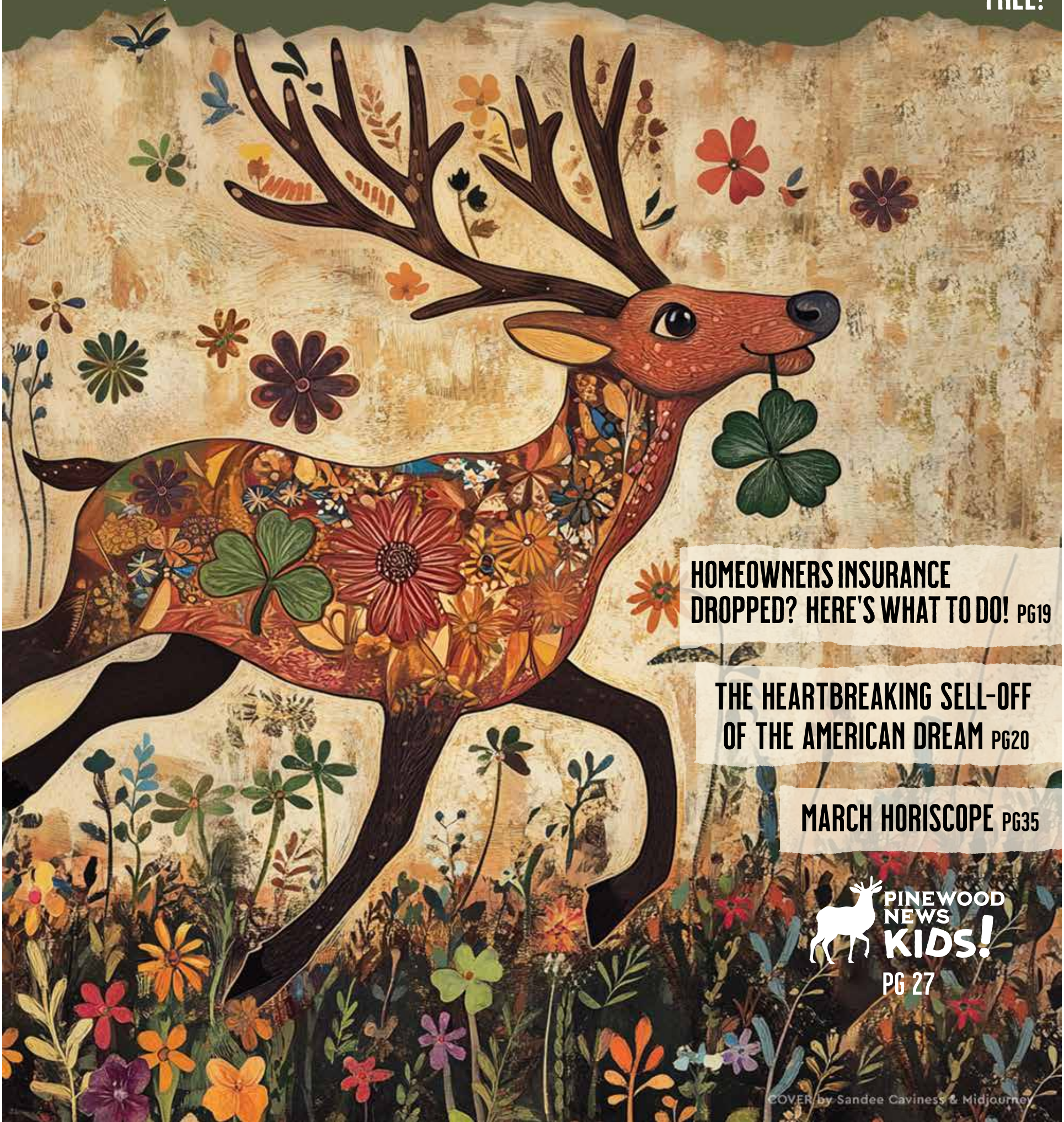


PINEWOOD

THE GOOD LIFE, COMMUNITY & DESERT MOUNTAIN LIVING

VOL. 32 NO. 3 MARCH 7, 2025


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DROPPED? HERE'S WHAT TO DO! PG19**

**THE HEARTBREAKING SELL-OFF
OF THE AMERICAN DREAM PG20**

MARCH HORISCOPE PG35

 **PINEWOOD
NEWS
KIDS!**
PG 27

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PINEWOOD NEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR & STORY TIPS!

The Pinewood News welcomes feedback and story tips from our readers. We encourage comments on any subject or article we publish. We will consider publishing received letters, except those that invade privacy or are libelous. All letters must be signed and include an address and phone number for verification. Note that letters may be edited for space and clarity.

Send your letters to: PO Box 18977, Munds Park, AZ 86017, or email us at Hello@ThePinewoodNews.com.

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COLDWELL BANKER NORTHLAND



\$1,495,000 • 17612 E FAIRWAY DR

Closed Restaurant with HUGE potential. Was an Italian restaurant opened during COVID and closed 11/9/2021. Sale price includes the land, building, all contents. The community really wants a good restaurant and this could be the one! Owner is a licensed real estate broker in the state of Arizona. Call Bill Spain, owner, 602-622-1196 for details. Owner may carry with a significant down-payment/scenario.



SOLD

**\$400,000
95 E FOXBORO ROAD, 11**

In serene Coconino National Forest, this 1.73-acre lot in Foxboro Ranch Estates offers a blend of tranquility and luxury with exclusive clubhouse access and all utilities ready.



**\$679,000
17380 CRYSTAL BROOK PL**

Charming cabin, blending modern upgrades with rustic appeal. New roof, upgraded floors, and vaulted ceilings. Features include loft, new kitchen appliances, and updated fixtures. The community offers a clubhouse, pool, and more.



SOLD

**\$445,500
17305 BIG SKY DR**

Turn-key 3-bed, 2-bath manufactured home in Munds Park. Fenced yard, carport, pellet stove, A/C, shed, apple trees, perennial flowers, and flagstone patio. All appliances included.



SOLD

**\$299,500
125 E OAK DR**

Updated home with new flooring, granite countertops, wood-burning stove, vaulted ceiling, split bedrooms, covered deck, storage shed, carport, and more..



SOLD

**\$391,900
17220 MESCALERO DR**

Updated 2-bedroom, 2-bath home, fully furnished with modern appliances, jacuzzi, RV parking, UTV storage, deck, and automatic drip system.



REDUCED!

**\$549,000
260 SANDIA CIR**

Enchanting cabin nestled among pines, fully furnished with new TV, light fixtures, Trex deck, Ring cameras, and WiFi locks. Enjoy al fresco dining under the stars. A cozy, modern retreat.



SOLD

**\$575,000
635 E OAK DR**

2017 Cavco home with 2,234 sq ft, 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, and 4-car garage. Situated on 2 lots, a redwood deck, and a natural stream, this move-in ready home offers privacy and outdoor space.



\$285,000

1200 S Riordan Ranch St #125, Flagstaff
Perfect for an NAU student, or second home. Conveniently located across NAU and downtown Flagstaff. Newly painted interior. Stack unit Washer & Dryer. HOA covers water, trash, sewer and hot water.



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555 E HILLSIDE DR

This energy-efficient home features top-tier insulation and a paved driveway with premium brick pavers. It includes a newer roof, three heating sources—pellet stove, split systems, and radiant floor heating—and a tankless propane water heater. The property boasts a private, fenced yard, a spacious garage for two cars plus a golf cart, and motorhome parking with hookups. Visit this immaculate single-level, 3-bedroom home today.

CALL DEBI BRIGHT



\$560,000

17425 S SHADOW ROCK PL

This fully remodeled, single-level home spans nearly 1100 square feet with three bedrooms and two baths. It sits on a large 7700 sq. ft lot and includes an oversized shed. The home features a propane fireplace, new vinyl windows, fresh interior and exterior paint, new cabinets, countertops, appliances, water heater, and flooring. Highlights include pine tongue-and-groove ceilings and new doors. Located on a quiet cul-de-sac, viewings are limited due to tenant occupancy. Please respect their privacy.

CALL DEBI BRIGHT



\$464,900

405 E CEDAR WOOD DR

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\$674,900



\$375,500



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LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS



AA Meetings - Feel Better!

Munds Park Community Church
Every Monday, 6 pm
17670 S Munds Ranch Rd

Munds Park Community Church Services

Services Sunday, 10:45 am
17670 S Munds Ranch Rd

Pinewood Fire Department Auxiliary meeting

The Community is Welcome!
Tuesday, April 1
6:30 pm • 17670 S Munds Ranch Rd

Pinewood Fire District Board Meeting

Public Welcome
Tuesday, April 13
3 pm • 475 E Pinewood Blvd

Pinewood Sanitary District Board Meeting

Public Welcome
Thursday, April 10
3 pm • 18075 Fairway Dr

Munds Park Town Hall

All residents are encouraged to attend. Stay informed about what's happening in our community—your presence and participation is essential!

Next Meeting May 15, 2025
Pinewood Country Club

PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE

Pavement Preservation, Willard Springs Opening Early, Community Cleanup Days & More!

By Christopher Tressler, Director, Coconino County Public Works

Hello Everyone,

I wanted to provide you with some important information about upcoming County projects, programs, and events for your community. It promises to be a busy spring in Munds Park, so I hope the following will help keep you “in the know” this season:

Pavement Preservation Work Getting Underway

Pavement preservation work in Munds Park is getting underway. You may have already noticed Public Works’ contractor filling cracks on paved County roads in your neighborhood as part of these operations.

This is the County’s first community-wide pavement preservation project in Munds Park since 2017. These projects are normally done about every seven years; however, pavement preservation in Munds Park could not be done in 2024 due to ongoing sewer repair work.

Traffic control will be utilized as necessary during pavement preservation work to guide vehicles through project areas. Vehicles and other obstructions will need to be off of the roadway during these operations. Please...be safe and aware of these operations in your neighborhood!

Pavement preservation work in Munds Park is expected to continue through the middle of May; however, this schedule is subject to change due to weather or other unforeseen factors.

Pavement preservation protects and extends the service life of paved County roads.

All County pavement preservation projects are funded by Prop. 403, the County’s Road Maintenance Sales Tax. For more information, please visit www.coconino.az.gov/PavementPreservationProjects or contact Public Works at (928) 679-8300 or via email at countyroadsinfo@coconino.az.gov.

Green Waste Program

Willard Springs Reopens March 7 for Summer 2025 Season

It goes without saying that this has been a historically dry winter. With wildfire danger already high, Public Works is reopening the Willard Springs Green Waste Site on Friday, March 7 for free green waste-only disposal.

We’re opening Willard Springs a month ahead of schedule to give full- and part-time residents more time to remove pine needles, branches, and other green waste from around their properties in order to create combustible material-free buffer zones that can slow the spread of wildfire.

The Willard Springs Green Waste Site will be open Fridays and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. until Saturday, October 31 when it closes for the 2025-2026 winter season. The last load of green waste is accepted through the gate at 4:30 p.m. each day the station is open. Please note that the site does not accept bulk or household waste.

2025 Bear Jaw Cleanup

Bear Jaw Interagency Fires & Fuels will once again help residents create defensible spaces around their properties by providing free pickup and disposal of branches, logs, small trees, leaves, and pine needles.

The Bear Jaw Cleanup is currently scheduled for Monday, April 28; however, this may change to an earlier date due to the danger of wildfire. Fliers will be mailed to residents when the event date is confirmed.

Continued on page 7



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FREE Safety Inspections

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LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from page 5

Public Works Update continued from page 5

Please note that certain conditions will apply for this cleanup. If you'd like to learn more about Bear Jaw Cleanup, then a flyer will be available online at www.coconino.az.gov/BearJawCleanupFlier.

2025 Community Cleanup Days

Coconino County's Community Cleanup Days are back this spring. The bulk waste voucher and informational flier for the 2025 Community Cleanup Days will go out to property owners in early May. As always, bulk waste vouchers are only good for depositing bulk waste at the City of Flagstaff Cinder Lake Landfill during Community Cleanup Days, which this year will run during the following dates and times:

City of Flagstaff Cinder Lake Landfill

6770 East Landfill Road • Flagstaff, AZ

Friday, May 30 - Saturday, June 7, 2025

Monday - Friday: 7:00 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Saturday: 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

We'll also be publishing more information about the 2025 Community Cleanup Days in upcoming editions of The Pinewood News, and fliers for the event will be available at www.coconino.az.gov/CommunityCleanupDays.

BEAVER CREEK LIBRARY LAUNCHES PASSPORT SERVICES

The Beaver Creek Public Library now offers passport services, including applications and renewals for all ages. Required documents include a passport photo and check or money order for the U.S. Department of State fees. The library also charges a \$35 facility fee, with additional fees for photocopying and passport photos if needed. This new service aims to simplify the passport application process for the community and is part of the Yavapai County Free Library District's efforts to expand services throughout the region. For more details, visit www.travel.state.gov or stop by at 4810 E. Beaver Creek Road, Rimrock, AZ.

WILDFIRE SAFETY WORKSHOP: PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR HOME

Join The Sedona Women for a crucial wildfire preparedness workshop titled "From Awareness to Preparedness – Personal Wildfire Emergency Preparedness in the Verde Valley." This event brings together experts like fire prevention officers and emergency coordinators to discuss personal evacuation strategies, roles of fire management agencies, and comprehensive emergency readiness. Equip yourself with the knowledge to safeguard your family and property against wildfire threats.

Date: Thursday, March 13

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 100 Arroyo Pinon Drive, West Sedona

Admission: Free (First-come, first-seated)

Website: thesedonawomen.com

Secure your spot and take a proactive step towards community safety!

Continued on page 9

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A collage of food items including a pizza with pepperoni, a burger, a glass of beer, and a plate of breakfast food (eggs, pancakes, and bacon). In the center is a circular logo for Pinewood Bar & Grill featuring a deer and a tree. Below the logo is a black box with white and yellow text.

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EVERY SUNDAY

SEDONA COMMUNITY FARMERS MARKET



Join us every Sunday for a sunny marketplace experience! Discover a wide array of local and regional goods, from fresh seasonal produce to unique artisan creations.

Date: Every Sunday

Time: 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Location: Wells Fargo Bank parking lot, 2201 W SR 89A, West Sedona

MARCH 12

COCONINO COUNTY BOOKMOBILE VISITS MUNDS PARK



Don't miss the Coconino County Bookmobile on its next stop! This mobile library brings a rich selection of resources right to your community. Whether you need to pick up a book or return one, the Bookmobile makes it convenient for everyone in Munds Park.

Date: Wednesday, March 12th

Time: 10:45 AM - 2:00 PM

Location: Pinewood Country Club, Munds Park
For the full schedule of stops, visit <https://shorturl.at/zwoYi>

MARCH 15

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE!



Experience the St. Patrick's Day thrill as Jordan Road transforms into a sea of green with floats, music, and dancers! Grab your friends and family, don your green attire, and come make some memories.

Time: 10:30 AM

Starting Point: 735 Jordan Rd, Sedona

MARCH 15 & 16

CAMP VERDE PECAN & WINE FESTIVAL



Get ready for a flavor-packed weekend at the Camp Verde Pecan and Wine Festival! This annual extravaganza celebrates the best of local pecan growers and wineries, offering a delightful blend of nut and wine tastings that will tantalize your taste buds. Browse through an array of over 80 food and craft vendors, both indoors and outdoors, as you groove to lively music. Don't miss this festive fusion of tastes and tunes!

Location: 75 E. Hollamon Street, Camp Verde

Cost: FREE! Wine tasting tickets can be bought online or at the event.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

JOURNEY USA COMES TO THE HISTORIC ELKS THEATRE!



Step back into the '70s and '80s rock with Journey USA at the Historic Elks Theatre! Experience the most authentic Journey tribute, featuring a lineup of seasoned musicians who've rocked the MTV era and beyond. From classic hits like "Don't Stop Believing" to "Separate Ways," prepare for a night of electrifying performances!. Don't miss this chance to relive the magic of Journey with the best tribute act on the scene!

Time: 7 - 11 PM

Location: Prescott Elks Theater, 117 E Gurley St #115, Prescott

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

VINTAGE RUN IN COTTONWOOD



Registration is now open for the 2025 Vintage Run in Cottonwood! This year there will be a timed half-marathon, 10K, and 2-mile courses, plus the unlimited Half Corked 5K Fun Run!

Don't miss out on the fun of Cottonwood's Vintage Run. Visit runcottonwood.com for more information and to register for your race!

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

VOLUNTEER WITH MUTS!



Join the Munds Park Trail Stewards (MUTS) for a morning of trail maintenance and friendship. We're gathering at the Pinewood 240 Trailhead at 8:15 a.m. to spruce up Crystal Point Trail and other paths needing love.

What's Happening:

Priority: Clearing & maintenance on Crystal Point Trail.

Wrap-Up: Conclude at noon, followed by a free lunch for all volunteers.

RSVP to mundstrailstewards@hotmail.com.

Bring: Work gloves, long pants, sturdy shoes, sunblock, and your best smile. Water and tools provided.

Stay Updated: Check MUTS Website at www.mundsparktrailstewards.com for updates.

Join us to nurture nature, minimize human impact, and preserve the beauty of our trails for generations to come!

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

OPENING DAY PINWOOD COUNTRY CLUB!



Join us on Friday, **April 18** for the first weekend of the season! We can't wait to welcome you all back for another fun-filled summer!

KIDS! EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION!

EXPLORE NATURE'S WONDERS: ECO-EXPLORERS SUMMER CAMP



The Arboretum at Flagstaff invites kids aged 5-11 to the Eco-Explorers Summer Camp, a perfect blend of education and adventure. Each week-long session from June to July offers exciting themes like Pollinator Power, Wilderness Explorers, Creature Camp, and Weird Plant Science. Children will engage in activities from studying wildlife to practicing survival skills, all within the Arboretum's diverse landscapes.

Date: Weekly sessions in June and July

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location: The Arboretum at Flagstaff, 100 Arroyo Pinon Drive, West Sedona

Admission: \$290/week for members, \$360/week for non-members; scholarships available

Website: thearb.org/summer-camps

Enroll your child for a summer of discovery and fun at the Arboretum!

KIDS! EARLY REGISTRATION! SUMMER THEATER!

MADAGASCAR JR.: SUMMER THEATER FOR KIDS!



This summer, immerse your child in the world of theater with our Kids Theatre Camp in Munds Park! We're excited to announce that this year's camp will feature the lively production of "Madagascar Jr.," with performances on July 23rd, 24th, and 25th at the Munds Park Community Church. Open to all school-aged children, this camp offers a fantastic opportunity to act, learn, and grow on stage.

Date: Camp from July 7 - 25, Performances on July 23 - 25

Location: Munds Park Community Church

Registration: Now open! Secure a spot at **Register Here:** <https://shorturl.at/MWVeJ>

Don't miss this chance to watch your child perform in this captivating musical adventure!

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LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from page 7

COCONINO COUNTY RELEASES MINIMUM WAGE IMPACT STUDY

The Coconino County Workforce Development Board recently released a comprehensive Minimum Wage Impact Study conducted by the Northern Arizona University Economic Policy Institute. This study analyzes the effects of Flagstaff's minimum wage policy on the local economy and workforce.

Key Findings

Overall Employment and Wages: The policy led to higher earnings for low-wage workers but also resulted in slower job growth. Approximately 4,000 fewer new jobs were created than expected, and workers earned about \$18 less per week, totaling nearly \$1,000 less annually, compared to projections without the policy.

Industry-Specific Impacts:

- **Construction:** An increase of approximately 18 new businesses was observed; however, there were about 1,600 fewer jobs than anticipated, with total wages decreasing by \$100 million annually.
- **Manufacturing:** Similar trends were noted, with more businesses established but nearly 1,800 fewer jobs and a reduction in total earnings by approximately \$135 million per year.
- **Trade, Transportation, and Utilities:** While there were fewer businesses overall, existing establishments paid workers about \$15 more per week, equating to an additional \$744 annually.
- **Professional and Business Services:** An increase of about 100 companies was recorded; however, wages decreased by \$123 per week, amounting to roughly \$6,600 less annually.
- **Leisure and Hospitality:** This sector experienced growth, with approximately 532 more jobs than expected and a total wage increase of nearly \$38 million annually.

Occupational Impacts:

- **Retail Workers:** Received an average increase of \$1.60 per hour, totaling over \$3,300 more annually.
- **Hotel Clerks:** Saw an increase of about 126 jobs and earned over \$2,100 more per year.
- **Healthcare Workers:** Experienced a reduction of approximately 169 jobs, with wages decreasing by more than \$2 per hour, totaling about \$4,700 less annually.
- **Transportation Jobs:** Faced a decrease of about 103 jobs, with wages remaining relatively unchanged.
- **Managerial Positions:** Salaries decreased by about \$2 per hour, amounting to nearly \$4,600 less annually.

Cost of Living

The overall cost of living increased by approximately 2.3%, with personal services such as haircuts and entertainment experiencing the highest rise at about 6.6%.

The minimum wage increase in Flagstaff achieved its goal of boosting wages for lower-income workers, particularly in sectors like retail and hospitality. However, these gains were accompanied by trade-offs, including slower job growth and reduced wages in certain industries, notably healthcare and manufacturing. Additionally, the cost of living saw a modest increase, affecting the overall economic landscape. These findings underscore the complexity of implementing minimum wage policies and highlight the need for strategies that balance the benefits to workers with potential challenges for employers and the broader economy.

For more information, contact:

Regina Salas – Coconino County Workforce Development Board
rsalas@coconino.az.gov | 928.890.4200



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ROC #158334

PINEWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT SET TO BREAK GROUND ON NEW STATION

By Jay Otlewski, Pinewood Auxiliary President

The Pinewood Fire Department (PFD) is gearing up for a major transformation as it prepares to tear down its aging fire station within the next 30 days.

In its place, the department will construct a modern facility equipped with enhanced safety features, improved living quarters, and state-of-the-art amenities designed to better serve both the firefighters and the residents of the Munds Park community.

For years, Munds Park's existing fire station has been a cornerstone of emergency response. However, as the demands on first responders have grown, so have the requirements for a facility that meets modern safety and operational standards.

After extensive planning, the approval of the 4.5 million dollar bond, securing approvals, and obtaining the necessary county variance for the setback adjacent to the Pinewood Country Club, the fire department is ready to proceed with construction.

WHY A NEW FIRE STATION IS NEEDED

While historically significant, the current station no longer meets the department's evolving needs. Built decades ago, it was not designed to accommodate today's larger fire engines, advanced equipment, or the increased number of calls the department responds to each year.

Firefighters have also faced challenges related to outdated living quarters and safety concerns such as inadequate decontamination areas for firefighting gear.

With fire science and safety standards constantly evolving, new firehouses are being built with firefighter health in mind. The new Pinewood Fire Station will include:

- Decontamination areas to reduce exposure to hazardous substances
- Expanded vehicle bays for modern firefighting equipment
- Upgraded living and working spaces for full-time and volunteer firefighters
- Improved training and emergency response facilities
- Energy-efficient and sustainable design features

TEMPORARY RELOCATION DURING CONSTRUCTION

During construction, the PFD will temporarily relocate operations to a home near the highway behind the old Woodys' station. This strategic move ensures that fire and emergency medical services (EMS) remain fully operational without disrupting the community.

While this arrangement may present logistical challenges, Fire Chief Tope has assured residents that response times will remain a top priority.

"We have carefully planned this transition to make sure our team can continue to respond quickly and efficiently to emergencies," said Chief Tope. "Our temporary location will allow us to continue serving Munds Park while we build a facility that will help us do our jobs even better."

COUNTY VARIANCE FINALLY APPROVED

One of the key hurdles in moving forward with the project was obtaining a county variance for the property on the country club side of the fire department's land. This approval allows for the necessary adjustments to the building footprint and layout to ensure the new station is built to optimal specifications.

The successful acquisition of the variance is a testament to the collaboration between the fire department, local officials, and the community. Many residents voiced their support for the project, recognizing the need for improved emergency response infrastructure.

How This Benefits the Community

The new fire station isn't just about providing a better work environment for firefighters—it's about ensuring the safety and well-being of the entire Munds Park community.

With a modernized station, firefighters will be able to respond more efficiently to fires, medical emergencies, and natural disasters.

The addition of advanced training facilities also means the department will be better prepared for a wide range of emergency scenarios.

Continued on page 13

SELLING YOUR HOME? You Deserve More Than One Choice!

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PFD READY TO BREAK GROUND

Continued from page 11

PROJECT TIMELINE & FUNDING

The demolition of the current fire station is set to begin around the end of March, with construction on the new facility expected to commence shortly thereafter.

While an exact timeline for completion has not yet been confirmed, estimates suggest the new station could be fully operational within 12 to 18 months.

The project is being funded through a combination of community resources, grants, and local support. Fire officials have been diligent in securing financial backing while ensuring that the new facility remains cost-effective without compromising on critical safety features.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & SUPPORT

The Pinewood Fire Department has long enjoyed a strong relationship with the Munds Park community and the Pinewood Fire Auxiliary.

As we plan for the new station, the Pinewood Fire Auxiliary has plans to raise funds to help with the items not included in the bond like bedding, kitchen items, etc. Fire Auxiliary President Jay Otlewski said “This is an exciting time for Munds Park as we plan for the new station. The men and woman of the Pinewood Fire Department put their lives on the line for us and we owe it to them to help in any way we can”.

Community members are encouraged to stay informed about the construction progress and voice any concerns or questions they may have. We will continually update the moves on the Pinewood Fire Auxiliary website-

www.PFDAUX.org

“We’re grateful for the ongoing support from the residents of Munds Park,” said Chief Tope.

“This is a project that benefits all of us, and we look forward to celebrating the completion of a fire station that will serve this community for generations to come.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Once completed, the new Pinewood Fire Station will stand as a testament to the department’s commitment to excellence in emergency response.

The improved facility will allow firefighters to work more efficiently, train more effectively, and ultimately provide an even higher level of service to Munds Park.

As the department embarks on this next chapter, community members can rest assured that their safety remains the top priority.

While the road to completion may come with temporary adjustments, the long-term benefits of a modernized fire station will be well worth the wait.

For updates on the construction progress, residents can visit the Pinewood Fire Department’s website or attend upcoming Fire Auxiliary meetings where project details will continue to be shared. Visit www.pfdaux.org for details and watch the progress of the new station.

HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

The Pinewood Fire Department welcomes community feedback and encourages residents to stay engaged as the new station takes shape.

Reach out to department officials or follow updates through official channels like www.pfdaux.org and www.pinewoodfire.org to stay informed.

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THE SEVEN 'P' PRINCIPLES OF EVACUATION

By Brit Elders

Many of us take certain items for granted. Unfortunately, these lessons were reinforced by friends who survived, but lost most everything, in the California fires.

People and pets are the most important during evacuation. Your family should come first, and you should have a communication plan in place if separated. In Munds Park, we have one primary way in and out: Interstate 17. As our Fire Chief Josh Tope stated, "The unpredictability of these emergencies doesn't allow for predetermined evacuation routes." Law enforcement would determine whether we go north or south. If your family is in different locations, have a pre-planned area to meet. It could be a grocery store parking lot or a school yard, but everyone must know the spot.



1: People & Pets

Pets should have collars, harnesses, leads, tags, and carriers. Know where they can be housed should you need to evacuate. Have a list of pet-friendly hotels and facilities where your pet can stay. Pets should be chipped, and GPS trackers like Tractive can help reunite you with runaway pets.

Be aware of neighbors who might need extra help evacuating, especially the elderly. Stay calm and reassuring during emergencies. Having a plan makes it easier to stay proactive.

2: Papers, Phone Numbers, Important Documents

During a disaster, you may wonder, "What do I need to take?" Here's a minimal list:

- Identification: Driver's license, passport, Social Security cards, and any other ID.
- Family records: Birth and marriage certificates, pet ownership paperwork.
- Financial documents: Insurance policies, bank account details, and business records.
- Medical information: Prescriptions, health records, insurance cards, vet details.
- Contact details: Phone numbers for family, doctors, veterinarians, and emergency services.

If records are stored electronically, back them up on a fireproof, waterproof drive.

3: Prescriptions, Glasses & Other Medical Needs

Ensure you have enough prescriptions, glasses, vitamins, and other medical necessities. Speak with your physician about obtaining copies of prescriptions and refilling ahead of time. Keep a visible note on the fridge to remind you of important medications.

Spare glasses, hearing aid batteries, and medical devices like a CPAP machine should be included. One friend found her Navage nasal care system useful due to air quality during the fires.

4: Phone, Computer, Hard Drives, & Chargers

Phones and computers are essential for communication and staying informed.

Backup hard drives can carry your computer's contents. Have a portable charger and cables in your go-bag, and recharge it regularly. A charging cable in your car is also helpful.

5: Plastic & Cash

Credit and debit cards are essential, but having \$1,000-\$2,000 in cash per person is wise. Smaller bills make transactions easier, and keep receipts for insurance claims.

6: Pictures & Irreplaceable Memorabilia

Scan your photos and store them on a flash drive, or know which items you want to take. Document your belongings with photos or video for insurance purposes.

7: Pack a Go-Bag for Your Family & Pets

Pack a go-bag with essentials: a 3-day supply of water, non-perishable food, a first aid kit, flashlight, map with evacuation routes, extra clothes, hygiene items, and sleepwear. For pets, include their medications, food, and water. A veterinarian can recommend calming supplements like Rescue Remedy for your pets.

This may seem like a lot, but it's doable. If you have space, take items of personal value, but remember that being prepared is the priority.

The key to a successful evacuation is knowing where the necessities are and having immediate access to them. My friends who were organized during the California fires experienced a sense of calm and peace of mind. They knew they had what they needed to move forward.

Humans are amazing beings, and we can survive disastrous events—with a sense of well-being—if we are ready for them

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WILDFIRE CREW CUTS STIR REAL CONCERNS OVER SAFETY & RESPONSE

By Sandee Caviness

The recent layoffs by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) under the Trump administration have targeted a significant number of federal employees across various agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service. However, it's essential to note that federal firefighters, specifically those involved in wildland firefighting, have been exempted from these cuts, recognizing their critical role in managing wildfires and ensuring public safety.

While preserving firefighting roles highlights a prioritization of essential services, the layoffs still include other positions within the Forest Service that are vital for comprehensive wildland management. Roles affected include those involved in forest management, road and trail maintenance, timber production, and watershed restoration. These positions, while not directly involved in firefighting, support the overall health and management of forest ecosystems, which are crucial for fire prevention and control.

The cuts reflect an effort by the administration to streamline our bloated federal government. However, the reduction in staffing for these critical support roles may weaken the country's ability to manage its natural resources effectively and respond to environmental challenges, which can increase the burden on remaining staff and escalate the risk of severe wildfires.

In response to these challenges and amidst a hiring freeze affecting the U.S. Forest Service, a special committee has been formed by the legislature, featuring members from Gila, Navajo, and Apache counties. This committee will explore strategies to enhance wildfire preparedness and response. State representatives have proposed legislation to bolster wildland firefighting resources and improve emergency coordination systems. The committee will also review policies aiming to fortify our state's response to wildfires.

As the government strives for fiscal efficiency, our forest services face significant challenges. During these transitions, the community's involvement is increasingly critical. The Munds Park Trail Stewards (MUTS) have always encouraged active community participation in forest conservation. Now, their mission is essential in filling service gaps and maintaining the health of our forests amidst these changes.

Note: After writing this article, I learned the Forest Service, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management have started rehiring terminated probationary employees deemed "mission critical."

Sources: Politico, Outdoorlife, The White Mountain Independent, & The Hotshot Wake Up

HOW TO HELP OUR FOREST SERVICES?

Sometimes, instead of leaning on the government, we need to lend a hand—after all, we're all responsible for the community we live in. Whether it's volunteering with organizations like the Munds Park Trail Stewards, strictly adhering to fire safety guidelines, or actively educating short-term rental guests on fire prevention, every action helps protect our forest. These efforts are always important, but especially now as we navigate challenges brought on by much-needed governmental adjustments. This collective endeavor not only addresses immediate forest management needs but also reinforces our long-term commitment to preserving our natural landscapes. Consider volunteering this season with the Munds Park Trail Stewards—any time you can give is appreciated. It's a great opportunity to make a direct impact, roll up your sleeves, and enjoy the camaraderie and satisfaction that come from helping preserve our forest and supporting our forest service.

On page 8, you can find information about volunteering for MUTS in our *Things To Do* section. Be sure to check it out!



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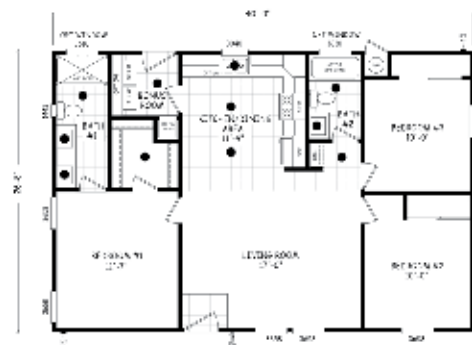


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OPINION: MUNDS PARK FLOOD MAPS

A Resident's Plea for Transparency & Action

By Larry Hering, Munds Park Resident

New floodplain maps for Munds Park were developed by Coconino County, beginning in 2012 and finalized in 2018. Due to gross mismanagement and negligence, Coconino County, through FEMA, is now imposing these maps on Munds Park residents this year.

I am an Arizona Registered Professional Engineer (#11096) and an Arizona Real Estate Broker. Over the past seven years, I have submitted more than 20 letters to Coconino County, FEMA, and ADOT, raising concerns. Despite this, the county has deliberately kept residents in the dark about these floodplain maps for years.

Through a legal Public Records Request and ongoing dialogue with Angela Lane, Coconino County Deputy Attorney, we have finally learned from FEMA, as of February 14, 2025, that Munds Park faces severe flood risks in multiple areas, including Interstate 17, the underpass, and all access roads to I-17—where flood depths are projected to reach between 4 and 8.5 feet.

This means Munds Park is a natural disaster in the making. There is no viable evacuation route other than through deep floodwaters. Alarming, the official legal evacuation route leads directly into 8.5 feet of water.

I have provided Coconino County with a clear solution to reduce flood risks, which includes:

- Expanding concrete culvert capacity along Interstate 17 on the north side of Munds Park.
- Dredging (mucking out) Lake Odell and other key areas that drain into the I-17 outfall into Munds Canyon.

With years of experience in the construction and operation of industrial power plants, and as the owner of All Certified Environmental, Inc., I have proposed practical engineering solutions. However, Coconino County engineers have shown no interest in considering them, as their goal appears to be finalizing floodplain maps without accountability or oversight.

We are at the mercy of bureaucrats who disregard the devastating impact on property values and the very real risk to human life. If a major flood occurs, Munds Park will be completely cut off, with no safe evacuation route.

Unfortunately, that is the current reality for Munds Park.

For questions, call Larry Hering at 602-316-6148.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please don't write about Robert F. Kennedy Jr. any more!

From Margaret Dyekman, Munds Park resident

Stunned is the word that came to mind when I learned of the confusion between JFK and RFK Jr in the latest Pinewood News, referred to as a “presidential mix-up” in an email to advertisers and writers. Presidential mix-up??? JFK was an actual US President, and at the time of the published edition, RFK Jr was merely a nominee for the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, hanging on by a thread since he is so controversial and unqualified. He spouts outrageous claims without scientific evidence. He had his children vaccinated and yet has made thousands of dollars on his anti-vaccine movement. He discourages policies and behaviors that have long been proven effective against diseases and their crippling or deadly outcomes, possibly contributing to a future public health crisis. And he is by far not the first person to address nutritious food. Countless others have, including Michele Obama with her “Let’s Move” initiative that incorporated increasing physical activity, healthy foods in schools, and improving access to natural and affordable foods.

“Despite being one of the wealthiest nations, America struggles with life expectancy and preventable health conditions.” Yes, what you wrote in your article is true. But how about this that I will add from published research by commonwealthfund.org: “The U.S. Health-care spending, both per person and as a share of GDP, continues to be far higher in the United States than in other high-income countries. Yet the U.S. is the only country that doesn't have universal health coverage. The U.S. has the lowest life expectancy at birth, the highest death rates for avoidable or treatable conditions, the highest maternal and infant mortality, and among the highest suicide rates.” Corporate greed over good health outcomes is the playbook right out of the political party that backs RFK Jr. The House GOP voted 70 times to try to abolish the Affordable Care Act, and DJT had his chance to improve it and did nothing but offer a “concept” of a plan with no details.

I believe you write your articles with good intention, but please don't push RFK Jr as a source of advice. This is also the man who dumped a dead bear in Central Park as a prank. In 2014. When he was 60 years old. He caused NYC public safety resources to be squandered over a reckless act and created needless public concern. The man does not have one iota of my respect.

EDITORS RESPONSE

Well, Margaret, here's the deal.

Yes, I goofed. I inked JFK instead of RFK Jr. in the paper. A presidential mix-up. A forehead-smacking, caffeine-deficiency-induced blunder. But let's be real—people in glass houses shouldn't be lobbing boulders, Margaret. We all slip up.

Now, onto RFK Jr. Love him, hate him, or keep a dartboard with his face on it, the fact is he's now the Secretary of HHS. And when I wrote that article, I had zero doubt he'd be confirmed. And he was. What he's setting out to do is something neither side of the aisle has managed: mandate that Big Food stop poisoning us. No more looking the other way while corporations fill grocery store shelves with chemicals banned in half the world. That's a conversation worth having, and we're covering it. Not because we're here to be his fan club, but *because he's the one that stepped up*. What we eat matters, and major policy changes in overly-processed fake-food will be fabulous.

Margaret wasn't the only one who wrote in with their keyboards on fire. My favorite? A reader who simply said, “It's okay. Dolts will be dolts.” Had to Google that one. Turns out, it's a delightfully old-school insult. Mean? A little. But also kind of hilarious.

Naturally, I shared this vocabulary lesson with Genna and our friends. The result? An entire weekend of sneaking “dolt” into conversations. You would be amazed at how many creative ways the word can be used. We had a lot of fun. Eventually, a good friend suggested we feature it in our Word of the Day section. And you know what? We did. Flip to page 18 for the full breakdown.

Look, we know we won't please everyone. For those who weren't thrilled to see RFK Jr.'s name in print—fair enough. You're entitled to your opinion, just as we're entitled to report on topics we believe are relevant. And yes, we'll continue covering RFK Jr.'s policies at HHS because we have readers who are interested in the subject.

So, to those who enjoy what we do—cheers! And to those who don't—well, we'll keep the pages turning either way.

WORD OF THE DAY

By RG

Insults have become so routine, so woven into the fabric of daily life, that it's hard to imagine if there was ever a time when they weren't just a natural part of conversation. From playful jabs to venomous bites, the dictionary is filled with a seemingly endless list of terms designed to offend, belittle, and provoke. We each have our own arsenal of words at our disposal—sharp, witty, and often more cutting than we realize—that we can deploy without a second thought. In a world where insults flow as easily as compliments, insults are just another form of communication – perhaps a way to prove our cleverness or assert dominance, with each word carefully chosen for maximum impact. Easy reaches include moron, idiot, loser, and clown. Gen Z has given us jit and NPC. But what about the entire armory of words from yesteryear!? Blunderhead, dunderhead, pillock, and ninny – all piercing little bullets that most of us have never thought about storing in our mag. Today's word of the day is one of those words; a little outdated yet still able to pack a solid punch.

dolt

[dohlt]

noun

1. a dull, stupid person; blockhead.

Ah, the word dolt—it's one of those words that has fallen out of favor in everyday speech. But just when we think it's about to become obsolete, a cluster of snow crystals will come along to resuscitate it. It's an old-timey insult with a dash of humor -- like a slap on the back from a friend. Except sometimes that friend is an insecure keyboard bully and that slap is delivered with a closed fist. So, follow along as we dig deeper into the meaning of dolt, and how can you use this spicy little antiquated term without coming across as a vintage-version of a modern-day Karen.

Simply stated, a dolt is a person who is slow-witted, clumsy, or prone to making thoughtless mistakes. More specifically, it refers to someone who acts in a foolish or unintelligent manner, often without realizing it. Think of it like the cousin of klutz, except instead of physical mishaps, the dolt specializes in intellectual missteps. A dolt is typically someone who might misplace their keys multiple times in a day, fail to pick up on obvious social cues, or mindlessly transpose a nephew's name for his uncle's in an article after having written and edited an entire newspaper—actions that, while forgivable, point to a certain lack of sharpness.

The word dolt comes from the Middle English word *dolte*, which is derived from the Old Norse word *doltr*, meaning “stupid” or “foolish.” The term has been used in English since the 14th century, establishing itself as an insult aimed at individuals perceived to be lacking intelligence or awareness. Over time, dolt has come to be associated with those who make errors not out of malice but because of an inherent inability to grasp things fully.

The word dolt is kin to a host of other terms that also denote foolishness or lack of intellect. Some common synonyms include:

- **Nincompoop:** A foolish or stupid person.
- **Simpleton:** A person with limited intelligence or understanding, often used in a slightly kinder context than “dolt.”
- **Dunderhead:** A more playful and somewhat endearing term for a person who is slow to grasp ideas.
- **Blockhead:** Implies a person with a hard head—i.e., someone stubbornly unaware or dull.

While these synonyms share similar meanings, each carries its own subtle shade. A “nincompoop” may be more deliberate in their lack of judgment, while a “simpleton” might not even know they're being foolish. The dolt, however, seems to straddle the line between unintentional clumsiness and a lack of intellectual sharpness, making the term a versatile one.



To be called a dolt is, of course, to be insulted—but it's not necessarily the harshest of insults. Make no mistake, calling someone a dolt still carries a bit of condescension, but it remains relatively mild compared to more severe terms of castigation. It functions much like a slap on the wrist – a quick sting more than a deep ache.

Despite its unflattering nature, there are those who might argue that the dolt is an innocent figure—a person who, while not quick-witted or particularly sharp, might be more grounded or less jaded than others. The dolt lives a life full of simple pleasures, free from the burdens of overthinking or self-doubt. In many ways, being a dolt could be seen as an act of blissful ignorance—a state of mind where intellectual distractions are put aside to fully embrace the simple joy of living.

Perhaps, in the grand scheme of things, dolts—unintentionally clumsy or not—make life just a bit more colorful. After all, without the dolts of the world, where would the humor in human error come from? In fact, being called a dolt might even be a sign that you're not afraid to admit you're human. You've made a mistake, you own it, and—most importantly—you know that everyone else has made blunders at some point, too. In a world where it's easy to get bogged down in being serious or perfect, embracing your inner dolt can be refreshing. After all, everyone makes mistakes, forgets things, and does a few doltish things now and then. And guess what? It's OK. Because, like it or not, dolts will be dolts.



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HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE DROPPED? HERE'S WHAT TO DO!

By April Plonski

Unseasonably low amounts of snow this year come with concerns of increased wildfire threat. In recent years, several homeowners across Munds Park have found themselves in the unsettling position of receiving cancellation notices from their insurance providers, and these cancellations don't appear to be slowing any time soon. For those affected, securing a new policy can feel like an uphill battle—but it's not impossible. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to ensure you're not left unprotected.

Why Insurance Policies Are Canceled

Homeowners insurance policies are often canceled or not renewed when insurers determine that a property is too high-risk, such as in areas vulnerable to wildfires. Insurance companies factor in the likelihood of a property being damaged by fire, as well as the cost of rebuilding or repairing it if a fire does occur. If an insurer deems the risk too high or no longer economically viable, they may choose to drop the policy.

Steps to Take After a Cancellation

If your homeowners insurance is canceled due to wildfire risk, there are steps you can take to secure coverage. While it may feel overwhelming, persistence and preparation can help you navigate the process.

1. Understand the Reasons for the Cancellation

Before you start looking for a new policy, make sure you understand the specific reasons for your insurance cancellation. Many insurers provide a cancellation notice with details about why the policy was dropped. It could be related to your home's proximity to high-risk wildfire zones or insufficient mitigation efforts.

Understanding these reasons will help you identify what needs to be addressed before seeking a new policy. For example, if your insurer canceled coverage due to lack of defensible space around your property, you might need to clear brush and trees to reduce the risk of fire spreading to your home.

2. Take Mitigation Measures

Many insurance companies are more likely to offer policies to homeowners who take proactive steps to reduce fire risks. Common measures include:

- Installing fire-resistant roofing and siding.
- Clearing brush, dead plants, and debris from around your home.
- Creating defensible space by trimming trees and shrubs.
- Using non-combustible materials for decks, fences, and other structures.

Taking these steps not only increases your chances of finding new insurance but can also reduce your premiums once you are covered.

4. Look for Specialized Insurers

In response to increasing wildfire risks, several insurance companies now offer specialized policies that focus on properties in fire-prone areas. These insurers are more familiar with the challenges of covering homes in wildfire zones and may offer more flexible coverage options, even for homeowners who have had their insurance canceled. Many of these carriers gained experience in high-risk markets in hurricane-prone areas of the country prior to moving west.

5. Work with an Insurance Broker

If you're struggling to find new insurance on your own, working with an



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insurance broker who specializes in high-risk areas may help you navigate the options available. Brokers have access to multiple insurers and can help you find the best possible coverage based on your specific needs.

An experienced broker can also help you understand the various factors that impact your premiums and provide guidance on steps you can take to improve your chances of being approved for coverage.

Specifically, brokers located in Northern Arizona as opposed to more Southern parts of the state may prove to be more knowledgeable and experienced with the very specialized market.

6. Consider Excess & Surplus Lines

If you are unable to secure standard homeowners insurance, you might want to explore "excess and surplus" (E&S) lines insurance. E&S insurers are not bound by the same regulations as traditional insurance companies and often provide coverage to homeowners who do not meet the underwriting standards of standard insurers. While these policies can be more expensive, they may be the only option for high-risk properties.

Stay Persistent & Stay Prepared

While it's undoubtedly challenging to face the loss of homeowners insurance in a wildfire-prone area, there are steps you can take to protect your home and property. Understanding the cancellation reasons, implementing fire mitigation strategies, and seeking specialized insurers or programs can increase your chances of getting coverage again.

As the wildfire risk continues to evolve, the key to staying protected lies in preparedness, persistence, and being proactive in seeking out the right insurance policy for your home. With the right approach, homeowners in Northern Arizona can safeguard their homes and their financial futures, even in the face of growing wildfire threats.

For more information on wildfire prevention and insurance options in Northern Arizona, visit <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/wildfire> or consult with an insurance agent familiar with the local Munds Park area.

THE HEARTBREAKING SELL-OFF OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

How STR Investors Are Turning Neighborhoods into Cash Cows & Stealing the American Dream of Home Ownership

By Sandee Caviness

As the editor and publisher of the Pinewood News, I've become something of a reluctant warrior in the ongoing saga of short-term rentals (STRs). My battle cry has been for rules that respect the ledger of communal life, not just the profit and loss statements of STR proprietors. Through the trenches of Munds Park, armed with heartbreaking stories of our readers and research, I worked to shine a light on the dark underbelly of the STR impact.

In 2022, my involvement reached a turning point. I took the issue straight to the Pinewood Property Owners Association (PPOA), hoping for leadership, for action. Instead, they sidestepped the controversy, favoring projects that were easier, safer. They have donors. They didn't want to rock the boat. That's politics. I understand.

But the reality was unavoidable. Munds Park is unincorporated—no mayor, no central authority, no strong unified voice. There was no cavalry coming. Just a small town, drifting, while outside forces reshaped it into something almost unrecognizable to those who have called the Park home for decades, some for generations.

Conceding to this reality, I dropped my pen on the subject. The silence from Munds Park was its own kind of statement—loud in its quiet, firm in its indifference. No outcry, no real effort to change course. There were voices of opposition, but not enough, and not loud enough. In the absence of real resistance, the fight for STR caps and regulations with teeth had little hope of gaining ground, not from Munds Park anyway.

Then came a call from Mayor Scott Jablow of Sedona, asking me to cover a Mayor's Forum on the statewide impact of STRs, urging me to bring our community into the conversation. I had stepped back from the issue, but the issue hadn't stepped back from Arizona. It had only grown—spreading into every corner of the state, stretching resources thin, forcing impossible choices. What was once a mounting concern had become a crisis, not just in the charming small towns that dot the map, but in Phoenix and Scottsdale, where even big-city resilience couldn't hold back the tide.

This piece explores the pivotal dialogues from the Mayors Forum and argues for repealing the infamous Senate Bill 1350—dubbed 'The Airbnb Bill.' It is, in essence, a heartfelt appeal from our mayors to return regulatory authority to local hands so they can safeguard and shape the future and character of their communities.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AIRBNB BILL

Back in 2016, Arizona legislators, enchanted by the promise of booming tourism and the sharing economy, ushered in Senate Bill 1350. Platforms like Airbnb and VRBO were booming, and homeowners found the allure of easy money renting out their abodes irresistible. The legislature, eager to hitch a ride on this economic bandwagon, passed the bill with promises of prosperity. But with dollar signs dancing in their eyes, they ignored the question every legislator should ask: What will the unintended consequences be?

The law was a triple threat:

1. It centralized control at the state level, stripping cities and towns of the power to tailor STR regulations to their local culture.
2. It prohibited local bans on STRs, no matter the level of disruption they caused.
3. It confined local regulatory powers to the narrow lanes of health and safety—leaving communities to grapple helplessly with the fallout

from noise, overcrowding, and the transformation of homes into commercial ventures.

SB1350 threw open the gates, and the flood came fast. Investors saw opportunity, turning neighborhoods into commodities and homes into profit centers. The character of communities began to shift, and the fallout was immediate.

A Series of Nutered Fixes

As STRs began to overrun neighborhoods, public outcry surged. Residents decried the invasion of noise, overflowing trash, and traffic and longed for the days when they had actual neighbors. As local pleas for control reached a crescendo, lawmakers scrambled to respond, cobbling together a patchwork of benign solutions—bills that merely nibbled at the edges of the problem.

- Enforcing noise and nuisance ordinances—Sure, when the police aren't otherwise occupied with trivialities like, you know, saving lives. Because in the grand hierarchy of civic emergencies, it seems a raucous Airbnb ranks just below a five-alarm fire.
- Requiring STR operators to register for accountability.
- Mandating contact details for lodging complaints.
- Slapping fines on violators in hopes of deterring the worst offenders.

Despite some legislative tweaks, the core issue remains untouched. The state's attempts at compromise have been just that—compromises, not solutions. Arizona's mayors have had enough. They are not asking for favors. They are demanding the authority to govern their own communities.

MAYORS SPEAK OUT: THE DAMAGE RUNS DEEP

Local leaders from Williams to Bisbee did not mince words at the Mayor's Forum on the Impact of Short-Term Rentals. The damage is real. The state's one-size-fits-all approach has failed. It is time for the state to step aside and let communities govern themselves. But even if local control were restored today, every mayor agreed: the scars left by STRs will not fade quickly. Recovery will take years—maybe decades.

Each mayor took the mic to advocate for their residents, pressing the Arizona Legislature to give cities back the power to protect their own. They acknowledged the usual complaints—noise, trash, parking. But those were surface issues. Their real concern was deeper: the long-term erosion of their communities, the slow unraveling of what once made their towns feel like home.

Here, we'll unpack their most pressing concerns, one by one.

STRs CASH IN, FAMILIES & ESSENTIAL WORKERS GET PUSHED OUT

Every mayor at the forum agreed: STRs aren't just a nuisance—they're a crisis. Investors are hoarding homes, artificially inflating prices, and leaving critical workers with nowhere to live. The hardest-hit towns—Bisbee, Jerome, Sedona, and Williams—aren't just fighting to preserve their charm. They're fighting to keep their teachers, firefighters, and nurses from becoming casualties of a rigged housing market. They're fighting for their seniors, their disabled, their disadvantaged. They're fighting for their people.

With Sedona's median home price teetering on \$1 million—pushed ever higher by investors treating neighborhoods like stock portfolios—it's no surprise that critical workers—those who care for our children, our health, and our safety—can't find a place to live. One teacher, eager to join Sedona's school district, ended up sleeping in her car in the forest while trying to find something affordable. She searched, she waited, and in the end, she left.

Sedona's lawmakers attempted a stopgap measure—allowing displaced workers to sleep in a designated parking lot overnight. The locals shot it down. Meanwhile, Sedona's mayor is searching for answers, grasping for anything that might keep businesses, schools, and emergency services from crumbling under the weight of a workforce that simply has nowhere to live.

Bisbee Mayor Ken Budge wasn't at the meeting, but Sedona Mayor Scott Jablow delivered his message plainly: "The working class has collapsed under the pressure of STRs." In Bisbee, schools struggle to hire, hospitals struggle to staff, and first responders are stretched thin. The workers are gone, because the housing is gone.

Jablow laid it out: "Residents expect hospitals to be staffed, doctors to be there when they're sick, teachers to show up for their kids, and first responders to answer in a crisis—and yet we don't have them. We need property rights for all."

Jerome Mayor Alex Barber told a similar story. Jerome is a town built on volunteerism. Firefighters, EMTs, local board members—people who step up, not for money, but because they love their community. But as housing disappears, so do the people who keep the town running.

Jerome's numbers tell the story:

- The town has 126 residences, but 26 are now STRs—20% of the total housing stock. That's a big hit for a small town.
- 52% are owned by those living outside of Jerome, and 20% of those are owners who live outside of the state of Arizona.

A typical home has 2.3 residents. An STR? Seven. Seven guests cycling in and out, overwhelming water, sewer, and systems never built for a town of revolving doors.

"The impact is devastating," says Mayor Alex Barber. "STRs have crushed the town of Jerome—a national historic landmark."

And the problem keeps growing. Almost weekly, a new STR pops up.

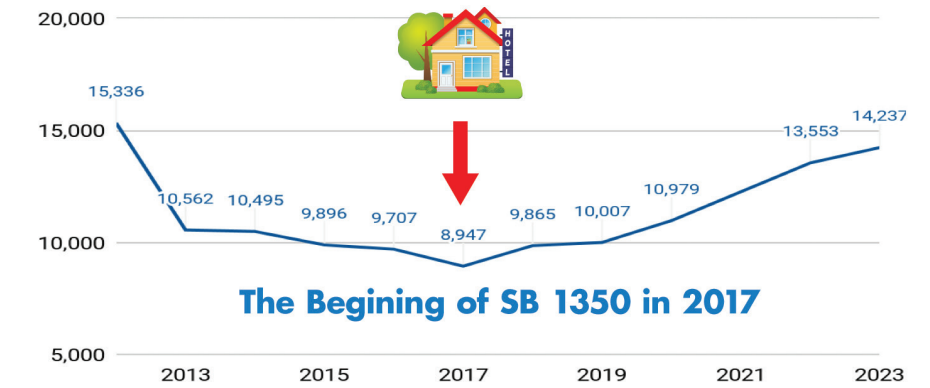
Every single mayor reported the same struggle. The jobs are there, but the people who fill them are disappearing. Teachers, firefighters, nurses—the foundation of any community—are being priced out, replaced by short-term visitors who leave nothing behind but their footprints. When a home does go up for sale, investors move in, inflating prices and locking out the very people towns and cities need to survive.

Lake Havasu City Mayor Cal Sheehy echoed the same frustrations:

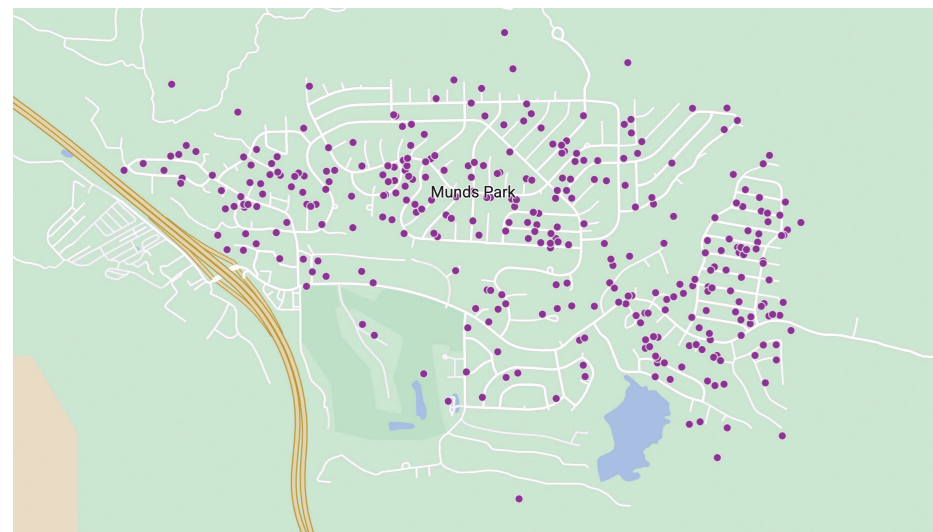
"We have people who accept positions in Lake Havasu and then have to rescind them because they can't find housing. We have teachers who can't find homes. We're facing the same crisis as Sedona."

Cities and towns are stuck: either they pay an impossible premium to keep workers local or watch them burn hours on brutal commutes. The rest are left scrambling for whatever housing they can find—overpriced, subpar, or nonexistent.

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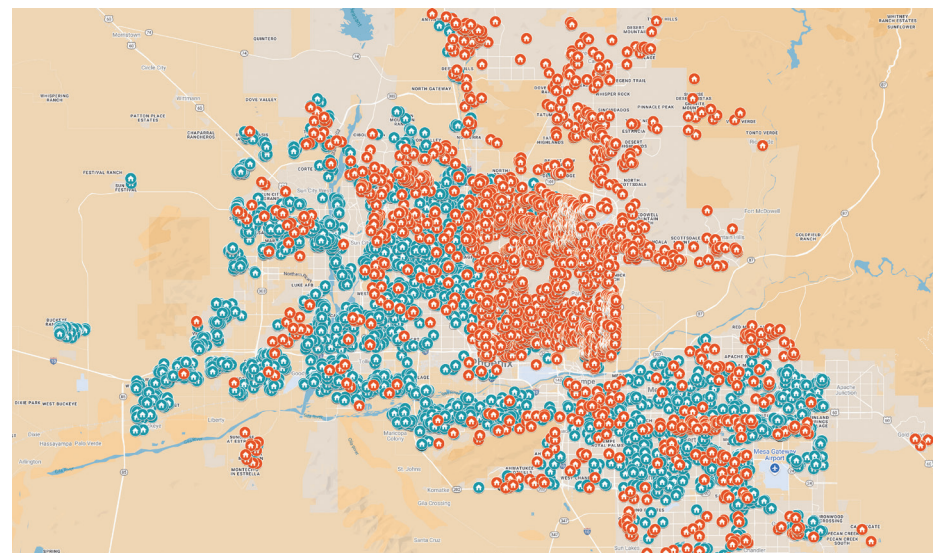


Number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Arizona, 2012-2023
Arizona Department of Economic Security SFY 2023 Annual Report on Homelessness
Arizona has experienced a rise in homelessness. As of January 2023, it is estimated that 14,237 Arizona residents were experiencing homelessness, which is a 29 percent increase from the January 2020 estimate of 10,979.



This graph displays the number of known STRs in Munds Park today. Our district, District 3, ranks 8th out of 30 districts, with 2,789 STRs in our district.

For STR estimate methodology, please contact
Sedwards@NeighborhoodsConnect.Org.



It's not just STRs devouring the American Dream—Wall Street-owned rental homes are doing their part too. This map of Maricopa County illustrates the extent of the impact. Blue = Wall Street-owned Rental Homes (Only about 6K of the +/- 71K are shown on this map). Red = Non-owner-occupied STRs (Only about 3,500 of the +/- 35,000 are shown here).

THE HEARTBREAKING SELL-OFF

Continued from page 21

Our legislators aren't listening—to their mayors or the people they were elected to serve. Hard not to wonder if lobbyists have their ear and their wallets. What else explains their refusal to act while families, their children and critical workers are shut out of the housing market? Instead, they've left mayors scrambling, pitching last-ditch ideas like parking lots and tiny homes made of ticky-tack. That's not a plan. It's an admission of failure.

I get it. Mayors are desperate. They need a fix, and they need it now. But let's be honest—Americans deserve more than a glorified parking spot. They deserve real homes, real neighborhoods, a real stake in their communities. They deserve a shot at the American Dream. And while lawmakers stall, investors—corporate and otherwise—are snatching it away, one overpriced STR at a time.

Let's be clear: this isn't about a family renting out their cabin for a few weekends a year or someone with a guest home. That was the spirit of the Airbnb bill. What's happening now is a land grab—by corporations and small investors alike. Residential neighborhoods are being gutted, homes turned into cash machines, and real communities are disappearing in real time.

STRs ARE GUTTING OUR SCHOOLS & OUR KIDS ARE PAYING THE PRICE

The damage caused by STRs isn't just about party houses and parking battles. It's about schools. Fewer families, fewer kids, less funding. Investors are swallowing up homes that could have housed local families, and Arizona's classrooms are feeling the fallout.

Try recruiting teachers when they can't afford to live in the towns they serve. Sedona Mayor Scott Jablow put it bluntly:

"We have plenty of teachers who want to educate our children, but they simply can't afford to live here. We can't pay them enough to keep up with housing prices artificially inflated by over-investment in STRs. Now, as families leave, our school budgets suffer."

In Oak Creek's school district, kindergarten enrollment has dropped 12% in just five years. The numbers don't lie: fewer students mean less funding—about \$5,000 per child, gone. Schools consolidate, teachers are stretched thin, and students get less attention.

And it's not just Sedona.

"When I was growing up in Jerome, and when my daughter was growing up in Jerome, we had over 100 kids living in town. Now? Maybe 15 kids are lucky enough to grow up in Jerome," says Jerome Mayor Alex Barber.

The ripple effect is brutal. The Clarkdale-Jerome School District is losing students, losing money, and forced to make impossible choices.

This isn't a fluke—it's happening across Arizona.

Cave Creek Unified is on the verge of shutting down two more schools.

In July 2024, Paradise Valley Unified voted to close three by year's end.

STRs aren't just driving up housing prices. They're gutting communities.

No affordable housing → families leave → school enrollment drops → school budgets shrink → schools shut down.

Arizona lawmakers may not see the connection, but local leaders

do. They're watching their communities, their teachers, and their schools disappear.

Editor's Note: While charter schools have played a role in declining public school enrollment, STRs are a major factor. In the hardest-hit areas, even charter schools are seeing drops in attendance. As homes convert into short-term rentals, communities lose families, students, and the funding that keeps schools running.

THE STR CRISIS IS PUSHING PEOPLE ONTO THE STREETS

When Sedona Mayor Scott Jablow shared the data linking the rise in homelessness to Arizona's Airbnb law, it was a jaw-dropper. (See graph on page 21.)

Sure, correlation doesn't always mean causation, but you don't need to be a statistician to see the logic. If people can't afford housing, where do they go?

For young people entering the workforce, the struggle to find affordable housing isn't just a minor inconvenience—it's a full-blown crisis. For low-income residents, it's not just about struggling anymore—it's about survival. And for those who aren't already on the streets, they're holding on by a thread.

While homelessness has many contributing factors, what's happening in Williams is impossible to ignore.

Williams Mayor Don Dent is watching it all unfold. With a population of about 1,500 homes, 225 are now STRs, a staggering 15% of the housing stock. 80% of those homes? Not owned by locals. These aren't families renting out a vacation home—they're outsiders looking to cash in.

Williams used to have a strong Section 8 housing program that helped low-income families, seniors, and disabled residents afford homes. But when leases expired, things changed. Landlords didn't renew—they sold to investors or converted their properties into STRs.

Now? There are only 17 HUD vouchers in use.

That's a 66% drop in low-income housing.

The irony? Williams has been designated a failing city by HUD because it's using less than half the funding it qualifies for. Yet, the town is still required to subsidize those unused vouchers, even though there's no place left for people to live. They can't even afford a housing director to manage this crisis.

Mayor Dent is now trying to transfer unused vouchers to Flagstaff, hoping they can use them.

"If we don't cap STRs, we're done," says Dent. "Every month, more and more pop up. There's no end in sight, and it's just going to get worse."

Williams is losing affordable housing faster than it can replace it, and those who need it most are getting pushed out.

Now, STR Investors Are Coming for Mobile Home Parks

If you thought STRs were just pushing out middle class families, think again. They're now targeting mobile home parks—the last affordable housing option left.

"Mobile home parks are the next thing the Goldwater Institute is coming after," said Mayor Scott Jablow.

Sedona used to have two private mobile home parks. Not anymore. The

ARRIVED

The Tool Making It Too Easy to Profit from STRs

Arrived has turned real estate investment into a streamlined, effortless process—speeding up the rise of investor-owned STRs, completely undermining the original intent of the Airbnb bill. With a few clicks, anyone can buy a stake in properties that once belonged to families, transforming them into cash machines. In Flagstaff, 1006 investors now own a piece of 1280 W Shullenbager Dr. In Glendale, 1133 investors hold shares in 6085 N 85th Ave. And at 8638 E Solano Dr, a staggering 2228 investors are cashing in. What was once a part of the American Dream is now a transaction, reducing homeownership to a distant concept, and leaving communities to pay the price.

owners, backed by the Goldwater Institute, are suing Sedona to turn those parks into STR clusters.

And it's not just Sedona. Prescott is seeing the same thing.

Mobile home parks have been the last hope for many low-income residents—the only place they could afford to own a home. Now, those residents are being told to pack up and leave.

STRs MAY BE COSTING ARIZONA SEATS IN CONGRESS

At the mayor's forum, Senator Mark Finchem dropped a bombshell: Arizona's rapid home-building—55,000 new units a year—isn't solving the housing crisis. Why? He suggests it's because investors are buying up these homes for short-term rentals instead of giving local families a place to live. The result? Arizona's population isn't growing the way it appears, and that's possibly costing the state seats in Congress.

Here's how it works: more homes mean more people. More people mean a bigger population count for the census. And a bigger population should lead to more seats in Congress. But if a large chunk of those homes are sitting empty as short-term rentals—when the census counts most—then Arizona's true population growth isn't what it seems.

Finchem warns this could cost Arizona one or two seats in Congress. STRs aren't just changing neighborhoods—they could be changing Arizona's political power.

So, while the construction cranes keep rising, the real question isn't how many homes we're building—it's who's actually living in them.

MAYORS AGREE—STRs NEED LOCAL CONTROL

Every mayor at the forum voiced the same concerns—just to varying degrees. None of them oppose STRs outright. What they oppose is not having the power to cap or regulate them in a way that makes sense for their communities.

They're not against homeowners renting out their places when they're away. What they do oppose are large-scale investment companies and even small-scale operators who own multiple properties, effectively turning residential neighborhoods into commercial enterprises.

The needs of each town are different. Lake Havasu depends on tourism and accepts STRs as part of its economy—but even they are overwhelmed by the sheer volume. Jerome, the third most visited town in Arizona, doesn't need STRs at all. They're so popular they don't even advertise for tourism. Sedona wants caps, striving to balance its natural beauty with sustainable tourism while still ensuring its residents can live there peacefully.

PROPERTY RIGHTS? WHATEVER.

Let's be clear about one thing: this is not about property rights. It's about common sense and the fundamental responsibility we have to each other. Your property rights don't give you the right to trample on your neighbors' lives or turn your community into a transient zone for profit. Our communities are built on stability—the ability for people to live where they work, raise their children in neighborhoods with people who care, and maintain the integrity of their homes. What's happening now is a disruption—one that no one should tolerate.

Property rights have limits. I can't just set up a mobile home on my property, no matter how badly my kids need a place to live. In Phoenix, I couldn't build a mother-in-law suite for my elderly father, despite the clear need. I can't buy property and set up a liquor store wherever I see fit. There are restrictions, and there are reasons for them.

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THE HEARTBREAKING SELL-OFF

Continued from page 23



From Left to right, mayors who are actively looking for local control of STRs: Williams: Don Dent, Payson: Steve Otto, Jerome: Alex Barber, Lake Havasu City: Cal Sheehy, Page: Darren Coldwell Sedona: Scott Jablow, Cottonwood: Ann Shaw, Prescott: Phil Goode

I can't build a fence taller than six feet, and I can't add a second story to my house without jumping through bureaucratic hoops. And yet somehow, my neighbor can turn their home into a 24/7 mini-hotel, sacrificing community stability for financial gain. This is not a property rights issue—this is about using the system to disrupt everything we hold dear in our neighborhoods.

Every citizen contributes—through taxes—to support the schools, healthcare, and first responders who are the backbone of our society. Our legislators have a duty to ensure these services remain strong. They shouldn't be undermined by greed.

Let's stop pretending. This isn't about property rights. It's about responsibility. The right to own property doesn't give you the right to disrupt your neighbors' lives or the community fabric for personal gain. Property rights should never come at the cost of other people's security, peace, and stability. We all know this to be true. If you're an STR owner pushing the limits, deep down, you know this is wrong. How could you not?

MUNDS PARK: A TOWN CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

So, where does Munds Park fit into the conversation on short-term rentals? The numbers tell part of the story. About 275 cabins are now being used as STRs, making up about 8.7% of the town's housing. Official records list 234 STRs, but according to the county, 10% are flying under the radar. It's true: Munds Park has become a target for investors looking to cash in. We have corporations here, right now, buying up property.

If any town was made for STRs, it's Munds Park. No schools, no hospitals—just a peaceful retreat for those looking to escape the hustle. It's always been a place for second home owners for quiet getaways—city dwellers seeking respite and retirees savoring the dream they worked hard to achieve. It was built around that sense of calm, the kind you can't find in the busyness of life beyond the forest walls. But slowly, that balance is beginning to shift.

The streets that used to echo with the gentle hum of golf carts are now busy with the roar of OHVs speeding through the streets. The forest that once felt like home to locals is now being worn thin by strangers who don't always care for it like those who live here do. The quiet is being drowned out. And for the people who've called this place home, it feels like something irreplaceable is slipping away.

Munds Park has always been more than a spot on a map. It's a place for connection, for quiet moments, for community. And that's what's at stake. For now, it's still a great place—but if the trends continue, the peace that defined it could fade, replaced by a different rhythm.

The future of Munds Park rests with its people. The question is simple: Do you want it to remain a peaceful escape, or is it time for something new?

Editor's Note: While this article presents the editor's perspective, the reporting on the mayors' stances and the accompanying research are based on factual reporting. The views expressed by the mayors represent their firsthand accounts and positions on the impact of STRs in their communities.

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GARDENS IN THE PARK

THE BENEFITS OF PLANTING BARE ROOT

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As spring approaches, gardeners are looking for the best ways to establish healthy plants in their landscapes. One of the most cost-effective and efficient methods is planting bare root stock.

Bare root plants offer several advantages over their potted counterparts:

Optimal Growth – Bare root plants have a highly extensive root system because they are grown in the ground from the very start (as opposed to being cultivated in a pot prior to planting). That means their roots have never been restricted by a container, leading to optimal growth!

Better Value – Without the costs of containers, bare root plants are more affordable, making it easier to establish a thriving garden without breaking the bank.

Cold Hardy – Since bare root plants are dormant when shipped and sold, they can withstand freezing temperatures. This means you can plant in early spring without worrying about frost damage.

Best Time to Plant

To ensure success, plant bare root stock while the plants are still dormant. However, if they have begun to leaf out, they can still be planted successfully. Our bare root stock at Warner's Nursery will arrive in mid-March, and planting can continue through May.

This season, we're offering a variety of small fruits and vegetables, including:

- Boyne, Latham, Amity, and Royalty Purple Raspberries
- Black Satin Blackberries
- Canadice Red Seedless and Himrod White Seedless Grapes
- Chandler Blueberries
- Horseradish
- Mary Washington Asparagus and Sweet Purple Asparagus
- Nugget Hops
- Crimson Red Rhubarb

Additionally, we will have potatoes, garlic, and onion bulbs available around the same time.

Tips for Success in Northern Arizona

Through trial and error, we've found that bare root trees do not transplant well in Flagstaff due to the unpredictable weather and soil temperature. For this reason, we focus on small fruit plants, which have proven to thrive in our climate.

Follow these steps for the best results:

1. **Choose a Sunny Location** – Your plants will need at least six hours of direct sunlight daily to produce fruit.
2. **Soak the Roots** – Place the roots in a container of lukewarm water mixed with 3 tablespoons of root stimulator per gallon. Let them soak overnight before planting.
3. **Dig the Right Hole** – Dig a hole slightly deeper than the plant's roots and check for proper spacing requirements.
4. **Build a Soil Mound** – Inside the hole, create a small mound of soil. Place the plant's crown on top of the mound, fan the roots around it, and lightly pat soil over the roots to cover them.
5. **Fill and Mulch** – Fill in the hole with your amended soil. Mulch helps retain moisture and keeps the soil warm for optimal root establishment.
6. **Water Regularly** – Keep the soil moist but not soggy. For the first 4-6 weeks, water once a week with a root stimulator solution to help plants establish.

By following these guidelines, your bare root plants will have the best chance to flourish in your garden. Visit Warner's Nursery this spring to pick up your bare root stock and get expert advice on making your garden a success!



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HOMEMADE & WONDERFUL

A TASTE OF TOGETHERNESS *Munds Park Soup'er Bowl Serves Up Flavor & Fellowship*

By Sandee Caviness

In the heart of Munds Park, where neighbors feel more like family, there's one event that always brings folks together—the Munds Park Community Church annual Soup'er Bowl.

Last month marked the 9th edition of this fun tradition, a free event where the only price of admission is an appetite for good food and good company. It's a simple recipe for joy: homemade soups, hearty laughs, and a table big enough for everyone.

Cooks from every corner of the community brought their best pots to the table—each one simmering with a whole lot of love. From bold and spicy bowls to rich and hearty creations guaranteed to “stick to your ribs,” there was something to surprise every palate. And, of course, the crowd had the final say—tasting, savoring, and voting on their favorites.

But in true Munds Park fashion, the real prize wasn't a ribbon or a title. It was the laughter around the table, the swapping of recipes, and the joy of sharing something homemade—from the heart.

And because good flavors—and good neighbors—are meant to be shared, we're delighted to feature this year's 1st and 2nd place winners right here in the paper. Enjoy!



From left to right: Diane Deam, 2nd place winner & Karen Zintack, 1st place winner

CREAMY CHICKEN PARMESAN SOUP

From the kitchen of Karen Zintak, 1st Place Winner

Ingredients List

- 2.5 lbs. chicken breast, diced
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 4-5 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 2-3 Tbsp. Better Than Bullion chicken paste
- 2 cans petite diced tomatoes
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 2 cups small shell pasta, dry



Directions

1. Cook Chicken: In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbsp. olive oil over medium heat. Add diced chicken breast, diced onion, and minced garlic. Cook until the chicken is browned and cooked through.
2. Prepare Soup Base: In a large pot, combine chicken broth and Better Than Bullion chicken paste. Heat over medium heat until the paste dissolves completely.
3. Add petite diced tomatoes, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper.
4. Stir in heavy cream and parmesan cheese.

WOODCUTTER'S SOUP

From the kitchen of Diane Deam, 2nd Place Winner

Ingredients:

- 2 cups chopped cooked chicken breast
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, chopped
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 bell peppers, chopped
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1 cube of butter
- 3/4 cup of rice (I used minute rice)



Directions

1. In a large soup pot, combine the chicken broth, cooked chicken, onion, carrots, celery, and bell peppers.
2. Stir in the seasoned salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, and Italian seasoning.
3. Add the cube of butter for richness.
4. Pour in the rice (minute rice works perfectly for this recipe).
5. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium heat.
6. Reduce the heat to low and let the soup simmer for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally to keep the flavors mingling.
7. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

THE LEPRECHAUN'S LOST GOLD: AN UNLUCKY ADVENTURE

By George Dee

Liam O'Connor wasn't expecting much excitement the day before St. Patrick's Day. Maybe a parade, maybe some green cupcakes, but certainly not a panicked, pint-sized man running in circles around the old oak tree in his backyard.

The little man, no taller than a barstool, was dressed in bright green from his top hat to his curly-toed boots. His red beard bounced as he clutched his head, wailing, "Oh, I've done it this time! I'm doomed, doomed, DOOMED!"

Liam blinked. "Um... are you okay?"

The tiny man gasped and spun around. "Don't sneak up on a leprechaun like that, boy! You nearly scared the buckle off me boot!"

Liam's jaw dropped. A real leprechaun?!

The leprechaun grabbed Liam's sleeve and shook it.

"Listen here, lad! I'm Finnigan O'Reilly, and I've lost me gold! If I don't find it before sunset tomorrow, poof! Gone forever!"

Liam stifled a laugh. "How do you lose an entire pot of gold?"

Finnigan groaned. "I have a habit of hidin' it too well... and me memory's about as reliable as a chocolate teapot."

Liam grinned. "Sounds like you need my help."

Finnigan perked up. "Aye! But be warned—wherever me gold goes, mischief follows. We'll have to be quick, clever, and, most importantly, lucky."

THE SEARCH BEGINS—AND GOES VERY WRONG

Their first stop was the most logical place: the old oak tree. Finnigan had meant to hide it there, but when they dug through the leaves, all they found was a very angry squirrel sitting on top of a very NOT-golden acorn.



"Oi! That's not gold!" Finnigan scolded.

The squirrel chattered, grabbed Finnigan's hat, and scrambled up the tree.

"ME HAT!" Finnigan shrieked.

"I'll get it!" Liam said, jumping to grab the lowest branch. He climbed higher and higher until he reached the squirrel—who took one look at him, stuck out its tongue, and chucked the hat at his face.

Liam lost his balance. "Whoa—WHOA—AAAAH!" THUMP!

He landed flat on his back, Finnigan's hat on his head. Finnigan sighed. "Well, at least one thing's been found. But where's me gold?"

THE BAKERY BLUNDER

Finnigan scratched his beard. "I did go to the bakery yesterday for a sneaky scone."

So off they went to Mrs. Molloy's bakery, where the smell of fresh bread made Finnigan sigh dreamily.

"Ah, if I were a pot of gold, I'd hide meself in a loaf o' soda bread and live happily ever after."

Mrs. Molloy chuckled. "Liam! And—oh my, what a fancy costume your friend has."

Finnigan groaned. "IT'S. NOT. A. COSTUME."

Liam cleared his throat. "Mrs. Molloy, did you find anything... unusual?"

She frowned. "Well, I did find this in the flour bin." She held out a golden shoe buckle.

Finnigan's eyes widened. "Me lucky buckle! That means I was here after I hid me gold."

Continued on page 28

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SCAN ME!

THE LEPRECHAUN'S LOST GOLD

Continued from page 27

Mrs. Molloy turned to grab a loaf of bread for a customer, but Finnigan, unable to resist, lunged at a tray of steaming scones.

FLUMP!

With one misstep, Finnigan skidded across the flour-covered floor, knocking over a sack of sugar, a basket of eggs, and—SPLAT!—face-first into a bowl of green icing.

Mrs. Molloy gasped. "Oh, good heavens!"

Liam sighed. "This is why you're bad at hiding things."

THE MUDDY MISHAP

"Maybe I hid it at the wishing well?" Finnigan suggested.

So off they went to the well in the town square. Finnigan peered inside and sighed. "No gold, just a pile of silly wishes."

Liam crossed his arms. "Where else could you have put it?"

Finnigan thought hard. "Wait! The field! I saw a rainbow yesterday and thought, 'Oh, what a perfect place for me pot o' gold!'"

So they ran to the field. It had rained the night before, and the ground was now a squelchy, muddy mess.

Finnigan pointed. "Right there! That's where I—AAAAH!"

SPLORCH!

Before Liam could stop him, Finnigan tripped and tumbled straight into a giant puddle. His tiny boots stuck straight up from the mud.

Liam pulled him out, coughing and spluttering, his green coat now brown.

Finnigan groaned. "If me gold's not here, I'm gonna—"

CLUNK!

Liam's foot hit something solid. He reached into the mud and pulled out—

"The pot of gold!" he cheered.

Finnigan whooped, hugging it. "Me beautiful, shiny, magnificent gold! I'll never lose ye again!"

A LUCKY ENDING

As the sun set, Finnigan beamed up at Liam. "A deal's a deal, lad. Ye get one wish."

Liam thought hard. Then he grinned. "I wish you'd have better luck remembering where you put your gold."

Finnigan cackled. "A clever and kind wish! Thank you!"

He tipped his hat (now slightly soggy), and with a POOF!, he vanished—leaving behind a single golden coin at Liam's feet.

Liam picked it up, shaking his head. "Best St. Patrick's Day ever."

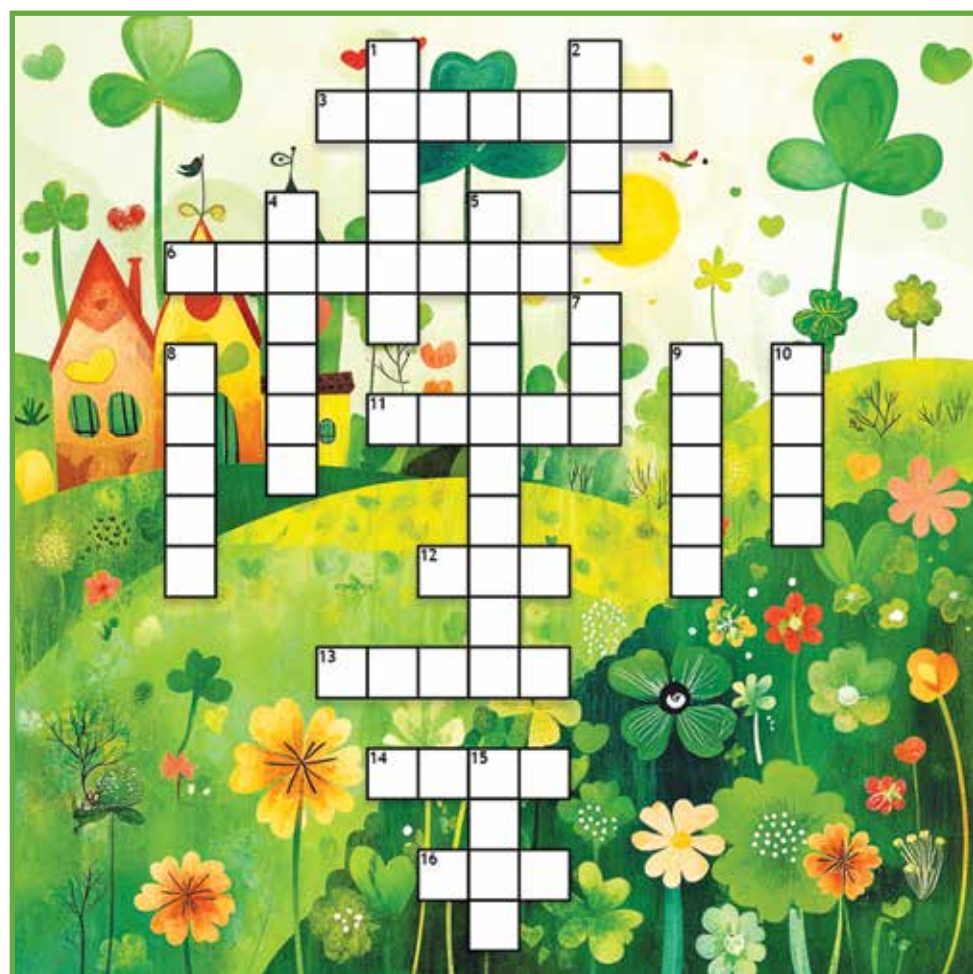


MISCHIEF IN THE MEADOW

In clover fields where rainbows end,
Leprechauns, those mischievous friends.
With coats of green and boots so neat,
They hide their gold where shadows meet.
Catch one and see—if luck allows—a wink
before he slips away!

POT O' PUZZLES CROSSWORD!

READ THE STORY ABOVE, 'LEPRECHAUN'S LOST GOLD', FIND THE CLUES! Solutions PG38



Across

3. What prompted Finnigan to hide his gold in the field.
6. The creature that stole Finnigan's hat.
11. The muddy location where the gold was hidden.
12. Part of Finnigan's attire that was stolen.
13. What Finnigan couldn't resist at the bakery.
14. What Finnigan lost and needs to find.
16. Type of tree Liam and Finnigan searched under first.

Down

1. A place Finnigan visited the day before.
2. How Finnigan disappeared in the end.
4. Found in the flour bin at the bakery.
5. A magical, tiny man who lost his gold.
7. Where the pot of gold was finally found.
8. The color of Finnigan's attire.
9. The muddy location where the gold was hidden.
10. What Liam was granted for helping Finnigan.
15. The boy who helps search for the lost treasure.

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GOD OF THE WOODS

By Sandy Wright

In the Adirondack Mountains lies the Van Laar Preserve. Atop the ridge is the Van Laar's impressive summer home, named Self-Reliance. Far below is the summer camp they own and run, Camp Emerson, which is open to campers eight weeks a year.

In July 1961, 8-year-old "Bear" Van Laar, son of Peter the third and wife Alice, vanishes without a trace while hiking with his grandfather near the family home. No trace of him is ever found, and they finally abandon the search.

Then, in early morning, August 1975, tragedy strikes the family again when a camp counselor discovers an empty bunk. Its occupant, Barbara Van Laar, has gone missing.

This is the story of two intertwined families and the tragedy that changed them all. The Van Laars, rich & respected, and the Hewitts, originally almost kin but estranged by the lure of power and wealth. Starting with young 'Bear' VanLaar's disappearance in the wilds of the Adirondacks, a long and troubling story of losses and lies begins.

The answers are all there, it's just a matter of putting the pieces together. As a young female investigator tries to puzzle out the second disappearance of a missing child, 14 years later, we are led through a labyrinth of mysteries as dense and eternal as the forests themselves.

Chasing down the layered secrets of the Van Laar family and the blue-collar community working in its shadow, Moore's multi-threaded story invites readers into a gripping dynasty of secrets.

It's a masterfully crafted, well-written whodunnit filled with well laid out clues and cleverly placed red herrings. The story is told in dual timeframes and from multiple points of view, so you have to pay attention. To help, the author has given her chapters distinct dates and locations.

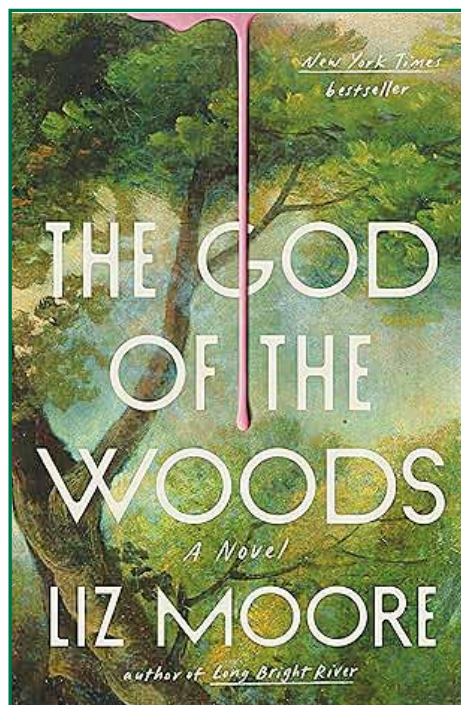
Barbara's parents are mysterious and cold. The father, Peter, disdains anyone he deems beneath him in his social circle. His wife, Alice, is ineffective and quiet, usually assumed to be lost in one of her frequent alcoholic hazes.

Barbara's cabin leader and her assistant all have alibis and deny having any reason to harm or kidnap Barbara.

There is another factor, however. The man accused of abducting Barbara's brother escaped jail and is thought to be on his way to the area. I will leave you on your own to follow-up on his story.

Most of the story centers around the Van Laar family, the generation of Peters I, II and III, Alice Van Laar, and their grandchildren. I'm not usually a fan of stories that go back and forth between timelines, but I felt this story does it well. I liked how each chapter was a snapshot in time, and each character was given space to share their story.

When you are about halfway through this novel you will realize that the pace has quickened, and the story then reads like a true crime novel. As a mystery, the book earns high marks for me. I was genuinely surprised by what happened to Bear Van Laar, and fell for several of the book's red herrings. What I find fascinating is that, although I kept suspecting foul play, Bear's death was caused by a drunken mistake, and followed by a blundering cover up.



There's a quote in the book where the police captain investigating Barbara's disappearance says, "When you hear hoof beats, don't look for a zebra." His sentiment is that the obvious answer is often the right one—and it's still missed. Author Moore gives us so many examples of the Van Larr family's superior attitude, its self-absorption, and its evilness. Why wouldn't we assume the family is to blame? It is difficult to find a single moment in the book that reveals anything favorable about the family, but we can appreciate the self-reliance of the blue-collar families that populate the story, even with their eccentricities. While one cover-up damns the Van Laar family, the other releases its youngest—a happy ending in my mind.

- God of the Woods
- By Liz Moore
- Riverhead Books, 2024
- 496 pages

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Before



After



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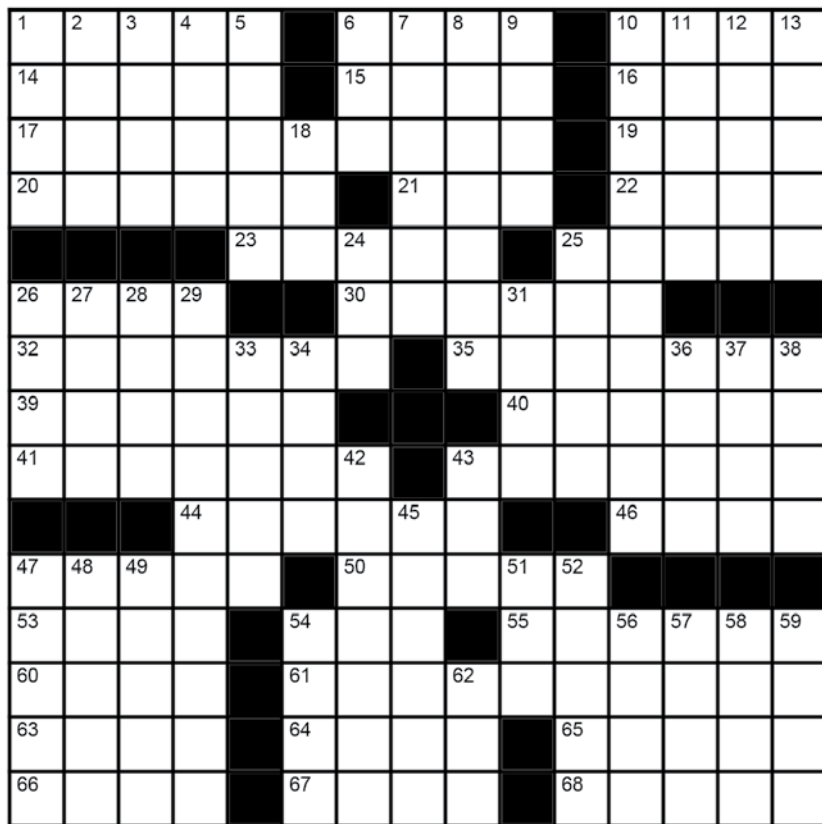
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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Created by Paul Mason • Solution Page 38



ACROSS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Bombards with cyberjunk | 46. Harvard rival | 4. Flaky mineral | 34. It gets hit on the head |
| 6. Young socialites | 47. Cunning | 5. Smelting leftovers | 36. Peru's capital |
| 10. Come together | 50. Robins and wrens | 6. Holiday mo. | 37. Wicked |
| 14. Sri Lankan language | 53. Mine entrance | 7. Resounding, like a canyon | 38. European freshwater fish |
| 15. Tannish | 54. Flow's partner | 8. Trendy watering hole | 42. Corned beef go-with |
| 16. Cry of pain | 55. Shoe part | 9. Without a doubt | 43. Vehicle |
| 17. Something that attracts attention | 60. Split | 10. Serving-mom-breakfast-in-bed occasion | 45. Gravy ingredient |
| 19. Helen of ____ | 61. When Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is celebrated by | 11. Surrounding glows | 47. They come for your birthday |
| 20. Household | 63. Does and bucks | 12. Use elbow grease on | 48. Parting word |
| 21. Need to pay | 64. S-shaped molding | 13. In a timid way | 49. Established fact |
| 22. Cart | 65. Ecological community | 18. Private eye | 51. Trash |
| 23. Money substitute | 66. Stars | 24. Curtain holder | 52. Rebuffs |
| 25. Suspicious | 67. Tartan pattern | 25. Work hard | 54. Heroic tale |
| 26. Latvia's capital | 68. Fine fiddle | 26. Puerto ____ | 56. Tizzy |
| 30. Visual | | 27. Wrinkle remover | 57. Smell |
| 32. The Emerald Isle | | 28. Trait carrier | 58. Dalai ____ |
| 35. Winter Olympics vehicle | | 29. Cockpit dials | 59. Spotted |
| 39. Against | | 30. Theater box | 62. Bumped into |
| 40. Famous naked horse rider | | 33. Large number | |
| 41. Dream-related | | | |
| 43. Made of clay | | | |
| 44. Sweet Spanish | | | |

DOWN

- Stern's opposite
- Sign on a ticket booth
- Word of



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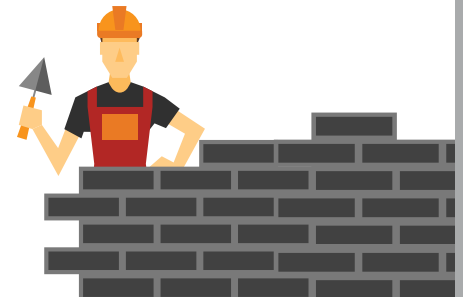
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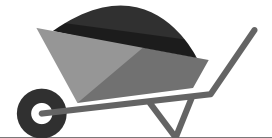
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WORD SEARCH

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- Birds
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- Butte
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- Celery
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MARCH HOROSCOPE BY CAKE

Astrology weaves us into the cosmic rhythms of the universe, where every celestial movement mirrors the energy within. This March, as nature awakens and daffodils bloom with resilience, the stars urge us to embrace renewal. It's a month for bold beginnings, for stepping into the sunlight and letting go of what no longer serves us. Each shift in the heavens whispers of growth and possibility, reminding us that life's cycles, much like the stars, are designed to bring us closer to joy and purpose.



ARIES, MARCH 21 - APRIL 20

March is your playground, Aries, and the universe is daring you to lead the charge. Big plans? Go for them—but remember, even the mightiest ram needs to pause for a breath. If a door doesn't open, maybe it's not your door (or you're pulling instead of pushing). Trust that there's a path meant for you. Keep your faith strong, your humor sharper, and your courage unstoppable. You're built for this season of growth. Just don't forget your sunscreen.



LEO, JULY 23 - AUGUST 22

March is your stage, Leo, and the spotlight is all yours. Go ahead, dazzle the crowd—but don't forget to recharge your batteries backstage. Your energy is magnetic, but humility adds that extra sparkle. Trust that your efforts will be noticed and that you're shining for a reason. Keep your faith close and your sense of humor closer—it's impossible to roar with confidence if you're taking life too seriously. Remember, laughter is as golden as your mane.



SAGITTARIUS, NOV 23 - DEC 21

Sagittarius, your adventurous spirit is itching for a spring reset. March is your cue to take a leap—whether it's traveling, learning, or just saying yes to something unexpected. You were born to move, explore, and expand, but don't forget to pause and appreciate the moment you're in. Laughter will be your guide, and trust will be your compass. Remember, even the stars take their time to align. Keep your faith alive; good things are unfolding.



TAURUS, APRIL 21 - MAY 20

Taurus, March asks you to shake off the winter blues and embrace a fresh start. It's time to make moves—whether it's spring cleaning your space or finally calling that friend you've been meaning to catch up with. But hey, pace yourself. Not everything has to be done in a day. Trust that steady progress will bring the peace you crave. And when in doubt, listen for the quiet voice within—it's been nudging you toward joy all along.



VIRGO, AUGUST 23 - SEPTEMBER 22

March whispers, "Relax, Virgo." Perfection can wait—this month is about finding joy in the messy, unfinished moments. Try to let go of that to-do list for a day (or at least shrink it). Your sharp mind is your superpower, but your heart knows when to pause. Life will remind you that not everything is in your hands—and that's okay. Laugh at life's quirks and lean into the beauty of imperfection. Even the stars shine with a wobble.



CAPRICORN, DEC 22 - JAN 20

Capricorn, March is your reminder to let go of what you can't control. You're hardworking, but even you deserve to rest without guilt. Laugh more, worry less, and focus on what truly matters—faith, family, and a little fun. The world won't stop spinning if you take a break. Trust that the seeds you've planted are growing, even if you can't see it yet. Your strength lies in your persistence, but your peace comes from knowing when to let go.



GEMINI, MAY 21 - JUNE 21

Gemini, you're brimming with ideas this March, and your charm is in full bloom. Everyone wants a piece of your time, but remember: you can't pour from an empty cup (or coffee mug). Take breaks and let your curious mind explore something just for you. A little faith goes a long way—trust that not every answer needs to be Googled. And when life throws you a curveball, laugh and swing anyway. It's your season to shine.



LIBRA, SEPTEMBER 23 - OCTOBER 22

Libra, this March is your season to rediscover balance. Stop trying to please everyone—sometimes it's okay to let the scales tip in your favor. Trust your instincts when choosing where to invest your energy; you can't be everywhere at once (despite what your calendar says). Lean into the simple joys that make you smile. And remember, grace isn't about being perfect—it's about staying centered in the chaos. Humor and a little faith will keep you steady.



AQUARIUS, JAN 21 - FEB 18

March is about reconnecting, Aquarius—both with yourself and the world around you. Step outside, breathe the fresh air, and let nature inspire your wild ideas. A little movement will recharge your creative spirit, and laughter will keep it alive. Trust that your unique perspective is a gift to share. Remember—trust that you're part of something much bigger. The stars are already rooting for you, so keep dreaming.



CANCER, JUNE 22 - JULY 22

March is about softening and opening up, Cancer. Your shell is great for protection, but don't let it keep you from new opportunities or people. Spring invites growth, and so does your heart—if you let it. A little humor and faith will help you roll with the tides. Remember, even the ocean was told where to stop. Be gentle with yourself, move toward what feels right, and trust that you're being guided exactly where you need to be.



SCORPIO, OCT 23 - NOV 22

Scorpio, March nudges you to open your heart and let a little light in. Life isn't a mystery to solve but a gift to enjoy—so loosen your grip on control and trust the process. Try something new, laugh at the unexpected, and remind yourself that even the deepest waters have calm shores. Faith doesn't always look like knowing; sometimes, it's about trusting. Your intensity is your strength, but don't forget to let it lead you toward joy.



PISCES, FEB 19 - MARCH 20

Happy birthday season, Pisces! March wraps you in its dreamy energy and whispers: "This is your time." Lean into your imagination, let your creativity flow, and don't hold back from making those big dreams real. Trust that you're supported, even when the path feels unclear. A sprinkle of humor and faith will help you navigate life's waves with ease. Celebrate yourself this month—you're the spark that lights up the beginning of spring.



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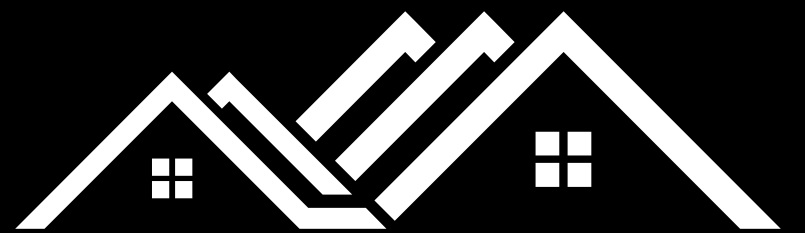
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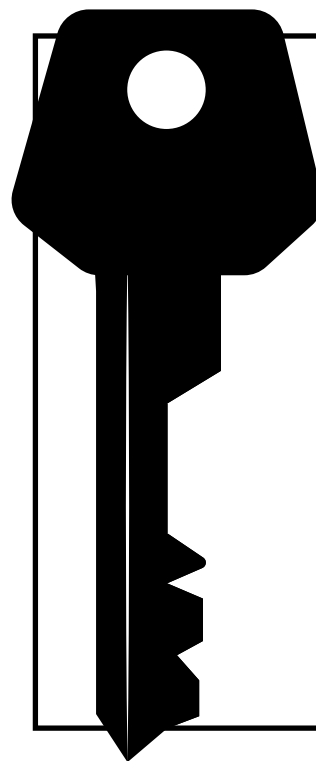
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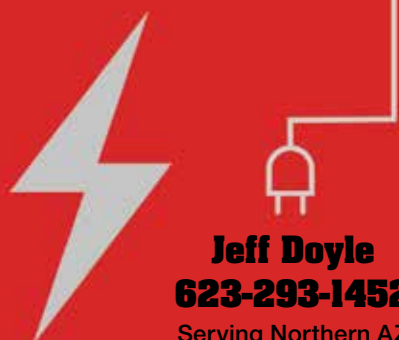
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MUNDS PARK COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOD'S WORD CHANGES EVERYTHING

By Pastor Steve Bowyer

I used to tell people that my bible was just ground up tree pulp and some poor cow gave its life so I could have a nice cover. That does not work anymore because I use a bible on my iPad. In fact, I probably have about 100 bibles on my iPad. They are all different translations, versions, and languages. And, they all say the same thing but do it in different ways.

The point I was making was this, as important as the written word is as you see it on the pages of your bible, more important is what it means to you and what it does to you. One of my seminary professors used to say, "It is not how much you are in your bible. It is how much of your bible is in you." – Howard Hendricks.

There is power in God's word. The spoken word as it is written in your bible has the ability to affect tangible changes in us and around us.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:1-3)

Jesus is the word of God. That is, God spoke, and it was written in the Old Testament that He would send His Son to the earth. Jesus is the manifestation of those words. God spoke, it happened just as He said.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Genesis 1:1-3)

Jesus was there before creation, and He is the One who spoke at creation. At His spoken word, something that was not there, came to be. Six times, "And God said..." then something new existed. There were no raw materials to work with. Jesus created everything out of nothing just by saying the word.

"He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm." (Mark 4:39)

With three words He calmed a storm that was about to claim the lives of the men in the boat. With spoken words Jesus controls the climate.

"Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that moment." (Matthew 8:13)

A Roman officer had come to Jesus because his treasured servant lay dying. He believed Jesus had the ability and authority to heal with a word without coming to his home to touch the man. He was right. Jesus healed the servant from long-distance.

The word of God has power when it gets into us.

"And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

"It is not how much you are in your bible. It is how much of your bible is in you."

– Howard Hendricks

We have access to a resource that has the authority and ability to change everything. We can have peace where we once had anxiety. We can have self-control where we once gave into impulse. We can have order where we once had chaos. The word of God is at work in us facilitating necessary changes that make our lives better.

Let the Word into your life and let it do what it does best; change everything.

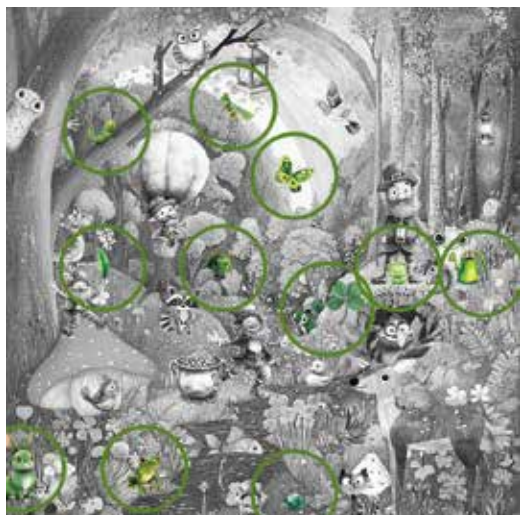
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For more information about our church go to our website, mpcc.church.

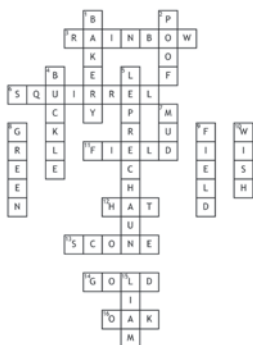
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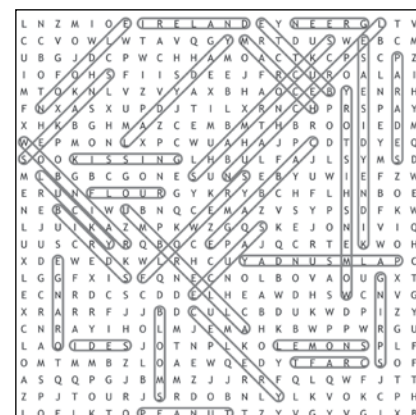
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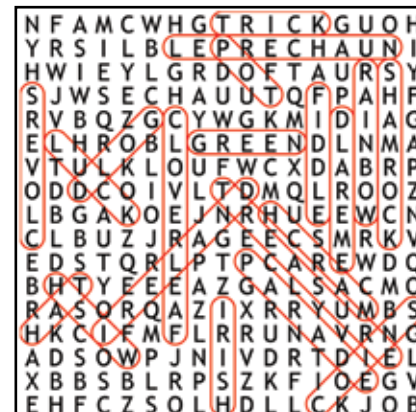
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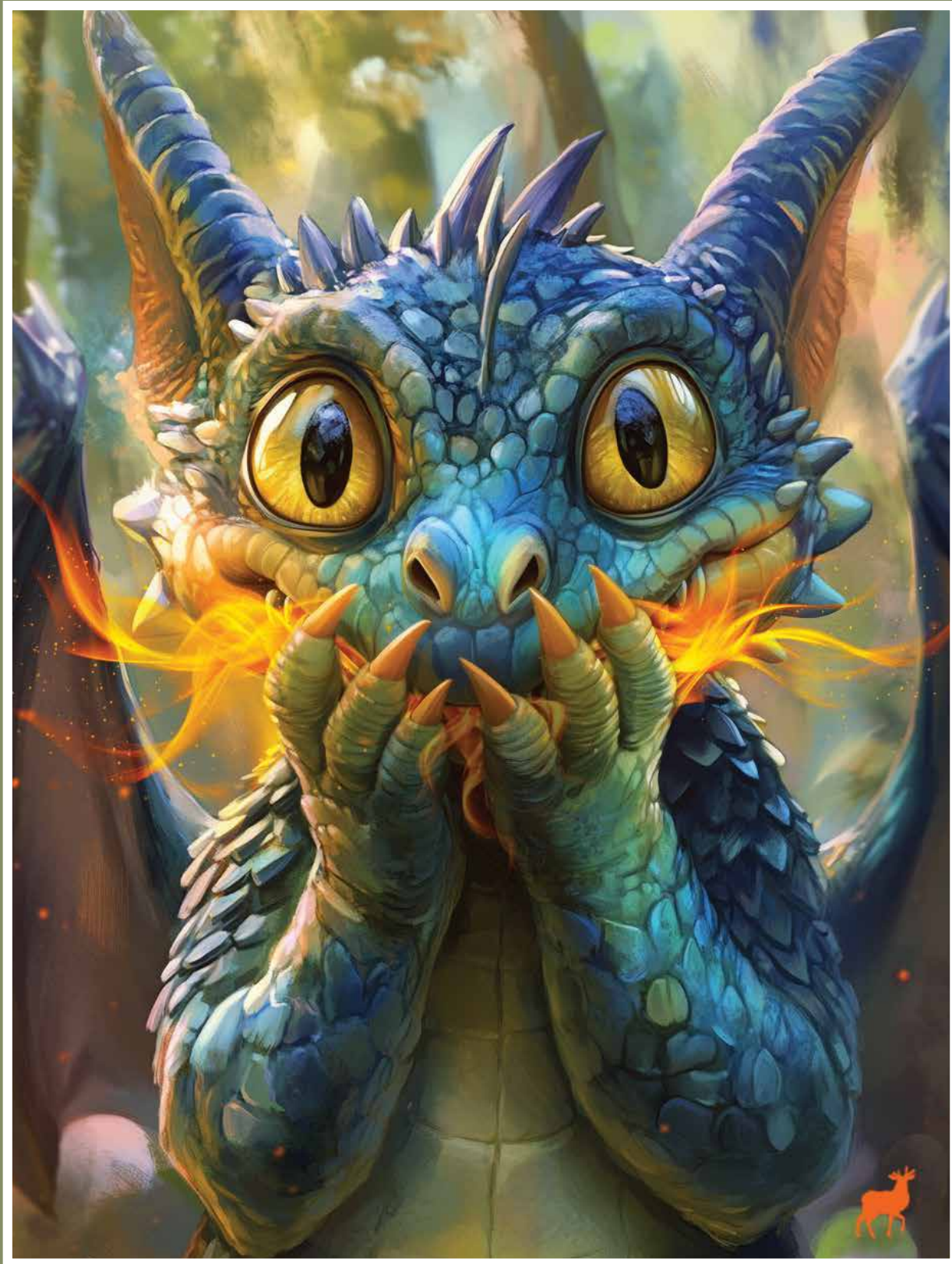
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