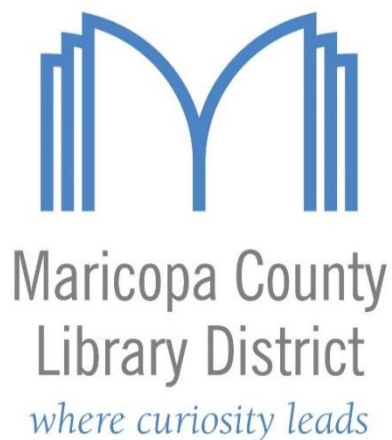




Maricopa County Reads

2020 Summer Reading Program

Summary & Report



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Overview

[Maricopa County Library District](#) (MCLD) is proud to share the success of its annual online countywide Summer Reading Program. From June 1 to August 15, all public libraries, two tribal libraries, and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office Library in Maricopa County (67 locations, representing 18 library systems) encouraged over 33,000 county residents to participate in our Summer Reading Program. The COVID-19 pandemic closed libraries to the public and changed the services offered during the Summer Reading Program, which led to a drop in participation numbers and increased engagement by those participants.

Building on the accomplishments and lessons of past years, the 2020 Summer Reading Program sought to accomplish two primary goals: interrupt the summer slide and promote literacy among children and their families. To achieve these goals, multiple strategies were incorporated in the program format, the Great Reading Adventure software, and the marketing campaign. Strategies focused on encouraging participants to read twenty minutes a day, modeling positive reading behaviors, and building home libraries.

Each year the Summer Reading Program is built around a theme, provided by the [Collaborative Summer Library Program](#) (CSLP). Arizona State Library supplies supporting materials created by CSLP to each of the participating libraries. This year's theme was "Imagine Your Story," in celebration of fantasy, fairy tales and mythology. MCLD staff, along with the assistance of representatives from many of the 18 library systems, planned a comprehensive program that included an interactive online platform to record program activity, digital badging, activity challenges, prize incentives and sponsored coupons, community experiences, a series of free and engaging virtual events, and a marketing campaign to spread awareness.

Continuing this year was a partnership with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to provide a Summer Reading Program to adults experiencing incarceration. This program has the potential to positively impact this community by encouraging adults to read for learning and/or for enjoyment with the goal of reducing recidivism. The dates for this program were extended to better fit their library structure. Participants completed 1,295 reading logs and each earning the ability for the participant to select their next book to read.

Outcomes

The two primary goals of the Summer Reading Program are to interrupt the summer slide, the common term given to the learning loss experienced by children while transitioning between school years, and to promote literacy among children and their families. This was even more important during the 2020 summer due to virtual learning and library closures. Strategies employed to accomplish these goals included:

1. Challenging all participants to read at least 20 minutes every day
2. Providing a free book to all participants who reach 1,000 points during the program
3. Offering an online interactive platform to log activity or optional printable game board
4. Encouraging teens and adults to model reading to children
5. Links to online read-aloud stories for children who may not have access to books
6. Including early literacy tips and information to parents within the software
7. Streaming virtual events provided by diverse performers to build comprehension skills
8. Extending the program by two weeks, after the governor's executive order to push back the start of the school year, so that more people could participate and reach their goal

Using the Great Reading Adventure software (or a paper game board), participants are encouraged to build a habit of reading twenty minutes a day by working towards a total reading goal of 1,000 minutes. Various incentives are achieved along the way including a free food coupon at 500 points, a free Arizona State Park Pass at 750 points, and a free book at 1,000 points. The free book incentive serves as a motivator towards the reading goal and helps to build home libraries, an important aspect of increasing children's literacy success. Teens and adults are also encouraged to participate in the program in order to model positive reading behaviors as they work towards their own reading goals and incentives.

Important to the program's success is consistent staff training throughout the many library systems regarding the goals and talking points, along with the functionality of the program and software. Three online trainings were created and distributed this year (one for administrators, one for customer service staff and a general program overview).

Marketing

According to last year's survey results, 71% of respondents heard about the Summer Reading Program from visiting their library. With the majority of participating libraries closed during the 2020 program, it was more important than ever that the marketing strategy meet possible participants where they were: at home and online. The result was a multi-faceted communications plan that leveraged both successful tactics from prior campaigns and new digital strategies. Highlights include:

- A new digital advertising strategy that targeted audience based on demographic, geographic and behavioral attributes:
 - *This campaign resulted in nearly 2,300 visits to the website—with 99% of visitors being brand new to read20az.com.*
- An increase in emails and email mentions to MCLD cardholders about Summer Reading:
 - *This resulted in nearly 2,000 visits to the website—83% were new to the Summer Reading website.*
- Social media advertisements throughout the Summer highlighting prizes, keeping kids engaged and big program announcements:
 - *This resulted in over 1,000 visits to the website—93% were new users to read20az.com.*
- A targeted effort to reach parents through digital marketing strategies with *Raising Arizona Kids* magazine and *PeachJar*—a digital flier distribution service for local school districts.
 - *These efforts resulted in more than 1,500 website visits—97% of which were new users to the Summer Reading site.*



Figure 1: Marketing graphic created to advertise on social media.



Figure 2: Marketing bookmark.

Software

For The Great Reading Adventure software behind Maricopa County Reads, 2020 has been, in a word: eventful. After the end of last year's program, we started making many internal and administrative improvements. As awareness of the global pandemic started to shift our summer reading plans, we were able to pivot and add functionality to better support adults, children, and families participating from home.

- Many administrative improvements are now in place, including streamlined email sending to participants, improved performer scheduling for participating libraries, and many small enhancements and bug fixes.
- Full support for streaming events is now included in the software. We needed to implement this feature rapidly; however, our expectation is that we will continue to use it even as libraries reopen for customers. Staff upload videos to streaming services and then enter them into the software with start and end-viewing times – pre-staging events in this way removes staff need to manage adding and removing access to them. Customers are able to browse available and upcoming programs and stream them right from the summer reading software.
- We added prize capabilities for online, email-based redemption to support the eAudiobooks supplied this year. Though this feature enabled us to work with the Libro.FM redemption process, it is capable of working with any vendor who could support email prize redemptions.

The award-winning [Great Reading Adventure software](#) continues to be available freely from GitHub as a cross-platform, open-source project.

Game Content

Digital badges continued to be used in 2020 to mark program achievements (program registration, 500-point achievement, etc.) and to indicate the completion of in-game challenges. Badges provide added motivation and incentive for participants to continue logging reading points throughout the Summer Reading Program.

Daily, bilingual early literacy tips from Expect More Arizona and Smart Talk graphics from Read On Arizona populate on the game dashboard of anyone who is registered as a prereader (ages 0-4). Another feature that continued was web links to online literacy resources and activities on the game dashboard, accessible as soon as someone logged into their account.

Avatars allow for personalized engagement in the online program. Avatar accessory bundles, such as knights, fairies and dragons, were unlocked throughout the program with 3.6 septillion possible avatar combinations. Participants were able to share their avatars on social media platforms to personally promote their engagement with the program.



Figure 3: Sample avatar with dragon costume.

Challenges

Challenges are a way for participants to earn bonus points by completing a themed reading list or activity challenge. These diverse engagement activities are created for all age groups by library staff and partners, such as Maricopa County Department of Transportation and Board of Supervisors. In the 2020 Summer Reading Program, 274 challenges were created and completed 42,543 times by participants.

Challenges	Created by	Users	Description
ABC, 123	MCLD's Gila Bend Library	2,456	Spend quality time with your pre-reader completing the tasks related to learning the alphabet and counting numbers!
A Magical Day	Tolleson Public Library	1,652	Complete these magic tricks!
A Place to Read	Mesa Red Mtn. Library	1,540	Try reading in a fun and different spot to score points.
Baby Time	MCLD's North Valley Regional Library	1,432	Complete these early literacy activities to earn bonus points and a badge!
Appreciation Challenge	MCLD's Asante Library	1,039	Say thank you and earn bonus points!
Anchor Quest	MCLD's Fountain Hills Library	1,007	Four objects of great power -the Anchors- have been scattered across the land. To save your village and the world, can you recover them? Others hope to claim the Anchors and are racing to control them. Large and small magics will help or slow your progress. Will you succeed in your quest?
A Balloon in the Window	MCLD's Queen Creek Library	909	Read the picture book "It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon" by Jarrett J. Krosoczka to learn how even in bad situations there are sunny spots to be found. Then put a balloon in your front window to make your neighbors smile. It can be made from paper or cloth or even be a real one. It would be fun to drive around looking for balloons in windows.
Bubble Bubble Pop	Tolleson Public Library	771	Create fun shaped bubble wands with your pipe cleaners! You can create a shape such as a triangle or square, or even a letter. Next, blow your fun shaped bubbles!
All About Unicorns!	MCLD's Asante Library	735	Complete 4 tasks to earn 40 bonus points and a special badge!
Chalk Your Walk	MCLD's Perry Library	735	Get outside and create chalk art in your driveway or sidewalk!

Figure 4: Top Challenges.

Community Experiences

45 unique community experiences were created for the 2020 Summer Reading Program. A community experience is a special summer reading event that takes place outside the library at an external space or organization. Community Experiences build community and provide participants with the experiential knowledge that is a key component of literacy. Staff from all participating libraries collaborated with community partners to create secret codes that were found and redeemed for a digital badge and bonus points. This summer saw a reduction in Community Experiences due to the closer of many organizations and stay-at-home orders.

Experiences	Location	Users	Description
Purple Elephant Cakes	Litchfield Park	173	Can you find the secret code hidden at the Purple Elephant Cakes? Perhaps it is hiding in a cookie?!
A Virtual Introduction to Queen Creek Botanical Gardens	Queen Creek	113	Watch this video to learn about the exciting new Queen Creek Botanical Gardens. Enter the secret code at the end of the video to earn 25 points. If you're interested in learning more, check out the website here: https://qcgardens.org/
Gila Bend Sun	Gila Bend	113	Try to find the secret code hidden in the local Gila Bend newspaper, the Gila Bend Sun! Happy searching!
June PokemonGO Community Day	Gilbert	90	Visit the Riparian Preserve during the June PokémonGO Community day to become an expert trainer. While you're here, don't miss the secret code that will earn you more points in the Summer Reading Program!
A Virtual Visit to Agriscaping	Queen Creek	81	Watch the video linked below to learn about local business Agriscaping and their mission to make backyards edible. Enter the Secret Code displayed at the end of the video to earn 25 points. If you're interested, visit Agriscaping's website to learn more: https://agriscaping.com/
Sugar and Spice	Litchfield Park	27	Can you find the secret code at Sugar and Spice?
Yogurtini	Litchfield Park	27	Can you find the secret code at Yogurtini?
Trail Trekkie	Queen Creek	22	Visit the Town of Queen Creek trails guide to read about the trail system, the plants and animals you might see and learn who yields to who on the trails: biking shoes, hiking shoes or horseshoes?
Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting	Phoenix	20	See the related challenge for website scavenger hunt questions. Visit the Hall of Flame Museum of Firefighting Website: www.hallofflame.org Email your answers to info@hallofflame.org to receive the Secret Code for bonus points.
Litchfield Park Recreation Center	Litchfield Park	18	Can you find the secret code hidden at the Rec Center?

Figure 5: Top Community Experiences.

Sponsors and Incentives

Donations from outside organizations support the program by providing incentives.

[Peter Piper Pizza](#) and [Raising Cane's](#) donated free food coupons for 500-point achievers.

Coordinated through the Arizona State Library, [Arizona State Parks & Trails](#) donated one-day park passes for 750-point achievers. Grand prize drawings conducted at the end of the program for all 1,000-point achievers included:

- a [Phoenix Mercury](#) jersey signed by player, Brittney Griner
- [Harkins Theatres](#) prize packs, which include loyalty cups, admission passes and free popcorn – one for a winner at each participating library
- [Legoland Discover Center](#) admission passes
- [Sea Life Aquarium](#) admission passes



Figure 6: Summer Reading sponsor logos.

MCLD participants that logged at least 140 points a week earned entry in a weekly prize drawing castle building blocks for pre-readers, Magic: Gold Edition magic kit for kids, a Dutch Bros thermos and gift card for teens and a Kindle Fire Tablet adults.¹



Figure 7: Images of the MCLD weekly drawing prizes.

¹ Drawings and prizes vary by library system. Some systems offer additional point incentives and drawing prizes.

Free Book Incentive

In an effort to build home libraries, the Summer Reading Program offers participants that achieve 1,000 points one of 118 print books from our custom online marketplace. More than 15,500 Summer Reading Program participants chose a title from this year's selections, which featured fiction, non-fiction, and activity books for early readers through adults. Participants could select books from any age category. There was an increase in the number of participants who reached their goal of 1,000 points and chose to redeem or donate their prize book with 87% of participants redeeming or donating their prize book.

New in 2020 was a partnership with Changing Hands Bookstore to offer achievers the option for an eAudiobook as their prize book instead of a print book through the Libro.FM app. Participants who selected this option were able to choose from 23 diverse titles for a range of audiences. Over 330 participants selected this option.

A partnership continued this year with Maricopa County Human Services Department which allowed participants the option to donate their free book to local Head Start classrooms instead of redeeming it for themselves. Five percent of participants who earned a prize book chose to donate their book to Head Start classrooms across Maricopa County. This is up from 4% of achievers who donated their prize book in 2019.

Top 10 Prize Print Book Titles

Harry Potter Origami

Scholastic Book of World Records: 2020

Guts by Raina Telgemeier

My First Hidden Pictures Learning Fun

Draw Your Own Comic Book by Ida Noe

The Storm Runner by Jennifer Cervantes

50 Mandalas for Adult Stress Relaxation Coloring Book

How to Draw: Flowers and Plants by Mark Bergin

I Just Ate My Friend by Heidi McKinnon

Komodo Dragon vs. King Cobra by Jerry Pallotta

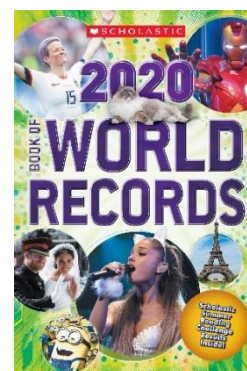


Figure 8: The top three most ordered free prize book options in 2020.

Events

When libraries closed to the public, events to support the Summer Reading Program pivoted to a virtual format. In-person events were canceled and the software was adapted to provide streaming events, viewable for any participant who was logged into their Summer Reading account. Local performers with diverse cultural and educational talents created a virtual event, at least 45 minutes in length. Three new streaming events were available each week, along a Spanish-language storytime that were available for a month at a time. Thirty-four streaming events were viewed over 8,400 times and included secret codes to earn digital badges and bonus points for the viewing participants.

Most Viewed Streaming Events

Goldilocks by Great Arizona Puppet Theater

Radical Reptile Fun

Alice in Wonderland by Hampstead Stage Company

Jungle Jill's Animal Encounters: Around the World

Superhero Science with Arizona Science Center

Dangerously Fun Juggling with James Reid

Phoenix Zoo

Phoenix Symphony: Tunes and Tales

9 Dragons Kung Fu: Chinese Lion Dance

African Drums & Stories with Keith Johnson



Figure 9: Streaming Events for Week 2



Figure 10: Streaming Events for Week 8



Figure 11: Streaming Events for Week 5

Overall Statistics

The Summer Reading Program features four age groups: Prereaders (Birth to 4), Kids (Ages 5 to 11), Teens (Ages 12 to 17) and Adults (Ages 18+). A total of 33,298 participants registered online between May 1 and August 15, 2020. Of those, 18,762 became achievers (earned 1,000 points)—an achievement rate of 56%.

- 41,244,010 reading minutes were logged
- 568,521 digital badges were earned
- 42,543 challenges were completed
- 15,532 free books were awarded
- 861 free books were donated to local Head Start classrooms
- 1,295 Reading Logs were completed in the Maricopa County Jails

The graph below illustrates Summer Reading participation and achievement rates over the past three years. Though participation was down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the percent of participants who reached achiever status (reached 1,000 points) has increased.

Library System Participation & Achievers

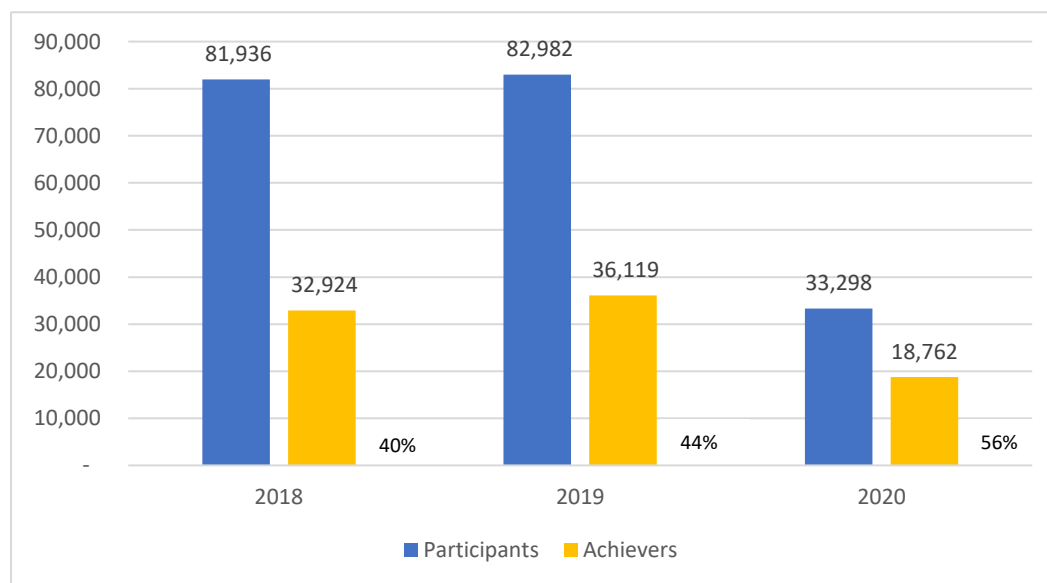


Figure 12: System-wide participants and achievers 2018-2020.

2020 Participants and Achievers by Library System

	Total Participants	Total Achievers	Rate of Achievement
Avondale Public Library	417	186	45%
Buckeye Public Library	688	320	47%
Chandler Public Library	4,801	3,138	65%
Desert Foothills Library	118	47	40%
Fort McDowell Tribal Library	41	6	15%
Glendale Public Library	1,058	532	50%
Maricopa County Library District	10,509	5,814	55%
Mesa Public Library	3,400	1,963	58%
Morristown Volunteer Library	2	1	50%
Peoria Public Library	1,150	668	58%
Phoenix Public Library	7,049	3,701	53%
Salt River Tribal Library	48	4	8%
Scottsdale Public Library	2,774	1,660	60%
Tempe Public Library	1,038	641	62%
Tolleson Public Library	134	58	43%
Wickenburg Public Library	23	5	22%
Youngtown Public Library	46	18	39%

Figure 13: 2020 Participants and Achievers by Library System.

Participants and Achievers by Program Age & Library System

Library System	Prereaders		Kids		Teens		Adults	
	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers
Avondale Public Library	55	23	176	63	59	29	127	71
Buckeye Public Library	102	45	306	113	99	54	181	108
Chandler Public Library	556	340	1,980	1,163	736	522	1,529	1,113
Desert Foothills Library	14	6	59	13	11	6	34	22
Fort McDowell Yavapai Tribal Library	7	0	17	2	6	3	11	1
Glendale Public Library	116	46	425	165	151	79	366	242
Maricopa County Library District	1,247	628	4,321	2,039	1,650	985	3,291	2,162
Mesa Public Library	489	243	1,288	662	509	337	1,114	721
Morristown Volunteer Library	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Peoria Public Library	135	78	490	229	173	121	352	240
Phoenix Public Library	937	432	2,753	1,219	807	514	2,552	1,536
Salt River Tribal Library	4	0	26	1	5	0	13	3
Scottsdale Public Library	335	186	1,210	637	380	247	849	590
Tempe Public Library	130	65	475	316	138	75	295	185
Tolleson Public Library	23	10	65	24	20	9	26	15
Wickenburg Public Library	3	1	12	1	1	1	7	2
Youngtown Public Library	2	0	15	0	5	0	24	18

Figure 14: 2020 Participants and Achievers by Program Age and Library System.

Public Surveys

Each year customer surveys are conducted to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the Summer Reading Program and to solicit feedback. Information gleaned from survey results is used to shape and inform the future program. This year 2,116 participants completed the survey (435 kids, 372 teens, 928 adults, and 381 parents or caregivers). This year participants were sent a link to the survey upon reaching achiever status, instead of being available during the last couple weeks of the program. Responses were up from 1,484 completed surveys in 2019 to 2,116 completed surveys in 2020. Open-ended questions included how the library supported families during the COVID-19 pandemic, feedback on virtual programs and what the library could do to help participants learn more.

Survey results include the following.

- 81% of respondents read more often.
- 82% of respondents want to use the library resources more often.
- 84% of respondents learned something new from what you read or experienced.
- 79% of respondents enjoy reading more after the program.
- 93% of respondents have a library card.
- 84% of respondents have participated in the Summer Reading Program 2 times or more.
- 99% of respondents plan to participate next year.

Summary

In its seventh year using this online format and software, the 2020 Summer Reading Program faced unexpected hurdles but was able to provide a quality consistent program for participants. Staff and customers were flexible throughout the program when it came to in-library programming, which was canceled and replaced with virtual programs, and prize distribution, which was pushed back to August and September. The extension of the program by two weeks in reaction to the Governor's executive order to delay the start of the school year, allowed 1,500 more participants to register and engage in the Summer Reading Program.

Plans for the 2021 Summer Reading Program include accommodations that were created in reaction to the 2020 library closures, such as electronic access to game boards and virtual events from local performers for participants to view. The plan will also include training enhancements within the Summer Reading software, refining the usability in Spanish and streamlining the process for prize distribution. Continued efforts will be made to increase the diversity of content in hopes of increasing the number of non-readers and non-library users who are engaging in the program.

Acknowledgments

The Summer Reading Program is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Maricopa County Library District staff, participating libraries, and community partners. We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for making the 2020 program a success.

Maricopa County Library District

Director

Cindy Kolaczynski

Branch Operations

Alicia Snarr

Library Region Managers

Collection Management

Laura Jamison

Amy Cimino

Tracey Hoyos

Tara Summus

Michael Porter

Facilities

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Bob Mungovan

Hannah Ma

Emily Lillo

Library District Branch Staff

Marketing and Public Relations

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Jolene Bradley

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Marissa Beckett

Christy Ploog

Yvonne Trotta

Web Team

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Harald Nagel

Daniel Wilcox

Madi Boman

Information Technology Team

Participating Libraries

Avondale Public Library

Marisela Munoz

Brenda Soto

Buckeye Public Library

Peter Grant

Chandler Public Library

Jill Baker

Jennifer Whitt

Desert Foothills

Caitlin Decker

Ashley Ware

Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Library

Jacquelyn McCalvin

Glendale Public Library

Erin Garred

Greg Kinder

Maricopa County Sherriff's Department

Lisa Poulin

Mesa Public Library

Brenna Klassen

Michele Sheppard

Linde Furman

Morristown Volunteer Library

Linda de Berge

Peoria Public Library

Kathie Jackson

Phoenix Public Library

Gretchen Pierce

Wendy Resnik

Salt River Tribal Library

Melissa Rave

Karria Silver

Latiesha Guy

Sophenia Begaye

Scottsdale Public Library

Andrea Guzman

Melissa Smith

Michelle Vorves-Cabrales

Tempe Public Library

Micah Corporaal

Samantha Seeman

Tolleson Public Library

Lila Garza

Youngtown Public Library

Cathy Grow

Heidi Speed

Wickenburg Public Library

Jane Baumbach

Suzie Wolfe

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Maricopa County Supervisors

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Steve Chucri, District 2

Bill Gates, District 3

Clint Hickman, Chairman, District 4

Steve Gallardo, District 5

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Nancy Kessay

Maricopa County Parks and Recreation

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Maricopa County Departments

Sheriff Paul Penzone

Office of Communications

Partner Organizations

Arizona State Library

Donna Throckmorton

Arizona State Parks & Trails

Ken “Gecko” Sliwa

Harkins Theatres

Alison Sipes

Hurricane Harbor

Don Spiller

Legoland Discovery Center/Sea Life Aquarium

Rebecca Crain

Peter Piper Pizza

Lee Rosenthal

Phoenix Mercury

Natalie Kirby

Raising Cane’s

Danielle Mann

Brittany Maroney

Expect More Arizona

Read On Arizona

Terri Clark