

# PEORIA REPUBLIC

## OPINIONS EDITOR

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## Mental-health facility helps Avondale meet a need

Recent tragedies involving violence and mental health have many of us wondering what can be done to mitigate such terrible situations in the future. We believe access to care and a greater state of community readiness is essential. In Avondale, we took an important step in that direction two years ago.

As one of the fastest-growing cities in Arizona, Avondale has experienced all the aches and pains that accompany such growth. From 2000 to 2010, the city saw its population soar 113 percent to more than 76,000 residents, and this rapid growth contributed to gaps in services, including behavioral-health care.

### Our Turn



FRANK SCARPATI



KEVIN KOTSUR

With only one 24/7 behavioral-health facility in the area, the options were limited. People often sought help in our hospital emergency rooms, a costly, time-consuming and less-efficient means of addressing urgent behavioral-health issues. If there was an encounter with law enforcement, the individual would be transported to a facility in central Phoenix, but this option would take an Avondale officer off the city's street for hours.

Our goal and belief was that we needed to get people facing mental-health challenges into services as quickly as possible, with minimal impact on the community, especially law enforcement. We knew we had to be creative to ad-

dress this problem and that we had to build partnerships with other agencies to be successful.

With that in mind, Avondale, the West Valley Police Chief's Association, Magellan Health Services of Arizona and Community Bridges Inc., worked together to open a West Valley Access Point and Transition Point facility in Avondale. This innovative facility provides two types of services essential to those in mental-health crisis: an Access Point that provides 24-hour triage, assessment, brief intervention and transition to the next phase of care to anyone arriving at its doors, and a Transition Point, which provides stabilizing care for individuals who need clinical and residential services for three to five days.

Since the opening of this facility two years ago, thousands of individuals in the West Valley have been cared for and

their mental-health needs addressed. And, our police officers and hospitals have seen the positive impact that the availability of these services has had on their organizations and operations.

With good communication, a willingness to partner, and a commitment to community-based intervention, any city can find innovative solutions to the challenges and gaps facing their growing cities — and meet a critical need that can help mitigate terrible situations from occurring in their communities.

*Frank Scarpati is president/CEO of Community Bridges Inc., a behavioral health and substance abuse treatment corporation. Scarpati is a member of the Magellan Health Services of Arizona governance board. Kevin Kotsur is Avondale's chief of police and the past president of the West Valley Police Chiefs Association.*

### YOUR VIEWS

## Field Kitchen rotten

My wife and her girlfriend were taken aback upon entering the converted Arrowhead Sweet Tomatoes Field Kitchen location. Scoping out the once anticipated "girls night out" choice favorite, they added up the cost and opted out, dismayed.

Why ruin a successful concept? It's one thing to be a food critic on an expense account and believe this concept is a "happy medium." A skeptic doesn't need to give it a shot, for if you add it all up, the bill will now easily exceeds \$20, with beverage and tip, for a meal that used to be under \$10. There are already plenty of casual-dining eateries costing in the \$20 range. In the event you haven't noticed, as typical of those in the liberal-dominated media, many folks have taken pay cuts or lost jobs. Sweet Tomatoes was an affordable "eat-out" treat. There's no confusion, Field Kitchens is not.

— **Joe P. Hutchinson, Glendale**

*Editor's note: The Field Kitchen restaurants in Peoria and Tempe are going*



Field Kitchen might have impressed food critics, but customers missed the lower Sweet Tomatoes price range. One reader says prices rose from \$10 to \$20. FIELD KITCHEN

*back to being Sweet Tomatoes. Page 10*

### APS should manage its budget

What is a person to do? We have done everything we can to reduce our usage of electricity, everything recommended by APS, and our bill just jumped \$50 in one month.

Included with our statement was a notice that effective in March, we must now start paying even more to "recover a portion of the fixed costs" of APS.

This because "more customers are installing renewable-energy systems" and APS is selling less electricity. I am sure I am not the only person seeing the irony of this. All I know is that when I have less money coming in, I have to rethink my budget. My fixed costs are not going to change. At this point, I start looking at my variable costs and start reducing. Why can't APS be as fiscally responsible as any Arizona family has to be? I am sure that APS, like any major corporation, has some "fat" in their budget. Let

them start reducing before we are required to pay more of our already shrinking income.

— **Sharon Dick, Glendale**

### Lobbying is the same as bribery

Regarding "Plan for casino near Glendale led to flurry of lobbying" (*The Republic*, Jan. 29):

I read about the obscene amounts of money being spent by lobbyists, such as Tohono O'odham Nation's \$1.2 million, Gila River Indian Community's \$2.6 million, and on and on. It would seem that this money could be better spent helping the people of the tribes.

Then a thought occurred to me ... what is the difference between lobbying and bribery? In the dictionary, the definitions are just about the same. Giving something, usually money, to someone to get what you want.

We know how strong all the lobbyists are in Washington, D.C., and also here in Arizona. Maybe it is time that we look at outlawing lobbying.

The lobbyists get what they want, the legislatures get what they want. Money. But what about the people who elected these officials ... what do they get?

— **Helen MacIntyre, Phoenix**