

## Quality of Life

By Lauren Serrato

As the West Valley continues to grow, so do the entertainment and recreation options for locals and tourists.

In the wake of summer and the consistent triple digit temperatures, the West Valley offers limitless opportunities for play, both indoor and outdoor.

Sintra Hoffman, president and CEO of WESTMARC, said the long list of activities to enjoy throughout the West Valley is one of the many reasons for the continuous economic development success and residents' quality of life.

Goodyear is the model of growth, ranking as the ninth fastest growing in the nation, second fastest growing in the state. To keep up with the rising population and attract tourists and businesses, the city's Parks and Recreation team have been hard at work to bring multiple projects to fruition within the last year, with one of Goodyear's largest projects to date set to open to the public on August 1.

Located on the northwest corner of 150th Drive and McDowell Road, the Goodyear Civic Square at Estrella Falls will offer residents and all of the West Valley a new park, library and will be home to Goodyear City Hall.

"One of the city council's strategic pillars is quality of life and this past year really speaks to that," Nathan Torres, parks and recreation director for the city of Goodyear said.

"In a few short months, we're opening up our new library and we're transitioning from a 10,000-square-foot space to a 24,000 multi level community library, located at the new city civic square. And that library is the Georgia T. Lord Library. That facility will be anchored by a two acre park, Civic Square Park, and that will be a place for people to gather for community events that will really be the heart of Goodyear and really bring the community together."

In addition to the Civic Square, Goodyear also opened its doors to the highly anticipated recreation campus.

"We opened up the recreation campus a little less than a year ago, and that consists of a 30 acre community park with something for everyone," Torres said. "That facility is anchored by a 50,000-square-foot recreation and aquatics facility. We are on target to reach 400,000 visitors in the first year. The response has been absolutely tremendous from a community standpoint."

Torres said the city of Goodyear's growth makes it a great time to be in Goodyear, adding that it also helps attract residents and businesses to the area.

"We know that quality comprehensive parks and recreation facilities and libraries not only help to retain your current residents and businesses but they also help to attract the same. Residents are looking for that high quality of life and that is what Goodyear is delivering," he said.

Travel about 16 miles north and you will find Peoria's notorious body of water that's been providing fun in the sun for residents and guests for nearly 100 years.

Contrary to many assumptions that one needs to travel out of state for a weekend on the water, Peoria is home to Lake Pleasant Regional Park. Whether it be for its paddle boarding, boating, kayaking or fishing, Lake Pleasant attracts hundreds of thousands of guests every year.

“Lake Pleasant is a gem in Peoria,” Jennifer Stein, economic development services director for the city of Peoria said.

“It provides so many recreational opportunities, which I know many Peoria residents and visitors alike enjoy outdoor activities. There is something for everyone, it is just filled with amenities and choices. It's not only a great opportunity to get out there and be healthy and enjoy the beautiful landscape in Peoria and the lake amenities, but you also get a unique overall experience.”

Serving as one of the busiest lakes in the metropolitan area, Lake Pleasant has been a magnet for attracting businesses to Peoria, including Postino, a top-tier restaurant set to open its first West Valley location in Peoria's P83.

“There's definitely a collaboration between some of these key strategic tourism sites such as the lake or Quintero Golf, or even our restaurants and retail on Lake Pleasant Parkway and Happy Valley because all of those sites are in the same vicinity and support each other,” Stein said.

“The lake definitely attracts a number of people and that's why from an economic development standpoint, we've been working with potential hotel operators to see if there's a site that would work best and be a good fit for a hotel because that would be appreciated and well utilized for Peoria as a whole.”

As families are ready to embark on their summer vacations and the Arizona heat is in full effect, Stein encourages Peoria residents and all guests to add Lake Pleasant to their bucket list this summer.

“Peoria is known for its quality of life and we're just excited to have this amenity,” she said. “We're so happy to have so many people visiting the lake and seeing them take advantage of all the good quality amenities and opportunities. Of course, we always want everyone to be safe. Make sure you have a designated driver, plan ahead. We want to make sure you have a safe, enjoyable experience.”

Lake Pleasant covers about 35 square miles or 23,000 acres of shoreline and water. As one of Peoria's most visited recreation locations, city council member Brad Shafer said he moved his family to Peoria in order to be closer to the lake.

“Lake Pleasant is probably one of the greatest assets we have in the West Valley, up there with Luke Air Force Base and the football arena and everything else, but at the end of the day, it's probably one of the greatest assets where families and friends can gather, spend time together and play and enjoy our beautiful outdoors,” Shafer said.

As someone who spends most of their Saturdays at the lake, Shafer said its location to Phoenix and the numerous recreational activities it provides makes Lake Pleasant one of the highlights of the West Valley.

“Here at the city of Peoria, our mayor and council's top priorities is quality of life and our number of accolades prove that, whether it's our public safety, or our outdoor spaces, our mountain reserves, our hiking and biking trails, and obviously Lake Pleasant, it's a combination of all that, and it creates a highly desirable place to live, work and play which is a great quality of life,” Shafer said.