

101 Of Our Favorite Things!

**EXCLUSIVE!** The real story behind the late-night, at-home arrests of *New Times* executives

# PHOENIX

**Best of the Valley**

**The City's Best:**  
Sushi • Tea • 'Tinis  
Ice Cream • Pastries  
Scooters • Hair Salon  
Art Exhibit • Breakfast  
First Date • Karaoke  
Jeans Store • Workout  
Newscast • Sports Team  
Record Shop • Baby Gifts  
Boutique • Grilled Cheese  
Chocolate Dessert • Wine  
**...and more!**

**Plus:**

READERS' TOP PICKS  
WORST OF THE VALLEY  
5 NEW VALLEY THEME PARKS



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Moak founded notMYkid in 2000 after living through the pain of drug abuse within their own family and wanting to dispel the "not my kid" mentality. The organization has an interactive program that promotes families achieving prevention through education. They offer peer-to-peer programs for students led by young-adult speakers, as well as online resources for parents including chat rooms, articles and a slang dictionary. 2211 E. Highland Ave., Ste. 140, Phoenix, 602-652-0163, [notMYkid.org](http://notMYkid.org).

#### **Best Nonprofit for Kids** **Gabriel's Angels**

Gabriel wears a purple vest to work - actually, he has a hard time calling it work. He's a 9-year-old Weimaraner who has been visiting children in the Crisis Nursery in Phoenix with his owner and founder of Gabriel's Angels, Pam Gaber. When Gaber started bringing Gabriel to the Crisis Nursery in 2000, she noticed the children's negative attitudes and behaviors completely change. So she thought to herself, how could she *not* get more people involved? Since the organization began, Gabriel's Angels has grown to include more than 100 pet-owner volunteer teams who visit more than 98 facilities. On September 12, there will be a Golf Marathon (100 holes) at Gainey Ranch in Scottsdale to benefit the nonprofit. 220 S. Mulberry St., Mesa, 480-460-5333, [gabrielsangels.com](http://gabrielsangels.com).

#### **Best Summer-Inspired Spa Treatment** **Mojito Cocktail Facial,** **Red Mountain Med Spa**

Let's be honest, we're not out of the heat yet, so we're still searching for ways to cool off. We love a good spa day for that reason, but it seems that warm mud and hot stones dominate Valley spa menus, even in the dead of summer. So kudos to Red Mountain Med Spa for adding a hint of mint to its seasonal lineup with the Mojito cocktail spa special: a custom, cooling facial (60 minutes) followed by a massage, refreshing mint foot wrap and reflexology (60 minutes, both \$199). The crisp mint muddled with hints of lime and sugar will cool you off, head to toe, but be forewarned: The sweet concoction smells so much like a real mojito, you may want to schedule your treatment in conjunction with the nearest happy hour. 1635 N. Greenfield Road, Ste. 131, Mesa, 480-854-4872; 8550 Shea Blvd., Ste. 120, Scottsdale, 480-991-4159, [redmountainmedspa.com](http://redmountainmedspa.com).

#### **Best "Click & Save" Animal Rescue Network** **Buildproof Buddies**

The brainchild of Buildproof, a local company that manages payment systems for construction and remodeling projects, Buildproof Buddies is a program that provides an easy way for busy people to assist in finding homes for pets awaiting adoption in Valley shelters. Without ever having to leave the comfort of a desktop computer, Buildproof Buddy "sponsors" commit to week-long online stints that focus on using e-mail templates and fliers to spread the word about specially selected dog and cat "buddies" in need of homes. It's an easy, free and rewarding way for even the most schedule-challenged animal lovers to advocate for the adoption of shelter pets. 480-751-1012, [buildproof.com/buddies](http://buildproof.com/buddies), [support@buildproof.com](mailto:support@buildproof.com).

#### **Best Way to Find a Good Mechanic** **Neighborhood Auto Repair** **Professionals Network**

It started with car troubles, an expired warranty and the reality of dealing with car dealers. "We realized that unless you know someone who could give you a referral, it was difficult to find a good mechanic without using trial-and-error," says Jay Jennings of

Mesa. In 2005, he founded NARPRO, a network of locally owned car repair shops whose members get the OK from Jennings in terms of services, prices and customer satisfaction, among other things. Participating repair shops must pass a 26-point inspection list that includes no unresolved complaints with the Better Business Bureau, fully certified mechanics, up-to-date repair equipment and positive reviews from their past 50 clients. If successful, they pay a fee to join the network. The results are available for free through a searchable online database that doesn't require you to register. At press time, there were 21 shops in the Valleywide database with four new members on the way, Jennings says. 480-854-7374, [narpro.com](http://narpro.com).

#### **Best Cure for Your Cactus** **The Cactus Doctor**

Rilee Leblanc has a green thumb for cactuses of all kinds. Born in Thailand to French parents, he eventually earned a master's degree in horticulture from the University of Dubai and specializes in cactus strengthening, surgery, disease eradication and more. His portfolio includes cactus gardens at Tovrea Castle, Papago Park, the Desert Botanical Garden and even the airport medians along 24th Street. He and his four-person crew work seven days a week. How Leblanc finds time to personally address cactus questions posted by users of his Website is beyond us. Basically, the guy's got a soft spot for our spiny friends. "I do it because it's my passion. If I had lots of money I would do it for free," Leblanc says. "When I die, I will probably drop dead taking bacteria out of a saguaro." 602-465-0566, [thecactusdoctor.com](http://thecactusdoctor.com).

#### **Best Barbershop for Men** **V's Barbershop**

Local businessman Jim Valenzuela relishes the years he spent taking trips to the barbershop in Tucson with his dad. As a man, however, he says he noticed that these places where Americana met a man's rite of passage had been taken over by national, quick-clip chains with a "revolving door of stylists." After an experience at a local barbershop in Knoxville, Tennessee, Valenzuela came up with the idea for V's barbershop in Phoenix: a modernized throwback with retro checkered floors, fully restored barber chairs from the '50s, iconic sports photos and more. "It's very much a masculine feel. It's geared toward guys in an upscale way," Valenzuela says. The resulting interest in the flagship Arcadia location has spawned seven Valley locations, two in Orange County, California, and a visit from potential franchisees living in Kansas City at press time. The \$21 haircut includes a neck shave with a straight razor, a quick back rub and a shoeshine. Now that's high and tight. 4801 E. Indian School Road, Ste. 3, Phoenix, 602-508-8600, [vbarbershop.com](http://vbarbershop.com).

#### **Best Green Gurus** **Phoenix Permaculture Guild**

Give a man a homegrown vegetable and he'll eat for a day; teach a man how to harvest his own crop using composting and a rain-water harvesting system and he'll be green for life. That's not *exactly* how the saying goes, but that's certainly the mission of the Phoenix Permaculture Guild, an organization whose main goal is to educate Phoenicians about green living through lectures, workshops, classes and events. With no membership fee and affordable class rates (typically \$10 per class), PPG makes it easy being green. Recent programs, which usually are held at the Downtown Phoenix Public Market, included "Designing Your Own Vegetable Garden," "Pollution Solutions - Paper or Plastic? Neither!" and "Composting in the Southwest Desert." Don't miss this fall's fruit tree program. [phoenixpermaculture.org](http://phoenixpermaculture.org).