

# ARIZONA BUSINESS GAZETTE

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

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## INSIDE: MORE ESSENTIAL NEWS ABOUT THE METRO PHOENIX ECONOMY

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## Tourism in state generates \$22.7B

**Russ Wiles**  
Arizona Republic  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Arizona's hotels, motels and other lodging venues hosted a record number of visitors, who spent a record amount of money last year, according to new research from the state's Office of Tourism.

A strong economy, moderate gasoline prices, expanded international air routes and an aggressive marketing campaign helped lure visitors to Arizona. The state welcomed American and foreign visitors who had 43.9 million overnight stays in 2017, collectively spending \$22.7 billion and directly supporting 187,000 jobs — largely in hotels

and restaurants. The state doesn't track the actual number of tourists but rather overnight stays, spending and related data. Tourism spending equated to about \$62 million a day. Visitors tended to stay nearly four nights each on average. Recent announcements that the Super Bowl will be held here in 2023 and the Final Four of the NCAA men's college

basketball tournament in 2024 bode well for the state's long-term travel potential.

### Sporting events boost awareness

Those sort of sporting events, along with Cactus League baseball, the Waste

See **TOURISM**, Page 12



Brian and Alisha Koborg are owners of Chemdyne Pools & Spas in Fountain Hills. ROB SCHUMACHER/THE REPUBLIC

## How an AZ couple kept business afloat

**Georgann Yara**  
Special to the ABG  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nearly 10 years have passed. But how Alisha Koborg decided to use the \$57,000 bonus from her CFO job remains a vivid memory.

At the time, Koborg and her husband, Brian, decided to start their own swimming pool-maintenance business. It was 2009, and they were living in Texas. They used her bonus as a springboard.

"It was very hard to let that check go. I was gripping it," Koborg said, as she laughed.

But years later, their investment has paid off with Arizona Pool Keeper, their Fountain Hills-based company the

couple started in 2012. They returned to Arizona, where they met, after the birth of their first child and started their current business with money garnered from the sale of their first one.

In that time, Koborg's bonus has generated a million-dollar company, she said. In Arizona, they grew an initial client list of 32 pools to one that currently boasts more than 500 accounts for residential and commercial clients.

And when they took the company to the next tier by acquiring Fountain Hills-based Chemdyne Pools & Spas in August 2017, the Koborgs' revenue tripled overnight with the inheritance of big commercial clients. Their small business American Dream, which they meticulously spent growing slowly but surely was in swift motion.

But reality followed just as quickly. And hit hard.

Koborg's experience as a finance executive and business research prepared her for an estimated 7 percent loss with the purchase of a new route. However, the turnover and subsequent loss due to understaffing created a larger loss.

"It's been a steep learning curve. It's been great and not so great at times," she said.

### Honesty is key

Putting more cash into marketing. Hiring a crop of new staff. Offering screaming deals to attract new clients.

See **COUPLE**, Page 12

## Interim director appointed for Corp. Commission

**BrieAnna J Frank**  
Special to the ABG  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Arizona Corporation Commission appointed an interim executive director to lead its staff after the previous head resigned amid conflict-of-interest accusations, the agency announced Thursday.

Matt Neubert will take on the role after serving as director of the commission's securities division for 15 years, overseeing nearly 46 employees. Before that, he served as director of registration and compliance within the securities division, the agency said.

The Arizona Corporation Commission regulates electric, water and gas utility companies, securities regulation and incorporation of businesses, among other responsibilities.

The previous director, Ted Vogt, resigned after commissioners said he failed to disclose that his wife worked for a lobbying company tied to Arizona Public Service Co., which the commission regulates.

Vogt said if his wife's job was a violation of state or commission regulations, it was unintentional, but he understood that "perceptions matter."

Commission Chairman Tom Forese, who had called on Vogt to resign, praised Neubert's "honor and integrity" in previous roles.

"(Neubert) has a fantastic track record, and I think he would do an excellent job steering the commission," Forese said in a written statement.

Neubert said he was "honored" to step into the position.

"We have a tremendous staff of dedicated individuals who help to inform Commissioners on utility services and rates, railroad and pipeline safety, securities investors, business filings and corporations on a daily basis," he said.

The five commissioners voted during Thursday's meeting to discuss next month a recruitment plan for a permanent executive director.

## APS spends to keep measure off ballot

**Rachel Leingang**  
Special to the ABG  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Arizona's largest utility has spent millions so far trying to derail an effort to ask voters to increase the state's requirements for renewable energy.

What exactly the money was spent on is unclear.

Also unclear: whether the measure they oppose will even make the 2018 ballot.

In new campaign filings, Arizona Public Service Co.'s parent company reported spending nearly \$6 million on a signature-gathering firm in the past few months. The company didn't appear to gather any signatures to place a



APS is opposed to a clean-energy ballot measure. THE REPUBLIC



The Arizona Corporation Commission in Phoenix. TOM TINGLE/THE REPUBLIC

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## Real Estate



Developer KDC has announced plans for an office high-rise at Tempe Town Lake. KDC

# New office highrise planned for Tempe

**Russ Wiles**  
Special to the ABG  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Developer KDC and the Weitz Co., a construction company, announced plans to build an office highrise at Tempe Town Lake near the Arizona State University campus.

The Tempe Waterfront joint venture is envisioned to consist of up to 400,000 square feet of prime office

space. The companies disclosed neither any likely tenants nor the cost of the project, to be situated on East Rio Salado Parkway east of the new corporate campus occupied by State Farm.

Many other details, including the number of floors in the building and likely completion date, also weren't revealed. Construction has not commenced.

"The site is surrounded by a strong

amenity base with easy access to State Loop 202 via McClintock (Road)," said Peter Yates, KDC's Phoenix market director, in a statement. He said the "vibrant surroundings" and quality of labor in the vicinity are attractive to potential corporate clients.

On-site amenities could include restaurants, retail locations and nearby links to public transportation and hiking trails.

KDC, a build-to-suit developer head-

quartered in Dallas, has produced about 33 million square feet of property valued at more than \$7 billion, specializing in data centers and broadcast studios.

The company said it has worked on developments for FedEx, J.P. Morgan Chase, Liberty Mutual, Raytheon, State Farm, Toyota North America and other entities.

Reach the reporter at [russ.wiles@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:russ.wiles@arizonarepublic.com) or 602-444-8616.

### NEW IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

# Modern Acupuncture expands to Mesa

**Georgann Yara**  
Special to the ABG

One of the newest locations in the Scottsdale-based Modern Acupuncture franchise opened its doors in Mesa in June. Franchisee Shannon Tolbert talks about her acupuncture business, which will soon be joined by her second in Gilbert next month.

#### What goods or services will customers find?

Modern Acupuncture offers an enhanced acupuncture experience through traditional and cosmetic acupuncture, treating conditions such as stress and anxiety, insomnia, digestion issues, allergies, chronic and acute pain, fine lines and wrinkles, under-eye bags, lack of skin hydration and more. Unlike conventional acupuncture, Modern Acupuncture utilizes needle therapy on nodes to increase blood flow and does not require the removal of any clothing and still access the full-body's health.

#### What makes your business unique?

Modern Acupuncture is the only branded acupuncture company in the nation. Guests receive an incredible value and experience for a fraction of the normal price of acupuncture, as well as receive tremendous benefits through a small commitment of a 30-minute session.

#### Why here?

I chose to open my first Modern Acupuncture clinic in Mesa because the East Valley is an underserved market in



Shannon Tolbert owns Modern Acupuncture Mesa, which opened in June.

terms of alternative methods of healing. Through the service that we offer at Modern Acupuncture, I am confident that our clinic will positively impact the Mesa, Gilbert, Tempe and Chandler communities — so confident that I have invested in a second location that's slated to open in August.

#### What did you do professionally before opening this business?

I was a chief marketing officer at a Fortune 500 firm providing financial services to franchisees. I have a 25-year career with Blue Chip companies in leadership roles such as quality leader, vice president of sales and CMO.

#### What made you want to open your own business?

Ever since I can remember, I have always wanted to own my own business. I am just now arriving at the intersec-



Modern Acupuncture Mesa offers an enhanced acupuncture experience through traditional and cosmetic acupuncture. PHOTOS BY MODERN ACUPUNCTURE MESA

tions of necessary experience, financial capital and a brand that makes sense. Details: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays, 11 a.m.-4

p.m. Sundays. 1652 S Val Vista Drive Suite 105 Mesa, 480-508-4616, modernacupuncture.com.

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