

## County working to ensure affordable housing



**BY JACK SELLERS**  
Guest Writer

To ensure the continued growth and prosperity of our region, I see three major areas in which we need to devote considerable time and resources: education, transportation and housing.

I'd like to spend a few minutes discussing the latter because I've had the opportunity to see some amazing work being done in this area.

You've probably seen the headlines. Record home prices. Record rents. Incomes not keeping up with rising costs. A greater number of evictions. A rise in the number of those experiencing homelessness.

The overall story seems to be that while our population is booming and opportunity is expanding for many, there are also an increasing number of families and individuals being left behind.

While we're not San Francisco, the fact is, there's not enough affordable housing in Maricopa County. And when I talk about affordable housing, I'm talking

about apartments or condos or houses that cost 30 percent or less of someone's income.

This is not a secret, but it's also not an easy thing to solve. The vast majority of apartments being built in the Valley right now are considered "luxury."

For developers, this makes sense. These projects are typically easier to finance and carry lower risk.

Affordable housing projects, on the other hand, often require complex land deals and piecemeal financing. That is why it makes sense for the public sector and the private sector to work together on solutions, which is exactly what we've been doing in Maricopa County.

In early November, I was at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Valley's newest affordable housing complex, River at Eastline Village, along Apache Boulevard in Tempe.

The Housing Authority of Maricopa County worked with Gorman and Company as well as local, state, and federal partners to bring the project to life.

The apartments are high-quality, with washers and dryers and modern amenities.

But, more important, the design means residents here will be connected.

There's light rail on one side of the complex and public buses running up and down the other. There's a school and a park nearby. River at Eastline Village is a mixed-use development, and on the ground floor, residents will have access to Newtown Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit that helps individuals and families improve their financial well-being.

The goal is not just a stable home; it's a solid home base from which to build a stable life.

River at Eastline is special, but it's not unique. Over the past six years, the Housing Authority of Maricopa County and Gorman and Company have worked together to redevelop 600 units of public housing across the county.

Maricopa County was one of the earliest adopters of the federal government's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which provides federal funding to housing authorities that partner with private companies on housing revitalization projects.

The Maricopa County Industrial Development Authority often supports these projects through grants or bond financing. What it means in practical terms is that we're leveraging partnerships, stretching our dollars and maximizing our impact.

It's easy to get excited about growth. In my time in Maricopa County, I have seen us take huge strides in terms of the diversity of our economy, higher education, transportation and more. However, we need an economy and a housing market that works for everyone and there is clearly work to be done when it comes to affordable housing.

Maricopa County is a regional leader and active partner on this issue, bringing people to the table, funding programs and facilitating developments that connect individuals to a better quality of life.

I believe more projects like River at Eastline Village are needed to ensure the continued growth and prosperity of our region. ■

*Jack Sellers is a Chandler resident and a member of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors.*

## ICAN focuses on 'Adverse Childhood Experiences'



**BY SHELBY PEDERSEN**  
Guest Writer

ICAN recently held a training for our staff about Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Care.

Community Programs Manager Ted Huntington has been trained in these areas, including certifications. The training was a great experience for our staff to learn more about ACEs and TIC, not only how it impacts the youth that we serve, but to take a better look at how they handle stressful situations managing our youth.

ACEs is the term given to describe all types of childhood trauma, including abuse, neglect and other traumatic experiences. If you are curious about your own ACE score, you can take the quick assessment at: [acestoolhigh.com/got-your-ace-score](http://acestoolhigh.com/got-your-ace-score).

Knowing your ACE score is one thing,

but investing in the solution is another.

We assume at ICAN that the majority of the youth we serve have experienced some childhood trauma. We need to ensure that we are prepared to equip these youth with the skills they need to conquer their ACEs.

Ted had the group talk through stressful situations where things are not in our control – such as traffic, youth acting up or being short-staffed. We also identified how youth might end up in a stressed-out state, maybe they started their day with their parents fighting, then had to sit quietly in school all day.

The other side of that thought, is things that are in our control – our attitude, thoughts and actions.

Ted gave a great analogy using the incredible Hulk. He calls it "Hulk Mode" – when that stress starts to build and you turn into a different person. That's a "toxic cocktail" where cortisol and adrenaline are released into the body, resulting in

aggression, impulsions, irrationality and anxiety.

Identifying and countering toxic stress is key to regulating this vicious cycle, and everyone can benefit from some of the steps it takes to get from a "toxic cocktail" to a "soothing smoothie."

First, you have to know your triggers – what tends to set you off?

Second, learn some skills that are immediate counters to toxic stress – maybe that is self-talk "not today trigger!" or some deep, concentrated breathing.

Third, re-evaluate your state, what are you doing and is it effective?

Lastly – figure out what works best to calm you down and use these as long-term coping techniques.

Toxic stress that builds up in the body and keeps coming back can have serious health implications. There's evidence that ACEs and built up toxic stress lead to disease, disability, social problems and early death.

Our ICAN programs team talked through "soothing smoothie" ideas for themselves, as well as dealing with kids.

One really unique skill that worked great for one of the youth was holding and petting a soft blanket. This particular youth was really having trouble controlling their emotions, so one of the staff members asked them what they do at home when they get upset. They said that they pet their guinea pig.

So, the staff member came up with the idea of giving them a soft blanket to hold and pet, which worked great.

Whether it is yourself, your child, or someone you care for – understanding ACEs and having compassion for what others have been through is helpful for everyone.

Developing skills to calm toxic stress – in yourself or in a child you know will have long-term health benefits. ■

*Shelby Pedersen is CEO of ICAN: Positive Programs for Youth.*