County working to ensure affordable housing

BY JACK SELLERS
Guest Writer

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

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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 living costs. A greater number of eviction orders. A rise in the number of people 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 homes that cost 30 percent or less of someone’s income.

But more importantly, 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 NewMark 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 GoNan 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 SHELLEY 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 craft to learn more about ACES and TIIC, 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 stressful experiences. It is if you are curious about your own ACE score, you can take the quick assessment at: acetoolboxhigh.com/get-your-ace-score.

Knowing your ACE score is one thing, but investing in the solution is another. We believe 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.

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Told with humor but straight-faced, 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 have identified how youth might be led up in a conversation to say that they’re not in control of the situation.

Third, re-assess your state, what are you doing and what 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 be serious health implications. There’s evidence that ACES and built up toxic stress lead to disease, disability, social problems and early deaths.

Our ICAN programs team talked through “soothing statement” ideas for themselves, as well as dealing with kids.

One really unique skill that worked is the “Hula Mode” -- when that stress starts to build and you turn into a different person (a “toxic cocktail” where cortisol and adrenaline are released into the body, resulting in aggression, impulsivity, irrationality and anxiety). Identifying and countering toxic stress is key to regulating this vicious cycle, and everyone can benefit from some of these techniques.

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

Shelley Pedersen is CEO of ICAN Positive Programs for Youth.