



# PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND EVENTS

JANUARY 2026  
NEWSLETTER

*Connecting our community through people, parks,  
natural areas, and programs.*

## Welcome New Recreation Staff!



Merle Morgan

### Welcome Merle Morgan - Recreation Coordinator I at Jay Lively Activity Center

Merle's connection to the ice rink began at age five when he was first learning to skate. Merle served five years in the military before continuing his passion for recreation. After seven years working part-time at the rink, he now joins PROSE full-time as a Recreation Coordinator I. Merle is excited to give back to the place he grew up in and recreate the warm, welcoming environment he experienced as a kid. When he's not working or hanging out at the rink, you might find him playing games with friends or enjoying Flagstaff's great outdoors.

### Welcome Taylor Todd - Recreation Coordinator II Guest Services at the Aquaplex

Taylor joins us from Grapevine, Texas, where he grew up and earned his undergraduate degree in Exercise Physiology with an emphasis in Human Performance and Research at Stephen F. Austin State University. Taylor and his wife moved to Flagstaff in 2019, and since then, he has worked with NAU Campus Recreation and as a Medical Assistant. He's excited to bring his experience and energy to PROSE at the Aquaplex and especially looks forward to revamping the Summer Youth Programs. When he's not at work, Taylor enjoys lifting weights and playing board games. He and his wife share their home with two dogs, Rigby and Zoey.



Taylor Todd



## Buffalo Park Receives Best of Flag 2025 Award

Buffalo Park has once again been recognized by the Arizona Daily Sun’s Best of Flagstaff awards. For the second year in a row, the park earned the title of Best Hiking and Biking Trail, a testament to its scenic beauty and popularity among the community.

# PARKS

## Continental Park Upgrades

The Parks team recently completed much-needed repairs and upgrades at Continental Park. Two aging scoreboards on the north fields were replaced with brand-new models. Working closely with the local Little League organization, the team ensured the new design meets the needs of both PROSE and the community. While on site, the team also replaced the stair structure on the concession stand, eliminating safety hazards associated with the old, deteriorating stairs. These improvements help keep Continental Park safe, functional, and ready for play!

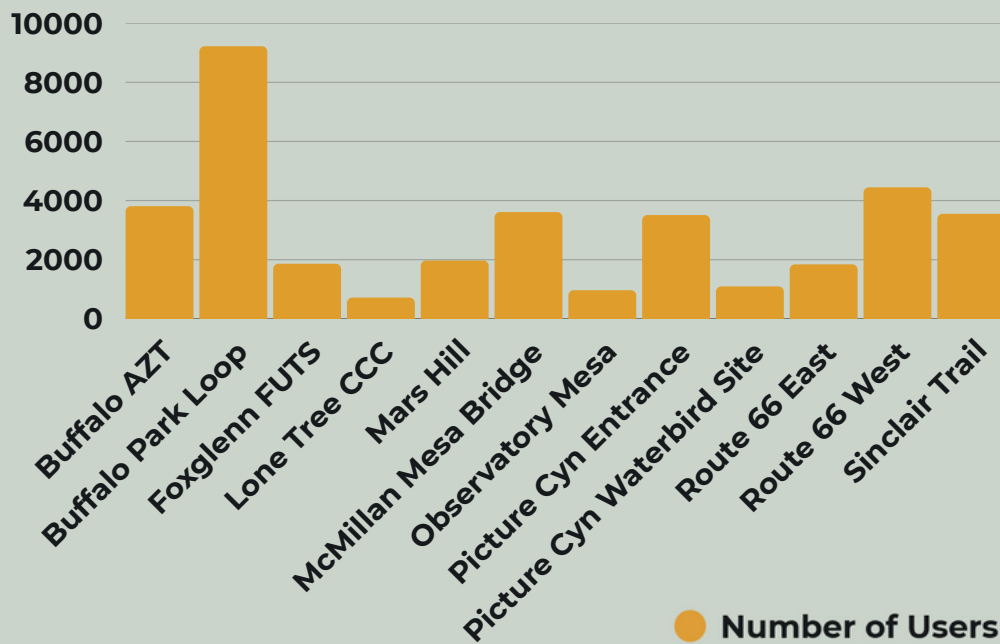


One of the two new scoreboards



New staircase

## December 2025 Trail Counts



# RECREATION



Piatigorsky Concert at Joe C. Montoya Community & Senior Center

## Piatigorsky Concert at Joe C. Montoya Community & Senior Center

This year's Piatigorsky Concert was a beautiful celebration of classical music, featuring Evan Drachman on cello and Lisa Bergman on piano. The duo performed a stunning program that captivated the audience. During his introduction, Evan shared an incredible detail—the cello he played is an original Stradivarius, over 301 years old. His willingness to travel and perform on such a rare instrument speaks to his passion for sharing classical music with the world. We are so appreciative of the Piatigorsky Foundation for bringing this wonderful concert to us every year!

## January Membership Drive

The Aquaplex had a very successful January Membership Drive! Throughout the month, we sold 552 new memberships, generating a total revenue of \$88,354.02. This annual promotion offers discounted rates, making access to recreation and fitness even easier for our community. We are excited to welcome all our new members and look forward to seeing you in the facility!



Aquaplex pool

## Jr. Suns Youth Basketball Visits NAU Game

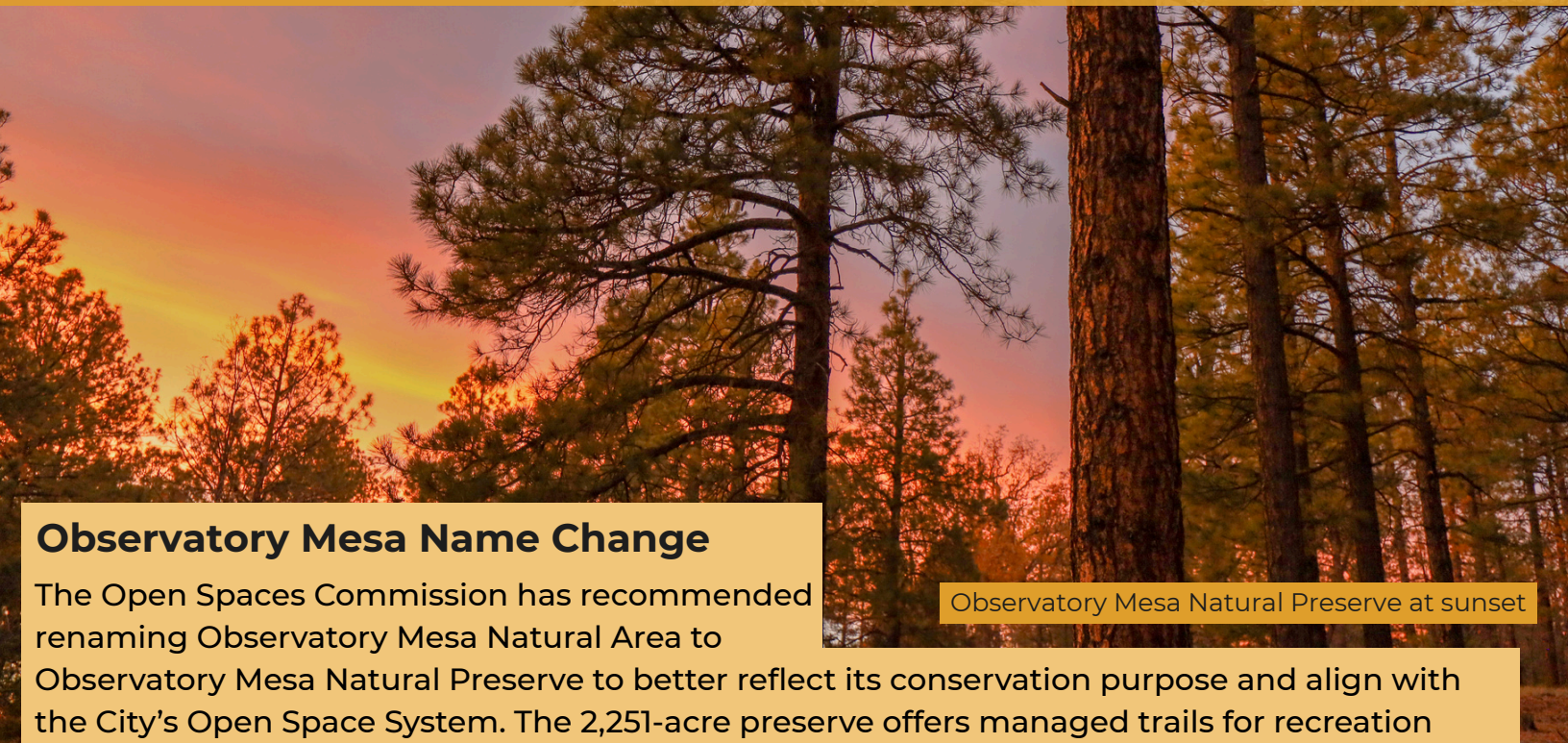
Youth Basketball hosted its first Jr. Suns Night at NAU with a great turnout. Kids wearing their Jr. Suns jersey got in free, and parents received discounted tickets. Players were invited onto the court to be recognized. The NAU Men's Basketball team also supported our Skills and Drills Day, so it's great to cheer them on and see them play!



Youth basketball kids at the NAU game



# OPEN SPACE



Observatory Mesa Natural Preserve at sunset

## Observatory Mesa Name Change

The Open Spaces Commission has recommended renaming Observatory Mesa Natural Area to Observatory Mesa Natural Preserve to better reflect its conservation purpose and align with the City’s Open Space System. The 2,251-acre preserve offers managed trails for recreation while protecting native forests, wildlife corridors, and scenic views. This change supports the Greater Observatory Mesa Area Plan, which will improve signage, restore damaged trails, and balance recreation with conservation. Trail improvements are scheduled to begin in July 2028, with grant funding being explored to accelerate progress.

## Education Highlights

Open Space kicked off the year with two engaging programs:

- Summit High School: Photography students explored McMillan Mesa, capturing “ephemeral moments” like melting snow and dormant plants, imagining how they would share these on social media.
- FACTS After-School Program: At Marshall and De Miguel Elementary, students learned about snow science through melt experiments and mapping snow buildup, connecting their observations to real-world snow management in Flagstaff.

## New Open Space Interns

We are excited to introduce two new Open Space interns, George Wilson and Aryelle Reynolds. Both are Parks and Recreation majors at NAU, gaining hands-on experience in Open Space management. Aryelle will focus on education initiatives, while George will assist with volunteer coordination and projects.



Aryelle Reynolds and George Wilson

# EVENTS, MARKETING & ATHLETICS



## Basketball First Session and Second Session

The first session of Adult Winter Basketball wrapped up with both divisions crowned by undefeated teams! Each division had a close runner-up, losing only one game.

- Mon/Wed Division: Winner – *Mike & Ronda's West*, Runner-up – *Leavitt Group*
- Tues/Thurs Division: Winner – *Leavitt Group*, Runner-up – *Mutton Busters*

The second session is already underway, giving new teams a chance to get in the game.



Adult Basketball

## Adult Summer Softball - First Session Registration Now Open

Registration for Adult Summer Softball leagues is now live online. Teams can sign up for \$350, and games will begin at the end of April.



Softball at Thorpe Park

Click Here to Register Online

