



GRATITUDE FOR YOU

This is a special edition of the PHXConnect employee newsletter. Directors from City departments have joined to celebrate all City employees. We hope you enjoy these notes of gratitude.



NOVEMBER 2025

Message from the City Manager

Beginning this week as your City Manager raises feelings of gratitude in me. There is no better job in the world than serving Phoenix residents alongside committed City of Phoenix employees. The impact we make on people's lives every day is remarkable and I am thankful for the opportunity to work with all of you, the Mayor and City Council again.

I am especially grateful to those employees who have to work the Thanksgiving holiday, keeping the city moving, safe, and clean.

Ed Zuercher
City Manager

Arts & Culture

To the awesome Arts and Culture team: Thank you for another great year of ensuring our residents have access to arts, culture, and educational programming. This was an incredible year, marked by record grant applications, serving more facilities, and tackling the Sombra project. Congratulations to you all.

I will miss you all, and I have been lucky to serve as your director for the past seven years. I am grateful for all we have accomplished!

Mitch Menchaca
Arts & Culture
Director

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

A cheese plate

Auditor

I am thankful for our talented group at the City Auditor Department.

Your dedication and hard work help us make sure Phoenix is the best place to live and work.

Phoenix is better because of your efforts. Happy Thanksgiving!

Aaron Cook
City Auditor

Holiday tradition:
Driving around to see
Christmas lights

Aviation

I'm grateful for our team across the Phoenix Airport System and the City. Working in a dynamic industry, where America's Friendliest Airport® serves as a key driver of Arizona's economy, takes a special team. Each team member plays a vital role in advancing our three airports, and I'm honored every day to lead alongside all who make it possible. Together, we will continue to achieve great things by serving our community, meeting challenges and striving for excellence. Thank you all very much for your hard work and commitment. I wish you peace and joy this holiday season.

Chad Makovsky
Aviation Director

Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:
That canned cranberry stuff

Budget & Research

I may be new to this role, but extremely familiar with the incredible work you do every day. To say I'm thankful for all your efforts is an understatement. The work you do is vital – helping to ensure the City allocates its resources efficiently and effectively, resulting in continued high quality services for residents. You may not realize it, but residents really do benefit from your skill and expertise, because your work helps make City services happen. It's a tremendous honor to work alongside you, and I look forward to all the great work we'll continue to do together!

Aaron Mertz

Budget & Research
Director

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:
It ALL makes it
onto my plate*

City Clerk

Thank you, City Clerk Team, for all your hard work and commitment to the important work we do. I am grateful to work with such an AMAZING team that supports each other and pulls together to accomplish great things, day in and day out. Your dedication to our mission is evidenced by the quality and excellence in our work.

I appreciate each of you, and I am so proud to be part of our small but MIGHTY team!!!

Denise Archibald

City Clerk

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*We typically host and make
ribeye roast on Christmas Eve*

Communications

Thank you, Communications team, for amazing work in 2025. You turn chaos into calm, City services into stories, and storms into “scroll-stoppers” – one picture post or press release at a time. You’re the voice behind the scenes, juggling deadlines, and dealing with drama like pros.

You make it look easy, but I know just how hard you work. Thanks for all you do to keep our City connected, informed, and entertained.

Dan Wilson
Communications
Director

*Holiday tradition:
Thanksgiving dinner
with 50+ relatives*

Community & Economic Development

This year brought many changes for the department, and through it all the CED team has remained adaptable, focused and committed to serving our customers. Your teamwork and professionalism reflect the very best of public service. I am deeply grateful for your dedication to serving our businesses, growing our economy, and assisting our workforce.

Thank you for the positive impact you make each day for Phoenix!

Eric Johnson
Acting CED
Director

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:
Surströmming, which is
fermented herring*

Equal Opportunity Department

Although I have only just begun my time with the Equal Opportunity Department, you have welcomed me with open arms. I am very grateful for your hard work and dedication to the Phoenix community. It is an honor to work with you, and I am thankful for your commitment to making Phoenix a better place for all.

I look forward to all the achievements and successes that lie ahead. Thank you!

Judy Boros
Interim Equal
Opportunity Director

Holiday tradition:
Cinnamon rolls
on Christmas morning

Finance

I extend my gratitude to the knowledgeable employees who contribute to the excellence of the Finance Department. I am deeply appreciative of the challenging work you undertake each day. Your efforts greatly impact our community, helping us achieve significant milestones in the financial area. Your unwavering commitment and expertise are the foundation of our success; and your dedication exemplifies Financial Excellence.

Feeling grateful,

Kathleen Gitkin
Chief Financial
Officer

Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:
Pumpkin cheesecake

Fire

Your dedication and professionalism make our Department truly exceptional. Through service excellence, you build trust in our community and sustainability for our future. Whether responding to emergencies or working with residents, your commitment strengthens public confidence. Internally with one another and with city partners, you uphold the same high standards, fostering integrity and respect. Your teamwork, sacrifice, and camaraderie keep our city safe. Thank you for everything you do every single day.

Chief Mike Duran

Phoenix Fire
Department

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:
I won't turn
anything down!*

Government Relations

To the Government Relations, Grants, & Regional Wireless Cooperative team: As we close out another year, I want to recognize and thank each of you for your outstanding dedication and service. Your commitment, long hours, and behind-the-scenes efforts continue to make a meaningful impact—not just for our office, but for the entire City. Much of what you do may not always be in the spotlight, but it is deeply valued. Your work helps safeguard the City's interests. I'm sincerely grateful for this team and for the professionalism, integrity, and care each of you brings to your role.

Frank McCune

Government Relations
Director

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:
Oyster gravy*

Housing

Housing team, thank you for your dedication to making Phoenix a better place to live. Your work not only makes a difference in the lives of Phoenix residents, but you are the very heart of our community. Your commitment makes a lasting impact, and I am genuinely thankful for each of you. A special shoutout to the fantastic volunteers who helped make the NAHRO housing conference a success. Your efforts showcased our department's excellence on a national stage. I see your efforts every day and am grateful to have such a passionate, hardworking team.

Titus Mathew
Housing Director

Holiday tradition:

*Opening one Christmas gift
on December 24th*

Human Resources

As we reflect on the year, I want to express my gratitude for your hard work and dedication. Our department experienced several changes this year, and I'm so grateful for your patience and flexibility as we navigated those. Each one of you plays a role in our success, and your commitment to good customer service does not go unnoticed. Thank you for showing up each day and being a part of our incredible team. We are just getting started, and I can't wait to see what the new year brings!

Jason Perkiser
Human Resources
Director

Holiday tradition:

*My daughter & I watch
Christmas Vacation & A
Christmas Story every year*

Human Services

As we gather with our loved ones to celebrate this season of gratitude, I am truly thankful for the privilege of working alongside such a talented and dedicated team in the Human Services Department. We couldn't make the impact we do without each and every one of you showing up day in and day out, ready to give your all to better the lives of those in our community. Together, we have faced challenges head-on, achieved remarkable milestones, and continue to support Phoenix residents with the heart to make a difference.

Jacqueline Edwards
Human Services
Director

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

Green Bean Casserole

Information Technology Services

I'm truly thankful for every member of the ITS team, and your dedication to connecting and empowering our employees. Your creativity, resilience, and heart power the systems that keep the City running. Whether you're solving tough problems or supporting frontline services, your work matters, and it doesn't go unnoticed. Your work consistently drives innovation and builds lasting public trust. I'm proud to serve alongside such a dedicated team. Wishing you and your families a joyful, restful holiday season.

Steen Hambric
Chief Information
Officer

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

Christmas cookies

Law

As we near Thanksgiving, I want to thank the Law Department for your talent, integrity, and teamwork. Your dedication and commitment truly reflect the best of who we are and what we aim to achieve together—administering justice and providing quality legal advice. Thank you for your hard work and commitment.

Wishing you and your families a peaceful and Happy Thanksgiving, filled with good food, fun, and laughter.

Julie Kriegh
City Attorney

Holiday tradition:

Eating too much food!

Library

I am incredibly thankful to be a part of this Library team. The past year has presented challenges and opportunities we haven't experienced before and you managed them with grace, compassion, and innovation. I am consistently impressed with your ability to welcome every customer, provide outstanding service, and meet community needs at every turn. What a joy it has been to learn more about you as individuals and visualize what we can do together as a team! Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our community and to each other. I am so grateful I am able to do this work alongside you.

Erin MacFarlane
Library Services
Director

Holiday tradition:

*Read the same book aloud
annually on Thanksgiving*

Municipal Court

This Thanksgiving I am especially grateful for the opportunity I have to work with the finest staff and judges of any court in the Arizona Judicial Branch.

You truly embody the Court's mission of "Justice Through Excellence," and it is an honor to get to work with you.

I wish each of you the happiest and warmest of holidays.

B. Don Taylor III
Chief Presiding Judge

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

Stuffing

Neighborhood Services

To every staff member in the Neighborhood Services Department - thank you for the heart you bring to serving our City's neighborhoods. Every day, you help residents feel seen, supported, and connected, whether you're helping with a community cleanup, assisting families with the health and safety of their homes, or strengthening partnerships that help make our neighborhoods stronger. Your dedication is what makes our department successful, and NSD couldn't do it without each and every one of you.

Thank you for all you do!

Spencer Self
Neighborhood Services
Director

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*Anything that can
be ordered*

Office of Accountability & Transparency

Ya'all! You continue to impress me and enlighten me as we navigate OAT's path in the City and community. I am so very proud of the accomplishments and advancements you've made to continue expanding OAT's progress and programs.

Thank you for all you bring as people and professionals to our shared work. I am grateful for you.

Shannon Johanni
Office of
Accountability &
Transparency Director

Holiday tradition:

*A real, fresh tree, ornament
tied to something from the
year, and new PJs*

Office of the City Engineer

A Thanksgiving moment to express my heartfelt thanks for all your hard work, dedication, and perseverance throughout the year. Your efforts have been nothing short of remarkable, and I am truly grateful for the commitment each of you has shown. Whether working on the mountain of procurements or public records requests, providing project management, environmental, or labor compliance support, or addressing flooding and development concerns, your contributions have made a profound impact. I am proud to work alongside such a talented and driven group of individuals. Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Eric Froberg
City Engineer

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*Chocolate Chip
Pecan Pie*

Office of Environmental Programs

It's that time of year when we write about how grateful we are for all of you. Since we are in Public Service, we are all grateful for each other and what we do. As for the Office, Environmental Programs, gratitude is the very nature of you. You are thankful by nature. Those that serve always are. You, the people of OEP and our sister-departments are the life's-blood of this organization, make their lives easier, better and keep the world turning.

I am especially fortunate to have an eclectic group of effective, empathetic public servants who choose to work with me. Those in OEP especially.

Nancy Allen

*Environmental Programs
Administrator*

Office of Heat Response & Mitigation

It is a joy and a privilege to serve the community alongside the creative and relentless staff of the heat office. Their commitment, effort, and ingenuity have improved our City's work to address a defining challenge. This year I am especially grateful for the new teammates who have joined us and the wonderful spirit and skills they bring. I'm also grateful for the care our veteran staff have put into preserving our supportive culture as we have grown. Young Evan and Owen share a special thanks to everyone who made it possible for them to spend precious time with dad during parental leave!

David Hondula

*Heat Office
Director*

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*Homemade mint
chocolate chip cookies*

Office of Homeless Solutions

To our incredible OHS team, thank you for the compassion, strength, and dedication you bring to this work every day. The work you do isn't easy, but it matters so much.

You're changing lives, lifting people up, and making a real difference in our city. I'm inspired by your commitment, and it's an honor to lead such a passionate team.

I see you, I appreciate you, and I'm proud to be on this journey with you.

Rachel Milne
Office of Homeless
Solutions Director

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*I'm only trusted with the
cheese tray!*

Office of Innovation

Thank you to the creative, data-driven Innovation team for continuing to reach for the sky in all that you do. You reimaged how to deliver City services, while measuring the impact for residents - and brought home a national Smart Cities award! You journeyed into the world of 3D augmented reality (AR) to connect residents to the City's GO Bond projects. And you demonstrated how innovation is most impactful through partnerships with residents, businesses, non-profits and City departments. Your passion for making a difference is appreciated. Wishing you a happy, healthy holiday season!

Michael Hammett
Chief Innovation
Officer

Holiday tradition:

*Gathering with the movie
Slap Shot, with Paul Newman,
in the background*

Office of Public Health

Mighty Office of Public Health! I am grateful to each of you for the specialized skills, knowledge and dedication you contribute every day. From creating new and effective approaches to improve health across Phoenix, uplifting mental health awareness, building strong community and health sector partnerships, reaching new Naloxone Program milestones, and your continued passion for evaluation and improvement you all have made this year a memorable one. I am eagerly looking forward to all we will accomplish together in 2026, I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful and joyous holiday season.

Yanitza Soto
Public Health
Advisor

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

*Pistachio pudding
fruit salad*

Office of Sustainability

Thank you for the warm welcome to the City! I'm incredibly grateful for our small but mighty Office of Sustainability team, including our dedicated AmeriCorps VISTAs, ORISE and FUSE fellows. I'm honored and truly inspired by the team's passion and commitment to driving meaningful change. Together, we are advancing sustainability initiatives with purpose and collaboration, positioning Phoenix as a national leader in sustainability.

Wishing you health, happiness, and great times with your family and friends this holiday season.

Carla De La Chapa
Chief Sustainability
Officer

Holiday tradition:

*A holiday lights outing ...
and Die Hard I and II!*

Parks & Recreation

I'm deeply thankful for this incredible team and all that you do every day. From caring for our parks to leading programs that bring joy and connection to our community. Your hard work, creativity, and heart are visible in everything you touch.

Your dedication makes Phoenix a brighter, stronger, and more welcoming place. I'm proud to work alongside such an inspiring group of people.

Cynthia Aguilar
Parks & Recreation
Director

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*Homemade apple pie
or deviled eggs*

Phoenix Convention Center & Venues

This year has been one to remember. You all performed at a high level as we hosted over 70,000 guests in our busiest summer ever. From Kappa Alpha Psi to the Burger King, June through September was a 'Whopper' of a season (I couldn't resist). Then we had SEMICON West, which got rave reviews. Behind all those reviews is high praise for the team's exceptional customer service. As someone who is fortunate enough to have a front row seat to see you in action, I can say that I am not surprised, I'm thankful - thankful I am surrounded by such an incredible team. I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving!

Jerry Harper
Phoenix Convention
Center Director

Holiday tradition:

*Lighting luminarias
in the neighborhood*

Planning & Development

I'm grateful for our incredible Planning and Development Department team whose professionalism and service help shape Phoenix every day. From our staff at City Hall to our inspectors out in the field, the personal, seamless, and innovative service you deliver to our residents ensures that Phoenix continues to grow safely.

Thank you for the pride you bring to your work every day, and for bringing your talents to our department to help preserve, shape, and build Phoenix.

Josh Bednarek

*Planning & Development
Director*

Police

I am so grateful for the incredible sworn and professional members of the Phoenix Police Department who serve with dedication and P.R.I.D.E. every day. It is the honor of my life to lead this team and to experience the support of our community, City leaders and police families.

Thank you to all the City departments who support our mission. That support inspires us to strive for excellence in protecting this community as we work together for a safer Phoenix.

Chief Matt Giordano

*Phoenix Police
Department*

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*My wife's
chocolate chip cookies*

Public Defender's Office

Another year passes, and I am even more convinced the members of this department are simply the finest examples of what a public service should look like. Each of you have shown an inspiring dedication to the mission of this department and, more importantly, to the needs of our clients. We do important work in this department, and your efforts have profound impact on the lives of our clients who are often the people most in need of assistance. I am proud and honored to be associated with each of you. Thank you for your continued dedication to what we do, and to why we do it. Thank you.

David Ward

Public Defender's
Office Director

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

Turkey breast

Public Transit

I'd like to take a moment to thank each of you for your hard work throughout the year. Whether you've been working on service changes, supporting infrastructure improvements, or managing the many tasks that keep our projects moving, your contributions make it all possible. Public Transit is much more than just buses and light rail - they're critical services that connect people to opportunities, and we gladly serve all members of our community. I'm proud to work with such a committed team that consistently rises to the challenges. Wishing you and your families a safe and Happy Thanksgiving.

Jesús Sapien

Public Transit
Director

Holiday tradition:

*Watching
The Sound of Music*

Public Works

I am very grateful for every one of our dedicated Public Works Department employees. Their unwavering commitment to providing essential fleet, solid waste, and facilities management services to ensure that our city runs smoothly and efficiently is nothing short of remarkable. I also want to extend a lot of gratitude to our administrative support team. Their behind-the-scenes work is crucial in enabling us to carry out these essential services seamlessly. We make a formidable team, and I am immensely proud of what we have accomplished. Thanks for your resilience, dedication, and hard work.

Felipe Moreno
Public Works
Director

Holiday tradition:

*Food, football,
and rest*

Retirement

I want to thank you for your commitment and effort over the last year. Being part of a smaller, close-knit team makes what we do even more meaningful.

Each one of you contributes something special, and together we make a strong, collaborative group I'm truly proud of. I appreciate all of you — thank you for always showing up and giving 100% to our members and retirees.

Scott Steventon
Retirement Program
Administrator

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

Stuffing, yuck!

Street Transportation

As we approach the season of gratitude, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt thanks to the entire Street Transportation Department family. Your unwavering dedication, hard work, and commitment to enhancing our city's transportation network does not go unnoticed. Your teamwork and determination inspire me every day, and I am honored to work alongside such a talented group of individuals.

Wishing you and your families a warm and joyful Thanksgiving filled with laughter and cherished moments.

Briiana Velez

*Street Transportation
Director*

*Holiday food you always
bring to a gathering:*

*Anything you
can purchase*

Volunteer

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all the incredible city volunteers who generously give their time and energy to support the City of Phoenix. Your commitment strengthens our community and makes a lasting impact every day.

Phoenix thrives because of people like you. Our success is built on your service, and we couldn't do it without you! A special thank you to Jasmine Young from Volunteer PHX—your dedication and hard work truly shine!

Yvonne Pastor

*Chief Service
Officer*

*Holiday food that never
makes it onto your plate:*

Beans

Water Services

I am grateful to the entire Water Services family.

Your dedication, teamwork, and care for our city inspire me daily. Because of you, Phoenix remains a model for reliability and resilience.

I hope this season brings you time to recharge and celebrate with those you love.

Brandy Kelso
Water Services
Director

*Holiday tradition:
After Thanksgiving, our family
decorates for Christmas and
bakes cookies*

Youth and Education

Another year has passed, and I'm grateful and proud of the Youth and Education team. We continue to change the lives of students and families through the support we provide. As the holidays approach, I hope you cherish time with loved ones. I will be gathering with my family and enjoying time with my first grandson! I can't wait to share our tamale-making tradition with him, a tradition from his great, great, great Nana. I'm also curious to see if he'll enjoy his great Nana's famous cranberry dish, which I'll be skipping! Wishing everyone a joyful season filled with warmth, laughter, and love!

Tim Valencia
Youth and
Education Director

*Holiday tradition:
Making tamales*



PHX  **CONNECT**