

ASU, Maricopa County team up to help families access health resources

Event on West Valley campus provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, food boxes and community resources to support Maricopa County residents

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
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Story highlights

ASU, Maricopa County partner for event to provide nutrition and breastfeeding education, food boxes and community resources to support Maricopa County residents

Event to be held on ASU's West Valley campus Sept. 26

ASU has been hosting the biannual event since 2024, serving more than 10,500 people

Halloween is coming to Arizona State University's West Valley campus a bit early this year, in the form of treats for caregivers and kids.

Event details at a glance

Spooktacular Fall Festival

Saturday, Sept. 26

9 a.m.–1 p.m.

University Center Building, West

On Sept. 26, the Maricopa County Department of Public Health — in conjunction with ASU — will hold its biannual WIC (women, infants and children) [Spooktacular Fall Festival community event](#).

Valley campus
[13590 N 47th Ave Glendale, AZ 85306](#)

The Maricopa County WIC program, now in its eighth year with ASU as a partner, is a free local public health initiative that provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, food boxes and community resources to those who are pregnant or postpartum and caregivers of children under 5 who meet income guidelines.

“It’s a one-stop shop where families can get the resources and information they need,” said [Michelle Villegas-Gold](#), associate dean of strategy and partnerships and assistant clinical professor in the [School of Technology for Public Health](#), part of [ASU Health](#).

ASU has hosted the event twice a year since 2024 and served more than 10,500 people. The spring festival, which includes an Easter egg hunt, has been held at the Chandler Innovation Center. Last year’s fall event on the West Valley campus served more than 5,300 people.

“We are incredibly appreciative of ASU’s continued partnership and the time and energy their team puts into making these events successful,” said Jennifer Dykhuizen, the WIC outreach program manager. “Events like this take a lot of people working together, and ASU has been a wonderful partner in helping us create an experience that is engaging, educational and memorable for WIC families.”

Villegas-Gold said ASU’s partnership with Maricopa County is being formalized and expanding with the advent of the School of Technology for Public Health and the [John Shufeldt School of Medicine and Medical Engineering](#).

“We’re determining how we can be of service to the (county),” Villegas-Gold said. “What are the projects or the expertise or the resources that they need? We have faculty and staff working with the county to assess their needs and meet them in any way we can.

“I really think of this as a mutually beneficial partnership in which our students, faculty and staff learn from them (county health officials) and have opportunities to participate in and serve public health.”

“We’re really thinking about the ways that we can work together to combine all of this wonderful expertise from our faculty, our infrastructure at ASU, along with that expertise and capability of county (health officials),” Villegas-Gold said.

The Sept. 26 event, which will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. inside the La Sala ballrooms of the West Valley campus’ University Center Building, will have more than 70 vendors on hand, including the College of Health Solutions, the Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation, the Reach Institute and the March of Dimes Mom & Baby Mobile Health Center.

If a caregiver is walking around or has little ones with them, there will be people who are ready to talk to them and help.

Michelle Villegas-Gold

Assistant clinical professor and associate dean of strategy and partnerships in the School of Technology for Public Health

ASU's music therapy program will provide fun, interactive activities for families, and the College of Health Solutions' Speech and Hearing Clinic will provide free hearing tests and referrals for parents and children.

Families can also obtain food boxes, and individuals who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or caregivers that have children under the age of 5, can sign up and start the process of enrolling into the WIC program at the event.

"If a caregiver is walking around or has little ones with them, there will be people who are ready to talk to them and help," Villegas-Gold said. "If they need help finding something, there's always people from ASU or Maricopa County that are all over and asking people, 'How are you? How can we help?'"

Villegas-Gold said families can also hear about different research studies or services that ASU provides.

Following the event, vendors will follow up with attendees to see how they're doing, Villegas-Gold said.

"One of the things that we've been talking about is how can we actually map out where all of these resources and services are," Villegas-Gold said. "And how can we help people connect with them?"

Villegas-Gold called the WIC festival a "beautiful event."

"The families are so happy," she said. "It's just the best experience. It feels so good to just be there and interact with the families and the kids."

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Brittany Howard (left) attends the Spring Spectacular WIC event held at the ASU Chandler Innovation Center on March 7. It's fall counterpart, the Spooktacular Fall Festival, will be held at the West Valley campus on Sept. 26. The biannual events provide low-income moms with health resources and support. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



Eight-year-old Lauriejane Whiting (left) and 7-year-old Skylin Whiting participate in a fishing activity during the Spring Spectacular WIC event held at the ASU Chandler Innovation Center last March. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/Arizona State University