Just Dance
Coming out of poverty, ASU alumnus J. Bouey struggled to enter the world of professional dance. See how Bouey’s life mission has evolved since moving to New York City. 4

Public Art Matters
An artist’s 3,000-square-foot mural transforms an auto body shop in the city of Maryvale into a source of pride and neighborhood revitalization. 11

Be A Nice Human
How can we be better people? Pursue that question through ASU’s Project Humanities. 18

STORIES OF GENEROSITY AND OPPORTUNITY AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Committing to Memory
ASU researchers cross disciplines and join forces to tackle dementia
QUOTED

BEING BETTER HUMANS Professor Neal A. Lester

“Are we losing our humanity? How can we be better people, more decent people?”

ASU Professor Neal A. Lester brings diverse people together to examine these questions as part of Project Humanities, a unique, donor-supported, community-oriented ASU initiative. Read about his work on page 18.
Valley resident Barry Smith, a volunteer with ASU’s Project Humanities, finishes loading a trailer with supplies for Service Saturday, an outreach to people experiencing homelessness.

PHOTO BY PHILAMER BATANGAN

4 STUDENTS
Breaking into the world of professional dance is difficult. J. Bouey wants to help.

6 FACULTY
Robert Cialdini spent his career learning the art of persuasion. His work will live on at ASU.

8 NEWS
Is there a way to live with cancer? Contemplate that question in ASU’s new cactus garden.

20 DONORS

22 PARTNERS
Emirati and Arab youth learn the skills they need to succeed.

24 PROOF
The College of Health Solutions’ Summer Health Institute is a philanthropic success story.

12 FEATURE
Every 65 seconds, someone in the U.S. develops Alzheimer’s. ASU researchers knuckle down to meet that challenge.

18 FEATURE
How can we be better humans? ASU Professor Neal A. Lester wants you to join the discussion.

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Franziska Barczyk
The sun is barely over the Phoenix horizon one morning in June, but the temperature already is inching its way to 105 degrees. Despite the heat and the early hour, about 150 men and women experiencing homelessness line up along the sidewalk spanning 12th Avenue between Jefferson and Madison streets.

The men and women know that every other Saturday, volunteers from ASU’s Project Humanities transform this dusty patch of sidewalk into a free-store where they can handpick everyday necessities: clean clothes, shampoo, shoes, undergarments, a hat to block the Arizona sun.

They wait quietly as about 25 volunteers erect folding tables and lay out articles of donated clothing, neatly folded, sorted and labeled by size and gender.

Overseeing the bustle is ASU Professor Neal A. Lester. Dressed for the heat — shorts, T-shirt and a signature bandana wrapped around flowing dreadlocks — he is both cheerful and on-point. “Don’t forget to drink water,” he reminds volunteers and shoppers.

Lester has been bringing volunteers to this stretch of road in downtown Phoenix every other Saturday for five years, after he founded...
Project Humanities, an ambitious, award-winning initiative to elevate the study and practice of humanitarian values.

Volunteers finish organizing, then pair up with shoppers to help them choose items. The process is orderly and efficient.

Until one woman tries to cut in line.

An argument erupts, spurring Lester and regular volunteer Chris Dotts into action. They calm the women standing in line with assurances that everyone will get a chance to shop, and then broker a compromise: The woman can sit at the front of the line while she waits her turn.

Customers finish up and disperse into side streets, large plastic bags in hand. Lester gathers volunteers around him to assess the day's events.

"I know there were some bumpy spots, but we handled that pretty well," he says. "I saw people showing patience and compassion. I saw people showing kindness."

These kinds of teachable moments define Project Humanities, where "talking, listening and connecting" are hallmarks of its year-round programming. Service Saturdays, as the day is called, is one of many ways the initiative brings people together to learn to understand each other.

Starting a Movement

Lester began Project Humanities nine years ago. The country was emerging from the Great Recession and students were fleeing the humanities in favor of other presumably more lucrative disciplines.

ASU President Michael M. Crow challenged Lester, then dean of the humanities, to rekindle interest in the field and cultivate a more robust program.

Lester embraced that challenge.

He envisioned an initiative that would elevate the study and practice of the humanities across ASU's campuses and beyond — out in Arizona's communities and among the state's disparate socioeconomic, geographic and cultural populations.

The time was ripe, he says. Society seemed to be fracturing along political fault lines, civil discourse all but disappearing.

"There didn't seem to be a story in the headlines that didn't echo that refrain," he says. "Are we losing our humanity? How can we be better people, more decent people?"

Lester was convinced that the humanities — broadly defined as the examination of the human experience through the lenses of literature, art, religion, philosophy, music and other forms of expression — is the perfect vehicle to unite people around those questions.

Demystify, Disseminate

How could he bring people together to talk about — and listen to — opposing viewpoints? What does it take to expand someone's worldview and preconceived notions, particularly around complicated issues like race, sexuality, privilege, unconscious bias or gender equality?

He set out to dispel the notion that humanities education happens only on college campuses. Lester and his Project Humanities team began facilitating community discussions in churches, people's homes, high schools, community centers, libraries, businesses and dusty street corners where people gather.

A hallmark of the project is the Humanity 101 initiative. Participants in Humanity 101 pledge to abide by seven principles: compassion, empathy, forgiveness, integrity, kindness, respect and self-reflection.

Through film screenings, performances, community dialogues, workshops, lectures and panels, high school symposia and festivals, participants engage these principles as they discuss timely and diverse topics.

Shared Values

As more people embraced the Humanity 101 pledge, Lester looked for ways to deepen their involvement. He established a Founders program seeking 101 supporters — individuals and organizations — willing to invest at least $1,000 each and to champion the initiative's seven values in support of Project Humanities programs.

These values resonated with ASU supporters and Founders, Michelle Mace and her partner, Jim Tuton.

Mace and Tuton learned about Project Humanities three years ago from Mace's son, Andrew, then president of his high school's Rho Kappa National Social Studies Honor Society. Andrew was looking for a speaker to discuss cultural awareness at his high school, located in a Phoenix suburb. Intrigued by Lester's background, the family invited Lester and his wife to dinner. As they visited around the table, Mace began to realize something about Humanity 101 values: They encompass what it means to be a good parent, a topic dear to her.

Mace believes that good parenting can help children of all ages overcome adversity in life; conversely, bad parenting can create adverse circumstances that can take years and sometimes generations to resolve.

Mace and Tuton ultimately founded the Come Rain or Shine Foundation to support initiatives that help people incorporate Humanity 101-like values into parenting. Additionally, they gifted $25,000 to Project Humanities, which is collaborating with them to develop community-based programming. Learn about Project Humanities events, including those on parenting, at projecthumanities.asu.edu/events.