

**CONTACT:** Emma Keider  
Assistant Marketing Manager  
[ekeider@gilariverarena.com](mailto:ekeider@gilariverarena.com)  
623-271-6059



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## **GILA RIVER ARENA RENEWS SENSORY INCLUSIVE CERTIFICATION** NEW SENSORY ROOM OPENS TO GUESTS ATTENDING EVENTS AT THE VENUE

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**GLENDALE, AZ (May 24, 2022)** -- Gila River Arena, an ASM Global managed facility, has collaborated with KultureCity, the nation's leading nonprofit on sensory accessibility and acceptance for those with invisible disabilities, in effort to make all of the events hosted at the venue sensory inclusive for fans through the opening of a new Sensory Room. This initiative expands the existing relationship the venue has with KultureCity, which began in 2018, in promoting an accommodating and positive experience for all guests with sensory needs who visit the arena.

The certification process began with the Gila River Arena full and part-time staff trained by leading medical professionals on how to recognize those guests and fans with sensory needs and how to handle a sensory overload situation. Sensory bags, equipped with noise canceling headphones (provided by Puro Sound Labs), fidget tools, verbal cue cards, and weighted lap pads were first made available to all guests at the arena who may feel overwhelmed by the environment starting in the Fall of 2018. Now, these fans will also be able to access the newly installed Ella Dean Sensory Room designed by medical professionals for those who may need a quieter and more secure environment. Located on the main concourse at section 106, the Ella Dean Sensory Room is donated by the Witcher Family, from the greater Phoenix area, on behalf of their niece, Ella Dean. This comfortable room features bean bag chairs, fidget toys, a bubble wall and a quiet atmosphere for guests to relax if they are experiencing sensory overload.

Sensory sensitivities or challenges with sensory regulation are often experienced by individuals with autism, dementia, PTSD and other similar conditions (one in six individuals). One of the major barriers for these individuals is sensitivity to over stimulation and noise, which is an enormous part of the environment in all sports and entertainment venues. With this enhanced certification, Gila River Arena is now better prepared to assist guests with sensory sensitivities so they can have the most comfortable and accommodating experience possible when attending any event at the arena.

Prior to attending an event, families can download the free KultureCity App where one can view what sensory features are available and where they can access them. Also, on the App is the Social Story which will provide a preview of what to expect while enjoying an event at Gila River Arena.

“Our communities are what shape our lives and to know that Gila River Arena is willing to go the extra mile to ensure that everyone, no matter their ability, is included in their community is amazing. We’re honored to partner with Gila River Arena to provide a truly inclusive experience for all fans and guests,” said Uma Srivastava, Executive Director at KultureCity.

“Our ties to the community are what makes Gila River Arena successful, and the ability for us to incorporate such a positive and supporting space that will help everyone enjoy the entertainment experience is exciting and makes us very proud. Gila River Arena is truly open for everyone,” stated Dale Adams, General Manager.

The Ella Dean sensory room officially opened on Sunday, May 15 and is open and available to guests during all Gila River Arena events.

#### **About Gila River Arena:**

Gila River Arena is a state-of-the-art, multi-purpose sports and entertainment facility situated on 13.5 acres in the City of Glendale, Arizona. The arena entertains over one-million visitors annually through concerts, family shows and sporting events. The arena anchors Westgate Entertainment District located on 223 acres for shopping, dining, entertainment and commercial offices. For more information about the arena, visit [www.gilariverarena.com](http://www.gilariverarena.com).

#### **About KultureCity:**

KultureCity is a leading non-profit recognized nationwide for using its resources to revolutionize and effect change in the community for those with sensory needs, not just those with autism. Since the program’s inception, KultureCity has created over 900 sensory-inclusive venues in five countries: this includes special events such as the NFL Pro-Bowl, NFL Super Bowl, MLB World Series, and MLB All Star Weekend. KultureCity has won many awards for its efforts, including the NASCAR Betty Jane France Humanitarian Award in 2017 and the 2018 Clio Sports Silver for social good in partnership with Cleveland Cavaliers/Quicken Loans Arena. The Cleveland Cavaliers’ Quiet Space Sensory Room at Quicken Loans Arena was a finalist for the 2018 Stadium Business Award, KultureCity was named one of the World’s Most Innovative

Companies for 2019 and 2020 by FastCompany and recently won the Industry Partner Award in TheStadiumBusiness Design & Development Awards 2019. For more information about KultureCity, visit [www.kulturecity.org](http://www.kulturecity.org).

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