



# ‘Wizard of Oz’ at Vegas Sphere is unlike anything you’ve seen

LIFE, 1F

# HERALDNEWS

NORTHJERSEY.COM

MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025 | AN EDITION OF THE RECORD

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

# Jolt to the market



Hamza Khaled, of Mokafe in Paterson, makes a Spanish latte. Increasingly, Middle Eastern coffee shops are drawing late-night crowds seeking a fun, alcohol-free alternative to nightclubs. KEVIN R. WEXLER/NORTHJERSEY.COM

## These Middle Eastern coffee shops bring flavor to NJ nightlife

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At 8:30 p.m. on a Thursday in July, the line outside Mokafe in Paterson stretched out the door. Inside, a crowd of mostly young professionals and college students gathered around plush green chairs with mocha lattes in hand, nibbling on croissants drizzled with chocolate and pistachio.

The din of chatter and a mocha aroma infused the space, as Arabic tunes streamed from speakers. Maria Ismail, 26, peered at the display of pastries made in-house, pondering what to order. Mokafe hit the spot for nighttime sugar cravings, Ismail said, but it was the vibe that kept her coming back. “There’s an energy,” the Teaneck resident said. “It’s the music. There’s always laughter. Anyone who walks in knows it’s going to be a good time.” Similar scenes are playing out at Mokafe coffee shops across New Jersey and New York, where daytime coffee business gives way to nighttime crowds.



Ahmad Alozy takes a piece out of a kunafa at Yaffa Coffee & Kunafa, which opened in Clifton in April. YANNICK PETERHANS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

It is one of several coffee chains with a Middle Eastern flair that have burst onto the social scene, providing a festive café environment and an alcohol-free alternative to bars and clubs. These establishments are bringing a touch of the Middle East to American coffee culture in the flavors they serve and the décor they embrace, while they pour brews with beans imported from Yemen.

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Ali Ajaj adds flavoring onto a tiramisu latte at Yaffa Coffee & Kunafa. YANNICK PETERHANS/NORTHJERSEY.COM

# Schools get money that Trump tried to block

\$158M funding includes \$140M for K-12 education

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The Trump administration has reversed its decision to freeze \$158 million in K-12 and other education-related spending for New Jersey, after a lawsuit by a coalition of 23 state attorneys general, including New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin, and two states challenged the move. New Jersey’s public schools stood to lose \$140 million in approved federal school funding for the school year starting in September. That money is now available again for districts to use. In total, about \$5 billion in congressionally approved funding to states across the nation was at stake, according to reports.

The move is a victory for state governments run by Democrats, who sued the Trump administration in a series of lawsuits since he took office.

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# NJ residents rush to get solar, EV tax credits before they end

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A number of clean energy tax credits are expiring this fall as part of the “Big Beautiful Bill” that President Donald Trump signed on July 4 — and some North Jersey residents are rushing to take advantage before the credits run out. The expiring incentives were meant to cover a portion of the cost to install solar panels as well as to buy an electric car. These were drastically expanded by the Inflation Reduction Act signed in 2022 under President Joe Biden. The federal government currently offers a \$7,500 tax credit for buy new electric vehicles and up to \$4,000 to buy a

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