

A City of Volunteers...

Signs along major arteries passing through Sun City used to proudly bear welcome signs, proclaiming Sun City the "City of Volunteers." Realtor A. J. Kovac brought this sign to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum for use in a future exhibit saluting "Those Who Serve."

But there's another story starring three women who decided to honor volunteers with a life-size sculpture. It all began with Connie Turner who while attending a planning meeting for Sun City's 40th anniversary thought, "Why not honor all who volunteer?"

She enlisted friends Kay Smith and Betty Jane Peters, who like her were active in the Sun City Clay Club. Peters was president. The three of them constructed a clay model depicting volunteers, and learned it would take \$100,000 to produce a life-size version in bronze. They immediately began running into roadblocks.

First, the members of the Clay Club wanted no part of the project. The new president explained, "We're not against the statue, we just don't want to be a part of it." Without the backing of a chartered club, the three women were unable to claim that donations would be tax deductible. The Sun City Foundation stepped in to provide help with the fund raising, but it took several months before they obtained club sponsorship. The Sun City Community Theater was the first to offer sponsorship, and was soon followed by the Bell Metal Club.

A Volunteer Statue Committee was formed by the three women and set out to raise the funds. The model was displayed in various venues throughout Sun City, and donations began to come in. The sculpture included four people and a dog. At left was a Sun City PRIDE. Next was a Posse member. Seated on the bench was the "smock lady," representative of the many who volunteered at the hospital and at Sun City's two libraries. A bouquet rests beside her, emblematic of the Rose & Garden Club that maintains the Sun Bowl Rose Garden and the Agricultural Club, which donated produce to food banks each year.



Next was a young girl representing a student as many residents worked with children in the surrounding communities. Last was "Sparky" representing pets that had found homes courtesy of the Sun City Animal Rescue. The sculpture sits along Thunderbird Blvd. in front of the Lakeview Recreation Center.

The committee was short of its goal of \$100,000 as the 40th anniversary year unfolded, but enough money had been raised to enable them to proceed with casting one of the four figures – the Posse member. The Bell Metal Club offered to build the bench, saving several thousands of dollars. A ceremony was held Dec. 16 to unveil the first two elements of the sculpture.

Sponsors and funding picked up considerably, and the remaining figures were installed at a major ceremony on March 17, 2001. The timing was fitting, as 2001 was officially the "International Year of the Volunteer." A year later, the wall was added behind the sculpture and lists sponsors and major donors.

The sculpture made news in 2005 when "Sparky" was stolen. Insurance only covered two-thirds of the replacement cost, but the Sun Dial Men's Club provided the necessary funds. Needless to say, "Sparky" was more securely anchored in place when replaced in 2007!

