

The Official Newsletter of the **Sun Cities Area Historical Society** Spring 2020 | Volume 29 | Number 1



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Jubilee Gala V! Sun Cities Historical Society conducts its fifth annual fundraiser. See Page 6

A look back at the Sun Bowl



Local historian recalls birth of Sun City's popular outdoor amphitheater. See Pages 8-9



Model Home Tour Unveiling new model homes was a cause for celebration in Sun City! See Page 10-11

(623) <u>974-2568</u>



Nov. 1, 2019: The Del E. Webb Sun Cities Museum celebrates the official opening of its new Del Webb Gallery, located in a new and separate building located behind, but connected to the existing museum. Above, Museum Board of Trustees President Don Tuffs cuts the official ribbon to mark the opening. The Gallery will also serve as home to the Constance W. McMillin Gathering Place. At right, President Tuffs with Constance McMillin and Trustee Paul Herrmann.



New gallery expands opportunities for museum to showcase history

By Bret McKeand

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum unveiled its new, 700-square-foot Del Webb Gallery and Constance W. McMillin Gathering Place during a special open house celebration held Nov. 1, 2019.

The gallery -- a newly constructed and separate building connected to the original house -- includes additional meeting and exhibit space as well as an upgraded and expanded gift shop.

"We're very excited about all the changes at the museum," said Don Tuffs, president of the Board of Trustees.

"The upgrades really improve our ability to provide a quality experience to those who visit the museum. We invite everyone to come see for themselves all the great changes that have been made."

Dignitaries on hand for a ribbon-cutting

ceremony included members of the Board of Trustees, building contractors, museum members and donors, and representatives from the Del E. Webb Foundation, the nonprofit organization primarily responsible for funding the expansion project.

The new gallery opened with an exhibit detailing the history of health care in the community, with special focus on the creation, development and evolution of the two hospitals in the Sun Cities.

A number of Sun Health officials instrumental in the development of health in the Sun Cities over the years were in attendance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

In addition to the exhibit celebrating health care, a new exhibit showcasing the history of baseball -- from spring training to softball -- opened in the Del Webb Gallery earlier this year.

The new gallery will also provide space

for museum talks, programs and community meetings.

An expanded gift shop will offer new merchandise to help raise funds for the museum. New items include souvenir hats, visors, drink coasters, water bottles and more.

The museum is located at 10801 W. Oakmont Drive in one of the first five model homes constructed in Sun City.

The original model home was first unveiled when the new community opened Jan. 1, 1960.

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society purchased the property 30 years ago and 10 years ago renamed it the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

The expansion, which involved construction of an entirely new building behind the current museum, was made possible by an \$80,000 grant donated by the Del E. Webb Foundation.

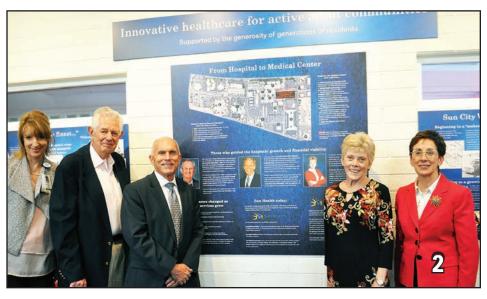
Museum officially unveils the Del Webb Gallery

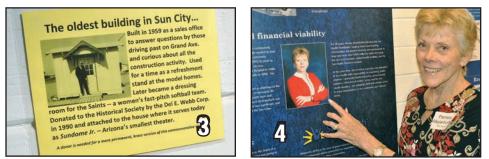


1. Don Tuffs, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society Board of Trustees, prepares to cut the official ribbon marking the opening of the new Del Webb Gallery. 2. Past and present Banner/Sun Health officials were on hand during the grand opening ceremony. From left, Linda Tyler, Don Tuffs, Sun Health CEO Joe LaRue, Pamela Meyerhoffer, former CEO of the Sun Health Foundation and Executive VP of Communications and Public Relations, and Sun Health CFO Sharon Grambow. 3. The new gallery is not the museum's first addition. That distinction goes to a small building once used as a sales office on Jan. 1, 1960. The building was restored and attached to the museum in 1989. A placard telling the history of the building has been attached outside the museum. 4. Former Sun Health executive Pamela Meverhoffer attended the grand opening and points to a description in the new exhibit detailing her role in the evolution of health care in the community. 5. The new, handicapped-accessible entrance to the new expansion.

The original museum consists of 1,580 square feet, not counting a carport and back porch. The new gallery replaced the back porch and encompasses much of the current back yard.

Construction cost approximately \$118,000. The museum launched a fundraising campaign in 2019 to cover added costs of interior design, as well as new ex-







hibits, supplies and physical upgrades to the existing building.

"The museum plays an important role in promoting the history of the Sun Cities, and we're confident our community will step up to generously support our efforts," said Mr. Tuffs.

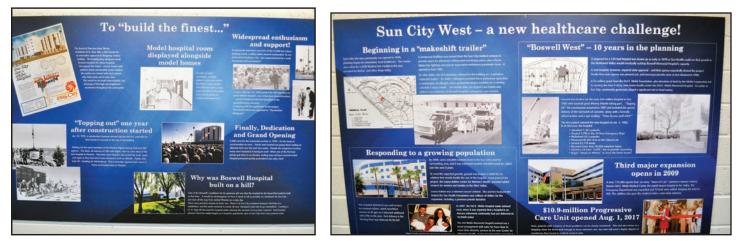
Residents can support the museum by becoming a member or simply donating

to the organization.

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society was organized in 1986. Its mission is to preserve, protect and promote the history of Sun City and Sun City West, as well as the story of Del Webb.

Visit www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org.

Exhibit Update: History of Healthcare in the Sun Cities



Healthcare in the Sun Cities: The makings of a good TV drama?

By Edson Allen

The current exhibit on the history of healthcare in our communities has revealed material ripe for a TV drama. Look closely at the exhibit and you'll discover these possible story lines:

Episode 1: Those planning the nation's first active adult community realize seniors will need medical care. They design a small clinic and set out to find a qualified doctor.

They search the state for months to find one willing to locate in what was then "a small community out in the desert northwest of Phoenix."

He no sooner arrives than a vocal minority want him gone! Why? Because he is raising his 10-year old son – and children are not allowed to live in Sun City! The episode has a fitting ending as the wife of the opposition leader suffers a heart attack, and the good doctor saves her life!

Episode 2: The community continues to grow, and preliminary plans are drawn up for a 60-bed hospital. But the forward-thinkers run into one obstacle after another.

A state board refuses a license saying there is no need for a hospital. The medical profession in Phoenix tells John Meeker no doctor or nurse will be willing to work at a hospital "way out in the desert."

Meeker's response: "We're going to hire your best doctors and nurses!" Unexpectedly, there are even those within Sun City who see no need – and fear it will only add expense to living in Sun City.

Episode 3: Watching the scene unfold, a hero steps forward – Jim Boswell, Webb's partner in the development of Sun City.

He understands the need and realizes the community is thinking too small. He offers \$1.2 million to jumpstart construction a hospital of at least 100 beds under three conditions. That captures the community's attention and the project moves ahead.

Once news of the dramatic, new circular tower design gets out, Meeker's boast comes true as medical professionals are eager to join the staff.

Episode 4: Medicare becomes both a blessing – paying healthcare expenses for seniors – and a problem – paying less than procedures actually cost. Hospitals in multi-generational communities have no problem as seniors on Medicare make up a small percent of the total, and non-seniors are charged a bit more to make up the shortfall.

Austin Turner, the first hospital administrator recognizes the hospital may not last more than 3 or 4 years unless something dramatic is done. The creative steps he sets in place saved the hospital and allowed it to grow into the two medical centers serving our communities today.

There is plenty more material for stirring drama, along with humor. One example: Sun City West. Originally planed as "Boswell West," the new hospital there took on its current name as a result of a \$3 million grant from the Del E. Webb Foundation and donation of the land.

The fact that this hospital was giving birth to babies in a community for seniors struck many as humorous. But that was nothing compared to the announcement in 2007 that the hospital, located in a retirement community, had delivered its 10,000th baby! That made the national news and provided great source material for comedians!

There's much more to the "History of Healthcare Exhibit" in the new Webb Gallery at the museum. It's a rich story of dedication and perseverance, coupled with the generosity of Sun Cities residents that have resulted in the excellent medical care.

Exhibit Update: Baseball & Softball in the Sun Cities



The Sun City Saints women's fast-pitch softball team captured the national championship in 1979.







Play Ball! Exhibit showcases history of baseball/softball in the Sun Cities

By Edson Allen

hile Sun City offered residents a variety of activities in the early 1960s, softball was not one of them.

Knowing of Del Webb's lifelong involvement with baseball, he was asked for a place to play ball – softball, not baseball. He had land along Grand Avenue cleared of weeds, and play began.

One field led to a second. And then, an exciting opportunity led to a third.

Fast-pitch softball wasn't played by Sun City teams, but many residents attended games played by a women's league in the Phoenix area.

When the popular Phoenix Ramblers disbanded, their Sun City fans persuaded DEVCO and Grand Avenue merchants to provide a field for them to play their games in Sun City.

A contest resulted in their being re-named the Sun City Saints and construction started on a field for them at 108th and Grand avenues. This was more deluxe with bleachers, rest rooms, a refreshment stand, and drinking fountains.



A Cactus League game in the early 1970s draws a standing-room-only crowd at Sun City Stadium. The stadium was located on the northwest corner of 111th and Grand avenues.

The first Saints game was played May 7, 1966.

A combination of growing attendance and the field being in a prime location for a restaurant, caused DEV-CO to build a new and larger stadium on land north of the railroad tracks at 111th and Grand avenues. When completed in 1971, Saints attendance nearly doubled.

The facility also became the spring training home for Major League Baseball's Milwaukee Brewers from 1973 to 1985.



Running a ballpark was not a key business for the Webb Corporation and the stadium was sold in 1983 with the proviso it remain a ballpark at least through 1987. Nothing, however, was said about rent and when the Saints learned it would be \$6,000 per month instead of the \$1 per year they had been paying, play ceased.

The stadium was eventually torn down and the site today is home to the Fountains at Sun City.

New ballparks were eventually built for residents' softball teams in Sun City and Sun City West, and the sport continues to be extremely popular! Today, some 600 men and women play on 35 teams in friendly competition between the two communities.

There's much more to the story, and it's all on display as part of the new, "Play Ball!" Exhibit at the museum.



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www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is certified by the Arizona Historical Society

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The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the records and artifacts for Sun City, Arizona, (the world's first Active Adult Retirement Community), and its sister city, Sun City West. The Society's headquarters are located in the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, in one of the five original Sun City model homes.

Museum Hours: 1-4 p.m. Sunday 1-4 p.m. Monday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday Or for groups of six or more by appointment

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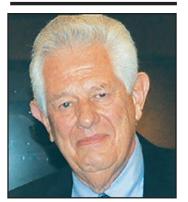
Office Manager Linda Borton Layout and composition donated by

N E W S M E D I A

Message from the President Museum continues plans for growth, enhancements in 2020

f you thought 2019 was an exciting year for the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, as a good old country boy would say "you ain't seen nothin' yet"!!!

Our Board of Trustees has voted to return, over the summer months, the living room and one of the bedrooms back to their original look. To accomplish this goal, we're currently looking for a 1960's-era counsel television with record player and radio, two twin beds with headboard and dresser, trundle sewing machine, plus any decorator items for the living room, kitchen or bedroom. If you have any items you might like to donate, please call the Museum office at (623)



Don Tuffs 2020 President Sun Cities Area Historical Society

974-2568.

Additional movable exhibits will also be added to the new Del Webb Gallery. And plans are in the making to better preserve the history of the Sun Cities. Expect an invitation for a members-only Re-Grand Opening party around October 1st. A public opening will follow.

Our membership more than doubled in 2019. We're hoping to increase those numbers even more in 2020. Please tell your friends and neighbors to consider being a member of our exciting Museum.

It's because of your membership that we can continue to offer free admission and continue to make the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum the best small museum in Arizona.

We should all be very proud of what has been accomplished.

Museum celebrates with 'Jubilee Gala V' fundraiser





Nearly 150 attended "Jubilee Gala V," the historical society's annual fundraiser, March 5 at Palmbrook Country Club. Community Service Awards were presented to the Sun City and Sun City Posses. From left, SCAHS President Don Tuffs and Vice President Paul Herrmann present awards to Danny Moore, past commander of the Sun City Posse, and Jan Vejraska, Sun City West Posse public information officer. Entertainment was provided by We3, featuring planist Nicole Pesce. (Photos by Rusty Bradshaw/Independent Newsmedia)



Welcome to Sunshine Service

People, meeting needs of people is what Sunshine Service is all about. Sunshine Service lends medical and children's equipment to residents of Sun City and we have been doing so for over 52 years. We are a charitable non-profit Arizona corporation and are funded by voluntary contributions and memorial gifts.

While the equipment is available for the use of all residents or visitors staying with residents, the equipment must not be taken out of Sun City on a permanent basis. As a matter of control, equipment is loaned only to Sun City residents.

Records show that as the population of Sun City grew, so did use of our medical equipment. Savings for Sun City residents have been calculated periodically; in 2015, it was estimated that residents saved over two million dollars in cost of equipment for that year alone. Sunshine Service, Inc has received local, state and national recognition. Awards received include the George Washington Honor Medal for services to the sick and handicapped from the Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge in Pennsylvania.

> "The Cleanest and Most Sanitized Equipment Around"



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Construction of the Sun Bowl outdoor amphitheater located at 107th Avenue and Clair Drive in Sun City began in 1965. The facility officially opened in 1966. Over the years, the venue has hosted some of the biggest names in the entertainment world, as well as local events, celebrations and festivals.



By Ben Roloff

elebrate with us the fascinating early history of the Sun Bowl amphitheater as 2020 residents of Sun City enjoy entertainment there for the 45th year since its opening in mid-November 1966.

The Del Webb Development Company (DEVCO) responded to continuous requests from early residents for a large venue to hold public meetings and to provide tiered seating for entertainment.

Cost estimates for building an indoor facility in 1965 for audiences of 2,000 proved prohibitive. The economy had slowed along with sales of new homes in Sun City.

DEVCO's bold thinking new President, John Meeker, saw an opportunity to satisfy public theater requests and to potentially spark interest in new home sales. Meeker proposed a huge amphitheater with a large bandshell, bathrooms, paved parking, and 21 six-



The Sun Bowl was the site of Sun City's 10th anniversary celebration in 1970. Popular accordionist Myron Floren of the Lawrence Welk Show entertained.

foot-wide spectator terraces that would potentially accommodate 7,000-plus by employing two rows of folding chairs on each terrace.

Meeker modeled his amphitheater after one he admired in Phoenix's Encanto Park, but the "Meeker Bowl" would dwarf the Phoenix model in size.

Meeker revealed estimated construction costs of \$30,000 -- a small fraction of cost estimates for an indoor theater. Residents applauded the plan for a movie screen that would rise/ retract from the stage floor to allow for future cinema viewing in the amphitheater.

When coupled with a rearview projector, the novel screen and projector would eliminate the need for a traditional projection booth. The bandshell itself would stand 30 feet high with the stage measuring 48 feet across and with depth of 39 feet providing ample room for large variety shows or even for symphony orchestras to comfortably perform.

DEVCO's original plan included turning both ownership and operations responsibility over to the Sun City Home Owners Association (SCHOA) shortly after completion of construction. That never happened.

As construction neared completion, a dedication ceremony was planned for mid-November 1966 with Del Webb as the featured speaker. Webb did not make personal appearances in Sun City very often, so to maximize



1. Standing-room only crowds were not unusual at the Sun Bowl during the 1960s and '70s. 2. Then-Governor Ronald Reagan visited the Sun Bowl in 1976 to campaign for President Gerald Ford's re-election. 3. Del Webb celebrates the opening of the Sun Bowl by presenting a U.S. flag to Michael Bross, president of Sun City HOA. 4. Guy Lombardo directs his orchestra.



the importance of his visit the groundbreaking ceremony of the highly anticipated Town Hall South Recreation Center (Mountain View) was scheduled for the same day.

That night 2,000 in attendance for the Sun Bowl dedication ceremony learned the first ever entertainment event scheduled for the new facility.

Five acts from the area that had previously entertained in Sun City at either Town Hall (Fairway) or Community Center (Oakmont) were booked to appear in the opening show. All had been well received in the past, so DEVCO knew the program would be popular.

DEVCO employees were to set up 1,500 chairs on the terraces. When they were filled, residents had to provide their own chairs or blankets. Next up for the Sun Bowl was a Christmas Show where the renown Phoenix Chorus performed along with a local dance company.

The two DEVCO-sponsored shows of 1966 were received enthusiastically, and residents waited to see what would happen next. To their delight, DEVCO announced signing a contract with Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians Orchestra, which was scheduled for the second week of February 1967.

The orchestra would begin with a

one-hour concert followed by a brief intermission. On the orchestra's return, they would play another three hours of music for dancing.

For the event, DEVCO decided to test the market and price tickets at \$1.50. Planners were confident because of the recent formation of the Sun City Council of Organizations. The new association was founded by volunteers who signed on with the avowed purpose of making the Sun Bowl a success.

Virtually every service organization, large church, and major organization in the community sent representatives to formation meetings to plot, plan, and commit their members to the cause.

One of the Council's first tasks was helping DEVCO sell Lombardo tickets at multiple community locations. Sales were brisk, with over 4,000 sold almost immediately; further sales were cut off when tickets sales reached 7,400.

Council members were simultaneously holding training sessions for ticket takers, ushers and parking lot assistants. Local newspapers urged ticket holders to carpool with a minimum of four to a vehicle, as there would be but 1,500 parking spots on newly leveled but unpaved lots. Plans for watering the surfaces to make them both level and dust free were already in place.

Weather was cooperative the day of the Lombardo concert and everything went smoothly. The newspaper description noted there would likely be an evaluation of dance floor space available for future events. In the writer's opinion, a dance floor 30 times the size of the one provided for the Valentine's Day Lombardo Dance Party would still be insufficient.

Nevertheless, a vast majority of Sun City's 1967 population (circa 8,500) went home excited by the latest jewel in amenities offered residents.

The Sun Bowl's storied history started strong. And it continues going strong in 2020. There is so much of the Sun Bowl story yet to tell, but that must wait for another issue of this newsletter. In the interim, pay a visit to your Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

Better yet, join those of us who love our museum, want the history of Sun City and Sun City West preserved, and are willing to write a check for as little as \$25 annually to become a member and have access to local history classes, special presentations, frequent newsletters, updates, and interesting tidbits from the histories of the two communities.



Celebrating the Sun City Lifestyle!

Unveiling new model homes was highly anticipated, festive occasion

By Bill Pearson

The Del E. Webb Development Corporation (DEVCO) spent its first 18 years in Sun City experimenting with community events. From parades, to anniversaries to yearly celebrations, they wanted those living here to feel special, unique.

Perhaps the most significant events over the years were the model home grand openings.

DEVCO would always open the new models to the community one day prior to opening them to the public. They purposely solicited feedback and awarded prizes to residents to share their thoughts on what they liked and disliked. Brilliant on their part.

Sun City Phase 1

Phase 1 (south of Grand Avenue) started Jan. 1, 1960 and ran through the move across the tracks north of Grand Avenue in 1969.

It had its highs and lows, and while the first couple of years were an explosion of sales, they had numerous challenges.

Printed on the adjacent page is a



Sun City officially opened Jan. 1, 1960, and it was the world's first glimpse of a master-planned, active adult retirement community. Top photo: New model homes are unveiled in 1964 to mark the community's fourth anniversary. Above photo: The interior of a typical 1960's model home in Sun City.

map of Phase 1 and where the models were located.

Those first six years were splintered. When John Meeker arrived in 1965, he immediately began experimenting with larger homes and different designs.

Sun City Phase 2

The grand opening of Phase 2 model

homes was nothing less than spectacular.

The move north of Grand Avenue was a question mark. Del Webb told Meeker if sales didn't pick up, the concept of an age-restricted community would end south of Grand Avenue.

John Meeker was a man with a vision and a plan. He boldly charted a new course and in doing so, Sun City exploded. From 1968 through 1978, the company averaged 2,000 sales per year. Staggering numbers in anyone's book.

Adding the hospital, Viewpoint Lake, Lakeview Recreation Center and the Lakes Club contributed to the hype. The homes on the lake were another dimension. John quickly came to understand bigger homes and nicer amenities were a plus -- and an attraction to a new generation of retirees.

There were three grand openings of models in those 10 years and each was bigger and better than the previous.

He knew everyone loved a bargain and Sun City was the best value in the country.

On the adjacent page you can see the locations of Phase 2 and 3 models.



The Mount Joy series was part of model homes introduced in 1962. Base price for a two-bedroom, two-bath home was \$12,750.



1968-1972 (Series 50-60). An elaborate sales pavilion was opened for Phase 2 in 1969 on Buccaneer Way off Del Webb Boulevard between Thunderbird and Emerald Point, facing Viewpoint Lake.

1974-76 (Series 60-70). Eight lifestyles offered; 10648 Buccaneer was the smallest model of the single-family homes and last with a bathroom house.



1961 (Series 11-18). Second set of new model homes open. Six new model homes on the northeast corner of Peoria and 105th avenues.





1967 Rancho Estates -- one-acre horse property homes -- opens.

Sun City Model Home Locations Phase 3



Phase 2



Phase 1





1968-1972 (Galleria Series). The Galleria 100 series of homes on Wheatridge Drive kicked off Phase 3 in 1974. Models included single-family homes, apartments, duplexes, quadra-plexes and garden apartments.

1976 (Heritage Collection). Named in honor of the nation's bicentennial, the Heritage Collection was located on an extension of the Wheatridge Drive models and served as the first model homes for Sun City West prospective buyers.

1974 (Quail Run). Located on southeast corner of Sun City, south of Grand Avenue, east of 99th Avenue, south to Pebble Beach Drive. Single-family homes.



1960 (Series 1-8) Initial five model homes on Oakmont Drive, south of Grand Avenue. An ancillary model added at 12806 Lake Drive.



1968 Spanish and Mediterranean villas introduced at 105th Drive, west of Mountain View. There was an all-electric experimental home at 9746 N. 105th Ave.



Museum gift shop offers expanded list of souvenirs

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum has an exciting new selection of Sun Cities-related gift merchandise at its expanded gift shop and available for purchase at the museum's website.

In addition to its selection of books on the history of the Sun Cities, the museum now offers a variety of items boasting the Sun Cities Del Webb Museum logo.

Themed-items include:

■Visors: Fabric, 100% washed cotton twill with hook and loop closure. Color choices: Hunter Green or Khaki

Cap: Fabric, 100% cotton twill with hook and loop closure; color choices: Carolina Blue or Oyster. The profile is small for ladies and a great size for men.

■Coasters: Fullcolor classic cartoons by Walt Ditzen on a durable, washable no slide coaster. ■Golf towel: 11-



by-18 towel with a classic cartoon by Walt Ditzen.

Bowling Towel: 11-by-18 towel with a classic cartoon by Walt Ditzen.

Playing cards: Classic playing card deck in bridge format $(2^{1}/4)^{2}$ x $3^{1}/2^{2}$).

Travel Mug: 16-ounce stainless steel works great for either hot or cold beverages.

■Bag tag: Identify your luggage, golf bag or any bag of your choice.

Tote Bag: 13-by-12 durable, reusable grocery bag or library book bag or gift bag, your choice.

Divot repair tool: Dye-cast with

Museum News & Events

antique brass and nickel makes this a durable tool and a very nice gift for any golfer. All proceeds directly benefit the museum.









Congratulations to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum!

"Our congratulations to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum on the success of its fifth annual Gala event. We were delighted to be sponsors and partners with the museum in helping make it the quality evening it has become.

When Tim and I moved to Sun City five years ago, we knew we found something very special. Not only was it our home, but where we wanted to help home buyers find their place in the sun. The obvious benefits of Sun City living sold themselves. The real surprise came as we grew to understand the amazing history behind the community.

Once we visited the museum, we knew there was so much more to why it is an incredible place to live. From the very outset, homeowners worked tirelessly to build a sense of community. Over the years, companies doing business were successful when they joined hands with residents and organizations.

Amy and I have grown to appreciate that connection and being a part of the marvelous story we all love as Sun City." *Tim and Amy Nixon*



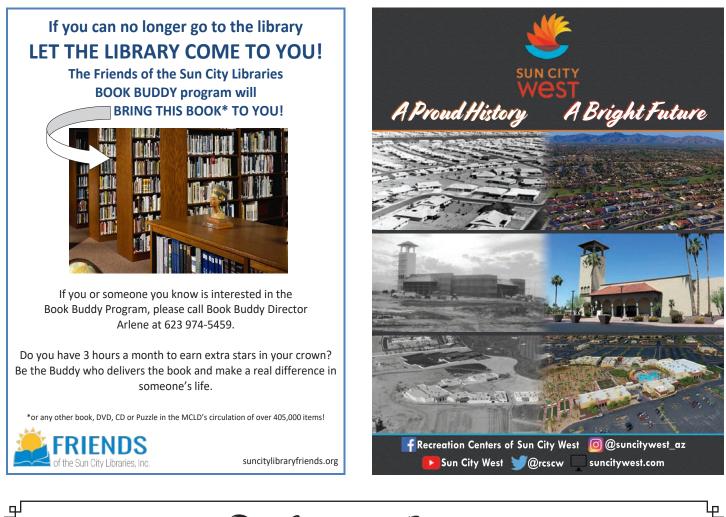
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14719 W. Grand Avenue Surprise, AZ 85374 Support for superior health and wellbeing through Sun Health Foundation is the catalyst for life-changing results in our community. Your charitable donations of time, talent and treasure, combined with proceeds from our resale shops, will have an impact for generations. It's a true group effort and we encourage you to help. We welcome all opportunities to speak specifically about your interests in our efforts.

By supporting Sun Health Foundation, you'll help ensure friends, neighbors, acquaintances and families in our community get the support and health care attention they need. We sincerely thank you for your consideration.

Learn more at SunHealthFoundation.org or call (623) 471-8500





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Thanks to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum for keeping history alive in The Original Fun City!



ARIZONA

RECREATION CENTERS OF SUN CITY



Sun Cities Area Historical Society/ Del Webb Sun Cities Museum 10801 Oakmont Drive Sun City, AZ 85351