

A Lending Hand for 60 Years -- *Signs of the Past by Ed Allen*

Right from the beginning, Sun City attracted retirees with a wide variety of retirement income. It wasn't long before the plight of some became apparent when they couldn't afford the \$40 recreational fee that was then in effect. As a result, in 1961 the Sun City Civic Association, the forerunner to the Home Owners Association, created a Sunshine Committee headed by the Rev. Duane Thistlewaite to aid those who could not pay this fee. He was also named to head a Sick and Visiting Committee – and the two committees were soon combined.

Four directors of the Civic Association each contributed \$40 to provide the Sunshine Committee with its initial funds. The money was promptly used to pay the fees for four households. All four parties asked for help finding jobs to help supplement their savings, and jobs were found for three of them. Next time fees were due, the committee only had to subsidize one of the families.

Another need was soon discovered for funds. The cost of renting a hospital bed was \$35 per month, a prohibitive expense for some. The Sunshine Committee did some investigating and found it could buy four beds with mattresses from Memorial Hospital for \$25 each. It spent half of its treasury for three. A resident donated money for a fourth.

The first bed and mattress, along with a wheelchair, were loaned out by the Sunshine Committee in April of 1962. Donations from residents meant it wasn't long before the growing equipment inventory created a storage problem. At first, Rev. Thistlewaite and his wife used their home (right) and carport as a storeroom, but were soon running out of living space. DEVCO came to the rescue, offering a lot and constructing a building at cost. The Sunshine Committee incorporated, and on October 22, 1964 became Sun City Sunshine Service, Inc. with Rev. Thistlewaite the first president of the board of directors. The new 1500 sq. ft. building opened July 1, 1965 at 10307 Coggins Drive.



Rev. "T" was working nearly full-time managing a large, growing volunteer organization, actively delivering medical equipment to residents, and making up to 150 hospital calls a week.

Funding came from a movie night run by the Camera Club in the Community Center (now Oakmont Rec Center) and from other special programs offered by other Sun City clubs and organizations. In addition there were private donations, many of which were made on behalf of Sun Citians who had been helped by Sunshine Service.

The inventory of equipment continued to grow ... hospital beds, wheel chairs, walkers, crutches, and many other essential items. Rollaway beds, playpens, strollers, and high chairs were added to meet the needs of guests. Most usual item today is a cardholder for arthritic, card-playing hands. All of it is loaned free to residents, saving them expensive rental costs. Free delivery remains available.

Within two years, Sunshine Service had outgrown its home on Coggins Drive, and DEVCO once again came to the rescue with an addition to their building. But in five years time, more space was needed. DEVCO donated a large lot at 9980 Santa Fe Drive, and built a new, much larger structure at cost (See dedication at right in 1974). DEVCO also bought back the building on Coggins, giving the organization a jump-start on the cost of a new building.

Today, Sunshine Service has an inventory of 11,110 items, valued at \$832,000 and used in 3,958 homes in pre-covid 2019. It is estimated that these equipment loans saved Sun Citians more than \$2,000,000 had they had to rent the equipment.



Thank you, Sunshine Service, for all you give to our community!