

Sun City museum shares voices from past

Project to highlight those who saw Sun City develop



(SCOTT TYNES/INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA)

Volunteer Regina Sollars guides Recreation Centers of Sun City new staff members through the Del Webb Sun City Museum Feb. 20.

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By Scott Tynes | Independent Newsmedia

A new project at the Del Webb Sun City Museum, owned by the Sun Cities Historical Society, will share tales of its unique development through the voices of those who lived it.

Through a \$10,000 grant from the Sun City Foundation, the museum will offer a video perspective from five residents who were here early in the city's founding and remain today. The grant will fund a

third-party to conduct interviews and edit 15-20 minute videos of each resident to be presented in the video rotation of the museum's Sundome Jr. Theater.

"They're going to video the stories and recollections and really bring those to light in the Ken Burns style," said Bret McKeand, museum director. "We want to capture those people who were here in the '60s and '70s and maybe knew Del Webb and the area then."

Music and historical photos will be inserted into the stories to add more depth to the stories, he said. The museum hopes to have the project completed and ready to present in the fall.

"I'll definitely watch that," said Gavin Dudley, a Casa Grande resident who visited the museum Feb. 20. "Their life stories could be pretty wild. Their history and how it links to here would be cool."

The first subject of the docuseries is Don Tuffs, McKeand said. Tuffs worked for Webb for nearly 20 years, was present for the opening of Sun City West in 1978 and served as the Sundome manager until it was transferred to Arizona State University in 1984. He is also a former president of the Sun Cities Historical Society.

"The editing part is what we were most concerned about," McKeand said. "We really want it to be entertaining. (Sundome Jr.) is a nice, comfortable place and it really takes you back to another time."

The seating in Sundome Jr. are seats taken from the original 7,000 seat Sundome when it closed in 2009. Demolition of the Sundome commenced in August 2013 and was completed by September.

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum opened in 1990 as the Sun Cities Area Historical Society and in 2010 was renamed after the man responsible for the first active retirement community in the nation: Del Webb. The founders of the museum understood how important a role Sun City and Sun City West played in the evolution of retirement in the United States. Webb's vision literally changed the lives of millions of retirees and created a niche market that is alive and growing to this day. The Museum is dedicated to telling that story. From personal interviews, to the photograph collection, to the endless displays of anecdotal trivia, it covers the exact reasons these two senior communities flourished and grew to be the successes they are today.

"It's awesome," Dudley said. "I love Americana in general. They do a great job of painting a picture of what it would be like here through the years."

The museum is located in one of the first five homes built in the development at 10801 W. Oakmont Drive