

Sun City Elks host luncheon for Vietnam vets

By Val Bianchini
SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

It was indeed a proud honor for Sun City Elks Lodge #2559 to be asked to host the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration Luncheon on Jan. 7.

Nearly 200 Vietnam veterans and their spouses and guests were treated to a great luncheon of Lasagna or Roast beef, carrot cake and ice cream for dessert. The club manager and chef were commended for an excellent meal.

The commemoration opened with seven members of the Sandra Day O'Connor High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, who presented the colors as honor guards for the event. They were quite impressive.

After presenting the colors, cadet commander Alesha Hunsaker read from the script, "The Vacant Chair," which pays tribute to those who have given their all and no longer have the opportunity to eat or drink with their fellow Americans. The chair was set in front of a table adorned with military caps from each branch of the service.

Opening remarks were made by John Capella of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #1043. Chapter members responsible for putting on the event were: Mike Roberts, president; Mr. Capella, commander and 1st member; and Dale Jeeter, 2nd member.

The invocation was presented by Reverend Fannalou Guggisberg, Major, USAF, Ret.



Seven members of the Sandra Day O'Connor high school JROTC led by Cadet Commander Alesha Hunsaker present the colors prior to the start of the 50th Vietnam War Commemoration luncheon. [Submitted photo]

nam. Col. Wanda Wright, a representative of the Arizona Department of Veterans Services, handed out memorial pins and medallions to all

who spoke. Most took advantage of the opportunity and proudly gave the information requested, even those who needed assistance to make

the walk to the podium.

Pride was definitely displayed on the faces those who spoke. Bless them all.

Visit www.vva.org.

Editor's Note: Val Bianchini is past president and public relations coordinator for Sun City Elks Lodge #2559.

Sudoku Solution

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The keynote speaker of the event was James Oliveri, Vietnam veteran and noted author. He spoke of his experiences and memories in the Vietnam War. There was not a whisper, chair scrapping or cough from the audience as Mr. Oliveri held the audience spellbound, while he transported them back over the decades to those days of horror, valor, sadness, humiliation and political unrest.

At the conclusion of the program, Mr. Roberts invited all vets present to come to the podium, give their names, branch of service and years served in Viet-

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EDUCATION

Peoria students honored by Sun City Elks

The Sun City Elks' December Student of the Month representing Liberty High School, 9621 W. Speckled Gecko Drive, Peoria, is Benjamin Barkai.

Benjamin has received a National AP Scholar Award and also a Certificate of Excellence in English. He is a member of the Chess Club. Benjamin has

received an Academic Letter.

In addition, he is a member of the National German Honor Society. Benjamin is a library volunteer, participates in scuba diving and is a National Merit semi-finalist.

Benjamin's hobbies include archery, writing and music.

The Sun City Elks also hon-

ored Sunrise Mountain High School, 21200 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria, is Westin G. Dawe as a December Student of the Month.

Westin serves at the Christ's Church of the Valley, 7007 W. Happy Valley Road, Peoria, every weekend. He is a leader of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Westin is the President of the Christian Club on Campus, as well as the President of DECA.

He is a National Honors Society member. In addition, Westin is a four-year member of the varsity swim team, captain of the swim team and president of the swim and dive club. Westin carries a perfect 4.0 GPA and is in the top 5 percent of the class.

Westin's hobbies include going to church, bible study and spending time with friends and family.



Benjamin Barkai of Liberty High School is the Sun City Elks' December Student of the Month. [Submitted photo]



Sunrise Mountain High School is Westin Dawe carries a perfect 4.0 GPA. [Submitted photo]

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HONOR

Elks gain 'All American' title

7th time for honor, 4 consecutively

By Val Bianchini
SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT
NEWSMEDIA

The Sun City Elks were again recognized for the organization's community service.

During the recently completed Elks National Convention in Reno, Sun City Elks Lodge No. 2559 was presented a seventh "All American Lodge" award. The last four awards have been consecutive.

Kay Chandlee, Sun City lodge president, received the award at the Reno convention.

The title is the most prestigious award given to an Elks Lodge. It indicates the honoree is the best lodge in the country for its size.

There are six awards given annually, depending on the size of the lodge. The Sun City lodge has more than 3,000 members and falls into the 1,501-or-more size category.

The Sun City lodge has a long history of community outreach. Its programs include high school graduate scholarships, awarding \$30,000 this past semester; intermediate school essay and poster contests with



Kay Chandlee, Sun City Elks president, receives the "All American Lodge" award from Douglas Scheifer, Elks National Organization Fraternal Committee chairman. [Submitted photo]

\$100 gift cards to the winners; drug awareness, students of the month awards; children's Christmas shopping spree; food distribution at Christmas; honoring first

responders; services to seniors at memory care facilities; and one of the best veterans programs in the state. The lodge also supports a Girl and Boy Scout troop,

and a Cub Scout Den.
Editor's Note: Mr. Bianchini is Sun City Elks public relations chairman.

AWARD

Sun City Elks earn 'Decade Award' from school

Lodge programs part of academy programs

By Val Bianchini

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Sun City Elks Lodge

was honored with the Decade Award from Arizona Charter Academy.

The lodge was among several organizations honored with special recognition during a May 18 school appreciation luncheon. The

Elks were recognized for more than a decade of support to the academy. Other organizations recognized for support were the Surprise Police Department, community leaders and donors.

The Sun City Elks Lodge, 10760 W. Union Hills Drive, began supporting Arizona Charter Academy, 16025 N. Dysart Road, Surprise, almost from the academy's infancy by involving the "A" rated school in the lodge's drug

awareness program, essay contests, hoop shoot contests and children's Christmas shopping spree.

In addition to the luncheon, those recognized were entertained by a children's dance group and a choral group.

Elks in attendance believe the children did a good job and were a reminder of the importance of supporting youth.

Editor's Note: Mr. Bianchini is Sun City Elks public relations coordinator.



Part of an Elks presentation at Arizona Charter Academy were, from left, Kay Chandler, Elks Lodge president; Meliassa Holdaway, ACA director; Dale Blomker, Elks lodge trustee chairman; and Rich Grudzien, Elks Christmas shopping spree chairman. [Submitted photo]

STINGS



From left Al Watters, Korean War vet, Terry Hunt, Vietnam Vet and holder of a Purple Heart, Hal Whitaker, WWII and Korean War Vet, Michael Bannon, volunteer fire fighter and nationally recognized by the fire fighters association, Gary Drumheller, Elks Arizona State Veterans Chairman, Chris Whelak, Prescott Case Manager, and Val Bianchini, Elks Public Relations Coordinator.

Fire fighters and Elks provide warmth and comfort to vets

With winter and colder weather approaching, the need to keep vets warm became a priority, especially in higher elevations of Prescott.

Michael Bannon of the North Valley Fire Medical Corp, and a volunteer fire fighter, was informed of the Veterans services provided by Sun City Elks Lodge. Mr. Bannon came into possession of thirty one cold/wet weather coats, belonging to the Sun City West Fire Department.

Upon hearing of the various veterans functions performed by the Sun City Elks veterans committee, Mr. Bannon contacted the Elks

and made an offer with the coats.

Handing the coats over to the Elks was not very simple. Each coat had the emblem and insignia of the Sun City West fire department and the coats could not be offered as they were, so Mr. Bannon had to think of how to overcome the obstacle.

Mr. Bannon designed a patch that would cover the fire department emblem, a patch with the American flag over which was the inscription, "Vets Never Forget."

The fire department provided the new patch and Mr. Bannon spent hours remov-

ing the old ones.

Mr. Bannon then contacted the Sun City Elks Veterans Committee and offered the coats. They then contacted the "Vets For Vets" facility up in Prescott, a branch of the larger, "Vets For Vets," in the Phoenix area.

Mr. Chris Whelak, case manager and counselor of the Prescott branch of "Vets for Vets," took the offer so five Elks and Mr. Bannon made the trip up north.

The Prescott facility presently has 73 vets residing in their facility and almost half will now have winter coats.

V F SC ELKS LODGE

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SUN CITY INDEPENDENT



Elks honor those who served

Sun City Elks Lodge 2559 played an important role in the development of Peoria's Military War Monument. The wall, 83 feet of black granite, was dedicated during veterans remembrance month of November. Highlights cover each critical stage of military engagement since the American Revolution and up to Iraq and Afghanistan. The Elks lodge donated funds towards the expense of the wall and were rewarded with the opportunity to have its name inscribed three times in three different locations throughout the wall. The lodge chose to adopt the sections of the wall that highlighted the exploits of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, as they have lodge members who have fought in each of those wars. Above are Val Bianchini, past president of Sun City Elks Lodge 2559, and Hal Whitaker, an Elk member and WW II and Korean War veteran. [Submitted Photo]

VF SC ELKS LODGE



Above, flag bearers from the various branches of the service present their colors prior to the start of the festivities. From left are George Hays, Navy; Robert Heidke, Air Force; Pat Cannon, Coast Guard; Ernie Brothers, Army; Del Kennedy, Marines; and Hal Whitaker, Merchant Marines. [Submitted Photo]

Elks never forget vets

"As long as there are veterans, the Elks will never forget." This motto of the Elks organization is especially appropriate during this month of November, which is Veterans Appreciation Month. Sun City Elks Lodge 255 not only remembers veterans this month, but they honor them by inviting 42 vets to the Elks lodge for a spaghetti dinner.

Twenty residents of the Arizona State Veterans Home, plus 12 veterans from the Grand Vets facility and 10 residents of MANA House were invited for food, fun, relaxation and music. After the veterans had eaten, a 90-member coral group entertained, singing patriotic songs and the battle songs of each branch of the military. As each battle song was sung, the vets from that particular branch of service rose, if possible, saluted the flag, and were roundly applauded by about 350 members and guests in attendance.

Sun City 50th: A Community Affair



Sun City is just a scant six months away from celebrating its 50th anniversary. While the planning of the yearlong event began 18 months ago, there are still so many things to do it is almost frightening to comprehend how we will ever get it all done.

Weaker souls may have become disheartened by the problems we have faced. The financial crunch that exploded just as we began looking for support left us in a wholly different place from the 40th anniversary committee. Within months we realized it was a different ballgame. If we were to succeed, it wouldn't be

because businesses were throwing money at us.

Undaunted, we shifted our focus to within. That just made sense. Sun City has always been a freestanding, independent community where we survived and flourished based on our own innate abilities and strengths. If we have learned anything from our storied past, it is we can do anything if we just put our minds to it. It's just a matter of rallying the community and asking them to get involved.

The results have been pretty awesome to date. Sure we could have sold more \$50 window decals (by the way, you can still get yours at the Sun City Visitors Center). But T-shirt sales and golf car raffle ticket sales (those are available at the Visitors Center as well) have been going well. We are raising money and we at least are seeing the potential to cover all of the costs.

The true inspiration has come from the clubs, organizations and individuals who have been willing to step up, speak out and donate their time and expertise. We have had clubs and organizations donate monies and more importantly begun planning events to make 2010 an incredible year of endless celebration. The most recent \$1,000 donation came from the Sun City Early Bird Lions' Club.

This article is growing long so rather than bury you in the details of who has done what, we will save that until next month. Suffice to say it has been gratifying to see Sun City residents join in planning the party and it's not too late for you to do the same. You can reach the 50th Anniversary Committee at SunCityAnniversary@cox.net, visit our website at www.suncity50thanniversary.org or for general information call Paul Herrmann at the Sun City Visitors Center, 623-977-5000. 2010 and the 50th anniversary is our chance to shine; to show the world why we love Sun City and why we believe it is the best darn retirement community in the whole world.

Sun City 50th: Deadlines looming



Hard to believe, but opening ceremonies for Sun City's 50th anniversary are a scant three months away. It's been two long years in the planning and while many of the events have been finalized, a number of them still need some work.

Lori Peterson, 50th anniversary chairperson for the sporting clubs, is excited about clubs that have stepped up and submitted their plans. Unfortunately, there are a number of them that aren't on the calendar as of yet and that is cause for concern.

Perhaps the most encouraging are the clubs that have hooked up with the Senior Olympics and are holding them in Sun City. Currently, bocce, pickleball, tennis and lawn bowling have nailed down dates in 2010 and the committee is trying to coordinate the opening ceremonies for the middle of February. Senior Olympics Director Irene Stillwell has reported the ASO is thrilled to play a part in the 50th anniversary celebration. It's a little-known fact that Del Webb was the largest single contributor when the Senior Olympics were founded back in the 1970s.

That should come as no surprise. Del Webb's Sun City was created with a very simple premise: Retirement should be about staying active, involved and engaged. His vision was: by providing amenities like golf, bowling, tennis and dozens of other sports, residents could hang on to their youth. Now 50 years later, Sun City and that vision for a better retirement have survived the test of time. Sporting activities are still at the core of the community's success. That is why it is critical that clubs make sure their schedules for events next year are in and will appear on the numerous calendars that will be showcasing Sun City.

The drop-dead date for clubs submitting their schedules to ensure they are in the year's program is October 1. While we will be happy to place dates on our website after that, the magazine will be THE program that is circulated throughout the community and distributed yearlong. If your club hasn't gotten involved or discussed being a part of this celebration, the time is short and members should talk to their officers with their ideas. Lori Peterson asks club officers to contact her as quickly as possible. She can be reached at 623-876-1896 or loripeterson6@cox.net. The 50th anniversary celebration is shaping up to be an incredible yearlong event and it would be an absolute shame if your club fails to get the kind of exposure it needs.

Elks Lodge in Sun City benevolent to many

By Coty Dolores Miranda
SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

For nearly 33 years, members of the Sun City Elks Lodge have made serving their community a priority.

As one of the largest of Arizona's 49 Benevolent & Protective Order of the Elks (BPOE) Lodges, and the nation's seventh largest, the Sun City Elks Lodge has made benevolence a main component of their activities.

Its 3,086 members exhibit benevolence by "showing kindness and performing charitable acts."

Former Exalted Ruler Gene Holmes notes that children and veterans have benefited most from the lodge's efforts over three decades.

"In Sun City, it would seem unlikely that we would get involved with a lot of youth activities, but we do," said Holmes, a 10-year member who served as Exalted Ruler in 2005-06 and is now active in the Past Exalted Rulers Association. "And we're a very patriotic organization, so we also do a lot with the veterans. We're much more of a benevolent organization than the average person may think."

The average age of members is 71 years old but a youthful spirit marks Holmes and his fellow Elks at Lodge 2559. Younger members are being added to the lodge as families move to the area.

When they visit third-graders during their Dictionary Program GiveAway, they challenge students with quizzes to help acquaint them with their new, free tomes.

"This program is not exclusive to Elks, as other civic clubs do it, too," Holmes said. "But in our area, we've taken it to heart. We give out 1,600 to 1,800 dictionaries yearly," he said. Attendant at the dictionary giveaways and other youth programs throughout the community is Elroy the Elk, the Sun City Elks Lodge Mascot — a perennial favorite.

Holmes said he's proud of the Student of the Month awards given to one boy and one girl from Deer Valley High School, Peoria High School and Dysart High School. Students are selected for leadership and receive a \$50 cash award.

"We place a lot of emphasis on peer leadership. A lot of these kids show up as Elks Lodge Scholarship winners later," he said.

The lodge provided about \$18,000 in



JOEY ANCHONDO/THE REPUBLIC

Mike White, Exalted Ruler of the Sun City Elks Lodge, stands with past Exalted Ruler Rich Korona, dressed as Elroy the Elk.

scholarships last year.

The 40,000-square-foot lodge building at 10760 W. Union Hills Drive also makes room for Cub Scout Troop 297 and Boy Scouts Troop 298, both of which receive financial assistance also.

"We've had 28 Eagle Scouts come from this group," said Holmes.

Tom Woods, youth activities director at Sun City Elks, is also state chairman of the drug awareness program. His wife, Sally Woods, serves the lodge as Leading Knight.

This summer, the couple accepted two major awards at the Elks National Convention in Portland, Ore. — both in recognition of their youth programs.

Their Drug Awareness program was named overall best in the state for the past seven years.

"We're 24/7/365 on this," he said. "Last year we visited 157 different classrooms with our program, tailoring them appropriately for each age group."

Elroy the Elk is used for younger grades while older classes hear from a member who is a registered nurse. The mother vividly describes her work in emergency rooms, tending to teens who have ingested illegal and legal prescription drugs.

Sun City volunteers recognized for timeless contribution

MARILYN HOLLEY

AND DARRELL BRADSHAW

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS-SUN

At the south entrance of the Lakeview Recreation Center, life-sized bronze statues pay homage to the countless volunteers, past, present and future, who give their time and talents to preserve the way of life in Sun City.

These pieces of art stand because of the dedicated efforts of three women, the Sun City version of the Three Musketeers: Betty Jane Peters, Connie Turner and Kay Smith.

Peters moved to Sun City in 1985 from Rochester, Minn. She and her husband, Gordon, have two sons, two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Peters worked 15 years for the Milwaukee Journal. Her Sun City voluntarism includes more than 20 years with the Sun City Posse, as well as serving six times as president of the Clay Corner at Marinette.

Turner, widowed, left Omaha, Neb., in 1988 to settle in Sun City. She has four children and one grandson. One of her sons is serving in Iraq, and she contributes hundreds of chocolate chip cookies for his comrades. Although a registered nurse by profession, she has spent her life involved in the arts as well as being a published author.

Smith moved from Estes Park, Colo., to Sun City in 1989. She and her husband, Henry, were Snowbirds for a number of years before retiring and purchasing a home in Sun City. They have two sons, a daughter, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Smith was raised on a farm in western Colorado and from her earliest years showed her artistic talent by making her own clay and creating horse-head statues. While raising her family, she put her talents on hold, but rediscovered her artistic side when she joined the Clay Corner at Marinette in Sun City. She and Turner attended the Scottsdale Artist School to hone their creative skills.

In 1999, after attending a public meeting regarding the Sun City 40th anniversary celebration for 2000, Peters, Turner and Smith met to discuss what contribution they were going to make to the event. Although the events being discussed for the yearlong celebration would be fun and interesting, their common concern was what kind of long-lasting tribute would be left to



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Betty Jane Peters, left, Connie Turner and Kay Smith are the artistic talents behind the life-sized bronze statues at Lakeview Recreation Center. They created the statues to honor volunteers as part of the Sun City 40th anniversary celebration.

stand after the event "confetti was swept away."

Turner stepped up to answer that question by creating a clay prototype of a memorial focusing on community voluntarism. The concept depicted five statues representing the Sun City Posse, Sun City PRIDES, volunteers at Boswell Hospital and two Sun City libraries, a student denoting the future and voluntarism in nearby schools, and "Sparky" the Dog, accounting for thousands of pets who found homes courtesy of Sun Cities Animal Rescue. Also depicted were flowers that signified the work of the Sun City Agricultural Club, which supplied food to families in need.

The sculpture, titled "Sun City Volunteers ... A Lifestyle of Giving," pays tribute to the men and women who donate millions of hours to ensure the health, safety and well-being of the Sun City community.

Although the three artists were willing to donate their time and creative talents toward the project, they faced the task of collecting \$100,000 to cast the life-sized figures in bronze. To accomplish this task, they found a way to introduce the sculpture and ask for donations at parties, club meetings, luncheons or gatherings.

During the donation drive, their friends, Kitty and Roger Ladro, introduced the artists to sculptor Snell Johnson. He was the owner of the Art and Design Foundry in Phoenix and had recently finished the huge golden lion sculpture for the MGM Grand Casino in Las Vegas. He was fascinated by the idea that these three ar-

tistic women were volunteering their time and talent to create a major tribute to their community as well as tackling the task of raising the funds to make it happen. He agreed to help by allowing them to make the figures in his private studio, where he would complete the casting process.

With donations coming in, a place to work and the guidance of Johnson, the artists began creating the figures. The plan was to build the armature for the figures using the lost-wax technique, then apply the clay and have the pieces cast in bronze. They soon realized their goal of unveiling the completed set of sculptures at the closing of the 40th anniversary celebration could not be reached. However, on Dec. 16, 2000, they dedicated the site and presented the first bronze statue, the Posse figure, along with a bench created and donated by the Bell Recreation Center Metal Club.

Although the Bell Recreation Center Metal Club and the Sun City Players were the official sponsors, the contributions of many community clubs, churches and businesses helped to reach the \$100,000 goal. The final four statues were presented at a ceremony March 17, 2001.

The plaque commemorating the statues states: "We have taken the spirit of our community; molded it with clay; cast it in bronze and returned it to you so that you may contemplate your selfless work and know that in giving you receive."

Marilyn Holley and Darrell Bradshaw are real estate associates with Ken Meade Realty.