



Submitted Photo

Ivy Shirley, second from left, director of Banner Olive Branch Senior Center, accepts a check from Sun Health Auxiliary Chairperson Sandy Gialinas, far left, Darl Bachmann of Ford's World Travel and Paulette Pyrick of Princess Cruises. The funds, earmarked to purchase awnings for the Sun City-based senior center, are a product of a recent Hawaii cruise that served as a Sun Health Auxiliary fundraiser.

Auxiliary funds aid senior center

By Kim Antoniou

Special to the Independent

The first time Banner Olive Branch Senior Center requested shelter, a local church answered the call.

Now, it's Sun Health Auxiliary's turn.

Recently, the auxiliary received a check from Ford's World Travel and Princess Cruises, representing fundraising income from the Hawaii cruise sponsored by the volunteer group last November. Now that money is in the hands of Ivy Shirley, director of Banner Olive Branch Senior Center.

The funds will be used to purchase awnings for the front entry of the Sun City center, as well as for the back area of the building where volunteers load and unload vehicles. The awnings not only will provide shade and protection from the elements, but they also will serve as signs to identify Banner Olive Branch and the entrance.

"The Banner Olive Branch Senior Center is so excited to receive funds from the Sun Health Auxiliary-sponsored cruise, and we appreciate being selected for this contribution," said Ms. Shirley.

In the spirit of keeping "locally-grown" money in the community, Shirley added, local business Sun City Awning has been contracted to do the work.

That seemed to please everyone involved with the fundraising cruise.

"Before the Hawaii cruise, we actually

had our Bon Voyage party here at Banner Olive Branch," said Darl Bachmann, co-owner of Ford's World Travel. "In that way, our cruisers—the people ultimately responsible for raising this money—were able to see exactly where it went and what a difference their participation in the cruise could make in their community."

"I think it's crucial for us to be involved locally," said Paulette Pyrick, Princess' district sales manager. "However, it couldn't happen without Ford's World Travel. Their team of experts works to sell our travel product to donors enjoying these cruises. Providing a vacation experience that also benefits the local community is a wonderful thing."

Sun Health Auxiliary Chairperson Sandy Gialinas agreed.

"It is very nice that the money raised by the auxiliary's sponsorship of the Hawaii cruise is going to a local contractor, and that we're helping the local community using a local travel agency," she said. "It all comes back to the village concept, and we take care of our own here."

The next cruise to benefit Sun Health will be a Princess Cruises Panama Canal trek set for Nov. 5-20. Call Ford's World Travel at 623-933-8256 (Sun City) or 623-584-4422 (Sun City West).

Located at 11250 N. 107th Ave. in Sun City on the campus of United Church of Sun

VF SC Olive Branch Senior Center



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

Seniors enjoy the daily lunch at Banner Olive Branch Senior Center, 11250 N. 107th Ave., Nov. 7. On-site and delivered meals are one of numerous services offered by the senior center that could be affected if funding to Area Agency on Aging is reduced again.

Budget battle endangers programs

Agency officials anxiously wait for state, federal decisions

By Rusty Bradshaw
Independent Newspapers

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center could see reductions in funding for services it provides to area residents.

The center, 11250 N. 107th Ave., provides meals, transportation and a number of other services to senior citizens in Sun City, Youngtown and surrounding areas. It is funded, in part, through the Area Agency on Aging, which has seen its funding from state and federal sources reduced in recent years.

"Over the last three years, we have lost \$2.2 million," said Laraine Stewart, Area Agency on

Get Involved

Contact Banner Olive Branch Senior Center to volunteer, donate or for services.

www.bannerhealth.com/Locations/Arizona/Olive-Branch-Senior-Center_Olive-Branch-Senior-Center.htm

623-974-6797

11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City

Aging chief operating officer.

She added it is uncertain whether additional funding cuts will be made for the coming year.

"We are still waiting to hear from the legislatures at the state and federal level," Ms. Stewart said.

Arizona District 21 House members Rick Gray and Debbie Lesko, re-elected during the Nov. 6

general election, said it is too early to know how much will be available from the state to senior programs.

Mr. Gray said wide-ranging program cuts were made in the state's budget in the past two years to offset poor fiscal planning prior to 2010.

"We have cut close to the bone," he said.

The Arizona Legislature set aside \$450 million this year in an attempt to rebuild the state's "rainy day" reserve fund, which was nearly depleted to make up for a \$3 billion shortfall in 2010.

"People say there is all that money that could be used to fund programs," Mr. Gray said. "But those funds are set aside as a reserve."

Ms. Lesko said funding decisions will be

Center

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made by lawmakers after Gov. Jan Brewer presents her proposed budget, expected as early as February.

"That will be the starting point," Ms. Lesko said.

The representative said she has discussed the issue with several concerned residents.

"I will bring this issue to the table and see if there is any money there," she said. "But we will have to look at the big picture, not just specific programs."

Because federal legislators could not reach agreement on a budget, funds for human services agencies, among others, are sequestered. The funds will remain held until a budget is finalized. However, the longer they remain sequestered, the more likely cuts will be made, according to Ivy Glinski, Olive Branch director. She added the center has been able to hold its own because of donations, both financial and material, but further cuts to Area Agency on Aging funds will make it difficult to serve existing clients.

"We had 650 clients in our sustainability program last year, but there is no specific funding for that program," Ms. Glinski said.

Olive Branch is overserving in a lot of areas, but receiving no reimbursement, she added. A team of volunteers coordinate the sustainability program, and more volunteers are needed.

"We could use anyone who has experience dealing with the public, like filling out applications," Ms. Glinski said.

There is no cost to clients for any service offered through Olive Branch. In addition to state and federal funds funneled through Area Agency on Aging, Olive Branch receives funds from United Way, Maricopa County and Banner Health.

"Banner has embraced our program in a huge way, even beyond financial," Ms. Glinski said.

Further reduced funding will mean more seniors will be without services provided by Olive Branch and other senior centers.

Ms. Stewart said prior to funding cuts, there was no waiting list for senior program

Olive Branch Services

- Confidential counseling, advocacy, referral services.
- Utility discounts (APS, SRP, Southwest Gas, EPCOR Water).
- Landline telephone discounts (Cox, Qwest), free phones.
- Budget development (money management).
- Food boxes, food stamps (EBT).
- Congregate meals, home delivered meals, mobile meals, curbside and take-out meals.
- Medication assistance, free medication (PAP).
- Limited income subsidy.
- Medicare cost sharing, payment of Part B, monthly medicare premium.
- AHCCCS (Arizona's Medicaid).
- Arizona Long Term Care Service.
- Medicare issues (costs, plans, benefits).
- Property tax/excise credits, tax exemption, tax freezing.
- Referral to health and wellness programs.
- Socialization.
- Transportation (limited).
- Sustainability program.

Source: Banner Olive Branch Senior Center

services. Now all programs are at capacity and there is a 600-person waiting list.

"Everyone on that waiting list has already been qualified as eligible," Ms. Stewart said. "They are just waiting and hoping there will be openings."

Area Agency on Aging funnels state and federal funding to 30 senior centers throughout Maricopa County. The monies finance meal programs, center operations, transportation and other programs.

Mr. Gray believes the way to build state funding back up to levels the once were is to rebuild the business climate in Arizona.

"That is the way to get out of our fiscal problems," he said.

While some Arizona legislators are ready to address the challenge, Mr. Gray is not entirely optimistic about the results. He said a lot depends on what happens at the federal level.

News Editor Rusty Bradshaw can be reached at 623-445-2725 or rbradshaw@newszap.com.

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Olive Branch delivers new meal program

STAFF REPORT

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center is offering a new meal program to help people who are ill, just out of the hospital or simply need some rest, especially if there is no one else to help out.

The center will deliver two meals at a special introductory rate of \$7 per day for a 30-day period. Those who need or want to continue receiving meals can do so at the regular rate of \$8 per day for one person and \$14 per day for two people.

"As a volunteer at the Olive Branch I delivered meals for this program and saw how it helped so many people in our community," said Rita Klis, a Sun City resident, who has also been a recipient of the meals. "It is truly a great program, meeting an incredible need in the Sun Cities."

The two nutritious meals will be delivered between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

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OLIVE BRANCH

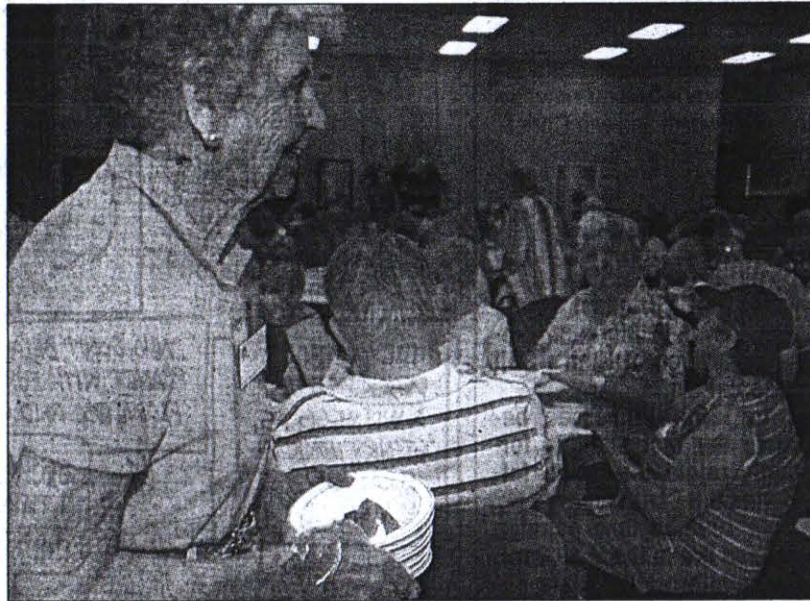
FROM A1

daily, Monday through Friday.

The meals are cooked by the center's chef, approved by a registered dietitian and consist of a hot meal and a sack dinner. An example of the hot meal is: roast beef with mushroom sauce, mashed potatoes, spinach casserole, dinner roll and milk. For the sack dinner, the selection could include a chicken salad sandwich or chef's salad, fruit or snack and a beverage.

For information about the program, call 623-974-6797 and ask for Mobile Meals, extension 204.

County antes up funds for senior center



Ginger Brock, a volunteer at Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center picks up unused dishes after lunch last week. The center recently relocated from the Sun Bowl Shopping Center to United Church of Sun City.

MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

STAFF REPORT

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved Wednesday up to \$20,000 for a contract with the Sun City Olive Branch Senior Center.

The Sun City facility "plays a vital role in our community," said Supervisor Max Wilson, R-District 4, who represents the Sun Cities and other parts of the West Valley on the board. "Folks can go there for companionship, to get a hot meal, or to get the health services they need. The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors is pleased to renew its partnership with this outstanding organization."

The senior center, which recently relocated to Witt Hall of United Church of Sun City at 107th Avenue and Sun City Boulevard, offers an assortment of programs and services to enhance the quality of life for area seniors age 60 or

older, their spouses and handicapped people of all ages, said Olive Branch Executive Director Ivy Wixson.

Food programs provide hot, nutritious, reasonably priced lunches to visitors of the center, as well as to residents who need home-delivered meals, she said.

In addition, the Legal Assistance Program helps low-income seniors unable to afford private attorney fees and court costs.

The Senior Employment Placement Program provides seniors in the community an opportunity to seek employment through job counseling and referrals. There is an on-site job fair every year, as well as an annual workshop on "How to Re-enter the Work World."

SEE CENTER, A5

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Other programs and services include, but are not limited to health screenings, blood pressure checks, entertainment, mental health counseling, crafts, exercise programs and computer classes.

Wixson said she welcomed the county's as-

sistance. "Olive Branch is in a new location and we have even more seniors utilizing our programs," Wixson said. "This grant will help us to continue serving the most vulnerable members of our community."

The center is open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday.

Residents welcome Olive Branch reopening

MITCHELL VANTREASE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Rick Kepner celebrated two occasions at the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center — his birthday and the opening of the new location.

During lunch, Kepner cut several pieces of chocolate cake and shared with people at the table as well as with those around him.

"It's the perfect time to do this and whatever better opportunity than now on my birthday, especially since we've been here for a few days," he said.

The senior center reopened July 7 after moving from 107th and Peoria avenues to a 9,000 square-foot building on the United Church of Sun City campus. The new space accommodates more residents, room for activities, extra offices for staff, as well as a state-of-art dining room and kitchen.

There also are more parking spaces to accommodate people at the center.

Pamela Meyerhoffer, CEO of Sun Health Foundation, said she's pleased with the new center and believes it'll serve even more residents.

"We're excited to be moved in and expect to have a major grand opening in September, when more people come back," she said.

Meyerhoffer said she thanks the United Church of Sun City for its cooperation.

In 2007, the church agreed to invest in a remodeling project of Witt Hall to accommodate the



MOLLIE J HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Rick Kepner celebrates his birthday Monday with his friends, including Charlotte Fournier at the Olive Branch Senior Center reopening. He gave cake to everyone.

senior center, which had outgrown its headquarters. The staff had hoped to open the doors on the new building in late June but settled for July.

In the meantime, the Sun City Country Club served meals to residents at its facilities and prepared food for the home-delivery program for almost a month. They prepared almost a 100 meals a day for delivery and served between 70 to 120 people at the country club during the week.

"They've been such a service to us and the residents because the people didn't have to drive a distance to receive their meals," Meyerhoffer said.

Finch Baker, an Olive Branch volunteer, said

he loves the new building and enjoys the space.

"It's beautiful and everyone has a little more room to spread out," he said.

Baker also said the parking lot won't be as congested.

"We had to share with a bank, Walgreens and thrift shops, so it was hard to find a space at times but not anymore," he said.

Dot Hayman has been coming to the Olive Branch Senior Center, since the beginning almost 20 years ago.

"I'm glad to be back with friends after not being in the same place for several weeks, this place is more than a center but a community," she said.

SENIOR CENTER BRANCHES OUT

Olive Branch moving to a new Sun City location

Early one morning, **Lois Maxwell** joined other parents and grandparents as they stood in line at a local department store to buy a Nintendo Wii (pronounced "We"), the latest state-of-the-art video game that has been in limited supply since its release last year. But unlike most of the people in line, Ms. Maxwell was not buying the game system for a child or grandchild. She bought it for seniors at the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center, when it relocates this summer to 11250 N. 107th Ave., Sun City from its current site at 10765 W. Peoria Ave.

"The Wii is fantastic. It will get people moving," explains Ms. Maxwell, who is the center's activities coordinator. "I attended a seminar, and it is amazing the way the Wii works. With a little gizmo in your hand and watching the screen you can bowl and actually see the effect of your throw. You also can play golf, tennis or baseball. It's just great for getting people active."

Ms. Maxwell is anxious to start using the Wii in her activities classes when the Olive Branch Senior Center moves to its new location in Witt Hall on the campus of the United Church of Sun City. For 20 years, the center has been a vital part of Sun City and neighboring communities. Its mission is to offer a diversity of programs and services to enhance the quality of life for area residents, many of whom are living at or below the poverty level. Among the services the center offers are meals served both at the center and through a mobile meal program that delivers hot, nutritious meals to housebound seniors, health screenings, blood-pressure checks, entertainment, legal assistance and a variety of classes, including computer and exercise. The center also offers SEPP (Senior Employment Placement Program), a no-fee service that helps seniors to find work.

"Quite a few people in the community are looking for work, whether they need the money or simply are not yet ready to retire and want the mental stimulation of a job," notes **Joanne Sadek**, Olive Branch's SEPP coordinator. "Often employers are looking for part-time workers, and seniors are looking for part-time work so it's a great fit. Moreover, employers embrace

the concept of hiring the older workers because of their work ethic. If they take a job, employers know the senior citizen will be there."

Adds **Ivy Wixson**, "I call SEPP the last senior program standing because so many 55-and-older programs have come and gone – we've been here 15 years." Ms. Wixson has been Olive Branch's director since it opened two decades ago.

VIP, the Visually Impaired Program, is another special service Olive Branch provides. This program is designed for anyone with a visual problem that affects their daily activities. Group meetings offer fellowship, encouragement and a place to share information about coping skills, special products and community resources.

However, the keystone of the Olive Branch is the food service. "We average 120 meals a day at our congregated site as well as 100 to 120 home-delivered meals," Ms. Wixson explains.

Larry Long has been the Olive Branch's food-service supervisor for the past 10 years. Each day he pulls together menus from the food on hand – much of which has been donated from area outlets.

"I always come in under budget," Mr. Long notes. "We have to run our menus by the Area Agency on Aging to ensure a delicious and nutritionally well-balanced offering. And we are succeeding. The people who come here just love the meals, and I love the people who come here."

Amazingly, at the current location, Mr. Long and the



Preparing for the re-opening of the Sun Health Olive branch Senior Center are (from left) **Larry Long, Lois Maxwell and Floyd Whitney.**

volunteers who help him, churn out the more than 200 daily meals on one stove, two ovens and a steamer. He is looking forward to the new location where he will have the addition of a grill.

"I'm really looking forward to the move, but it's going to be like going to a new house," Mr. Long explains. "We'll take some of our old ideas that work and incorporate some new ones, but what will remain unchanged is the same high-quality food we've served all these years. We've received gold stars on every health inspection we've ever had, and we're really proud of that."

The Olive Branch Senior Center has come a long way from its roots when it began in a church paying \$1 a year for rent and delivering food with one 1984 Chevrolet on loan. It now has a fleet of eight vans and delivers more than 28,000 meals to the homebound in addition to the 28,000 congregate meals served each year on site.

Floyd Whitney is the center's supervisor of operations. Asked what moving to the new facility means to him he responds, "It's not what it means to me but to the seniors who come here – for good conversation and a meal with people in

their age group. The move will be upsetting to people's daily routine, but it will all smooth out and the new facility will offer a larger dining area and kitchen and will be a great improvement because we'll be able to service more people." Mr. Whitney's wife, Bea, volunteers at the center and is the volunteer coordinator for the boutique.

While the Olive Branch transitions to its new location it will close its doors for the first three weeks in June. During that time, the seniors who frequent there and those who depend on the delivered meals are not forgotten. The Sun City Country Club has opened its doors and dining room as a transitional facility to keep the programs going.

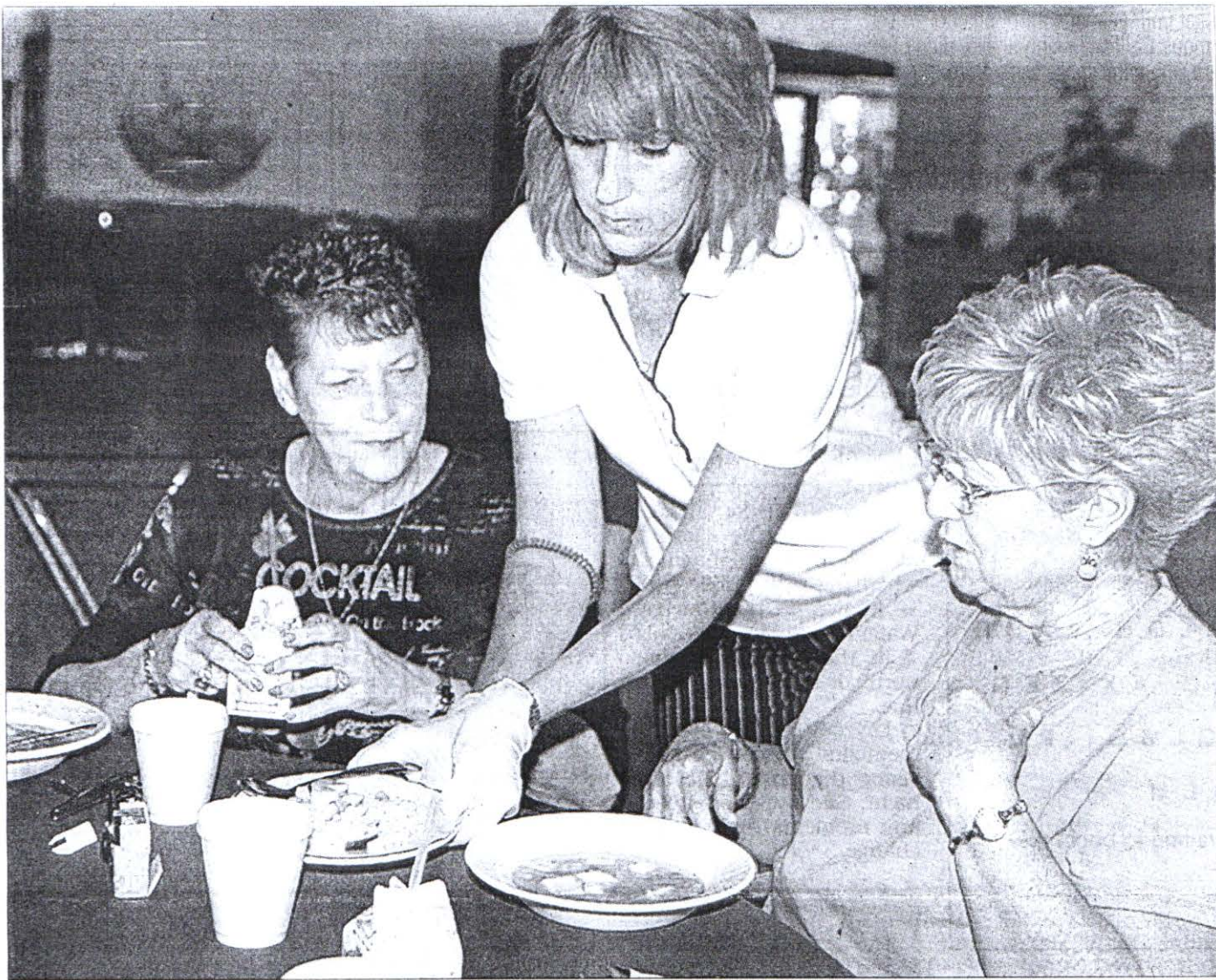
"So many people thrive on coming here every single day," Ms. Wixson notes. "They need that, and if we didn't do it for three weeks it would be a great loss. It will be fun to work with the country club."

The center will be celebrating a grand opening in the fall so local residents can see its new facilities and offerings.

To find out more about the Olive Branch Senior Center call **623/974-6797.**

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT SUN HEALTH OLIVE BRANCH SENIOR CENTER

- Almost 60,000 meals served each year.
- Picks up more than 4 million pounds of donated food each year worth more than \$10 million.
- Distributes food to more than 9,000 seniors, children and homeless families.
- Operates the only drive-up, take-out meal program for seniors in the country.
- Delivers more than 28,000 meals to the homebound each year on five delivery routes.
- 70 percent of the staff are older than 60; 5-percent older than 80.
- Olive Branch's 290 volunteers clocked more than 44,300 hours in 2007, with a cumulative total since opening of 578,118 hours.
- Chef Larry Long was voted "Chef of the Year" by the greater Phoenix Chef Association in 1999.
- Receives gold stars on every Arizona Department of Health Services inspection.
- Provides the only center with a visually impaired program in the West Valley to teach independent living skills.
- Only center in West Valley to provide computer classes to the visually impaired.
- Provides free legal counseling for seniors.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Anne Inman serves lunch to Barbara Kamen-Reiss, left, and Dee Dee Baker, who frequent the Olive Branch Senior Center, which is in the process of moving. The Sun City Country Club is hosting the seniors for a few weeks.

EXTENDING OLIVE BRANCH

Sun City Country Club takes in senior center for meals in June

MITCHELL VANTREASE
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Chet Kusmiesz worried about where he would eat lunch when Olive Branch Senior Center closed this summer to relocate to a new building.

Kusmiesz, who lives in Sun City, thought he might have to drive several miles to the Peoria or El Mirage senior centers.

His concerns were eased when he found out he'll be dining at a country club — the Sun City Country Club.

"It's generous on (the

country club's) part because at \$4 a gallon, it could have been costly for some of us to drive far away," he said.

Since Monday, the country club staff has served meals to residents at its facilities and prepared food for the home-delivery program.

Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch executive director, said the center is excited about working with the country club, which receives \$4.50 for each



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Theresa Krumrei loads meals into warming containers in the Sun City Country Club kitchen Wednesday. Krumrei, Shirley Redwing, Lu Hurley and Helen Edwards, all with the Olive Branch Senior Center, worked with employees to get the meals ready for delivery. The new Olive Branch site at United Church of Sun City is being renovated.

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OLIVE: New center at United Church opens at month's end

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meal made by the kitchen staff.

Between 70 and 120 people are served at the country club, while 100 meals are delivered each day.

Wixson said her organization chose the country club because it's closer to residents' homes, which helps combat rising gas prices.

"This just seemed like a reasonable decision, even though we're paying a little more for it as we transition into a new home," she said.

Olive Branch closed its doors at 107th and Peoria avenues last week to move into a 9,000-square-foot building on the campus of the United Church of Sun City.

In 2007, the church agreed to invest in an extensive remodeling project on one of its buildings for the senior center, which had outgrown its headquarters. The new facility is expected to provide more space for activities, extra offices for

staff and a state-of-art dining room and kitchen.

Staff hoped to open the new site on June 23, Wixson said, but that has been changed to the end of the month.

"There are still some necessary inspections and permits we have to get along with the furniture being moved in," she said.

Meantime, Wixson said she's pleased with the response of residents who have eaten their meals at the country club.

"I'm very proud because it's been a great partnership for us," Wixson said.

Bob Chadwick, general manager of Sun City Country Club, said he thought the idea to help Olive Branch works for the country club and the seniors.

"We don't have any traffic in the summer with members and it would keep my employed staff busy all at the same time," he said. "You also get an opportunity to show an

audience what you have to offer. They might want to do something here later."

Chadwick said he's also happy with cooperation of his staff and the Olive Branch volunteers, who help serve meals.

"I couldn't have asked for anything more pleasant than this because everyone's happy from the staff to the residents," he said.

In addition, Chadwick said he and senior center officials are in talks to possibly hold a "senior prom" at the country club.

John Chart, an Olive Branch volunteer, said he's enjoyed helping out at the country club, even though he would have gone to Peoria or El Mirage to help as well.

"It's very commendable that the owner stepped up to do this and serve meals until we get into the new place," Chart said.

Mitchell Vantrease may be reached at 876-2526 or e-mail mvantrease@yourwestvalley.com.

Bridging the gap between young and old

Senior center event brings different generations together

By **ANNE RYMAN**
Sun Cities Independent

Eight-year-old Nicholas Pond sits at a table in the Olive Branch Senior Center surrounded by senior citizens, alternating between bites of a bologna and cheese sandwich and a nectarine.

An unusual site in a place known for catering to older adults?

Not since last year, when children — ages 5 to 9 — from Sun Health Child Development Center began visiting the senior center regularly as part of Intergenerational Day.

The program helps bridge the



Sun City resident Loretta McCann shares lunch with Kristine Smith, 8, as part of Intergenerational Day at the Olive Branch Senior Center.

gap between youngsters and senior citizens and benefits both age groups, says Jamie Davis, director of the Sun Health Child Development Center.

“We entertain them and they entertain us,” she says.

But fun and entertainment are not the only goals of the program, she adds. Intergenerational Day helps the children, who are sons and daughters of Sun Health Corp. employees, build self-esteem.

“It’s by reaching out they (children) get good self-esteem. The more they can be helpers the better they feel about themselves because they’re learning new skills and want to try them out.”

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Some senior citizens who come to the center on Intergenerational Day say they like the presence of young people.

"I enjoy the children when they come in every month. I feel I'm surrounded by family. I don't have anyone — no children and no family," Sun City resident Loretta McCann says.

A recent visit by Kyle Dickinson, 7, and Jeremy France, 8, reminded Peoria resident Frances Wilccynski of her great-grandchildren who live in Michigan.

"One of them is quiet like Brandon and the other is mouthy like Michael," she said as she shared photos of her great-grandchildren with the two boys.

Generally, the children are well received, although some senior citizens talk to the children more than others.

"Some (children) were here last year and are more familiar with the setting. Some are used to it and others are not," says Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch Senior Center director.

Among the comments Ms. Wixson has heard from children after their visits:

■ "Just because they're old doesn't mean they don't know anything."

■ "They can do more than we can do."

■ "They eat good lunches."

Decades may separate the two generations, but a recent topic of conversation seemed to appeal to all ages: the Phoenix Suns defeated by the Chicago Bulls in the NBA Finals.

The children visit the center from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. one Thursday a month. Once at the center, they join the seniors in low-impact aerobic exercise, make crafts, walk around the Sun Bowl and return to the center for lunch. Last week, many of them heard accordion music for the first time.

"This is my first time here. It's great. I like the music," said Nicholas Pond as he listened to a traditional polka. The senior center, he says, is a lot different than other places.

"The music is different plus this place doesn't have Nintendo."

Kristine Smith, 8, likes the senior center because the people remind her of her own grandparents.

As well as the Olive Branch Senior Center, children from the development center visit the Carillons, Royal Oaks and Sun Health Care Center.

Ms. Davis, a strong advocate of intergenerational programs, says it is important for young children to be with seniors.

"Some don't get to see their grandparents very often."

Program finds jobs for retirees

Placement center taps volumes of senior workers

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Retirement isn't for everyone in the nation's most famous senior community.

With higher costs of living and lower interest rates on their investments, many new Sun City residents can't afford not to work, Joanne Sadek said.

"We've seen the younger group of people move in and they find it's harder to live on their retirement," said Sadek, volunteer coordinator of the Senior Employment Placement Program at the Olive Branch Senior Center.

And there are also those who simply find they have too much time on their hands without a regular job, Sadek said.

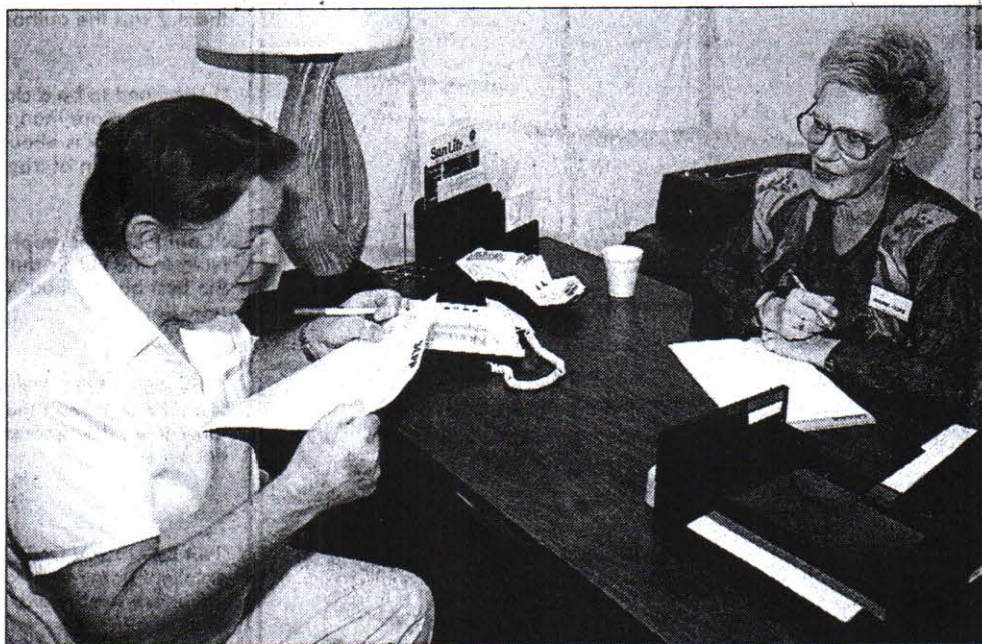
"There are a lot of retirees that find out ... that retirement is not all they expected," she said.

The employment program, which began last week at the center, attempts to match the needs of local employers with the talent of area residents looking for part-time jobs.

"Why not use your own resources in your community?" asked Ivy Wixson, director of the senior center.

Sadek said she and Wixson made a presentation to the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce meeting last week and discovered that there is a lot of interest in the program from local businesses.

"We got back to the office on Tuesday after the chamber meeting



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

John Sidelinger of Sun City West studies a job application with JoAnne Sadek, a senior employment counselor at the Olive Branch Senior Center, Sun City.

and we'd had a number of phone calls from employers offering jobs," Sadek said.

Sun City is "an untapped wealth" of older workers who are sought-after by employers because they are experienced and have a good work ethic, she said.

"I think you find with seniors that need or want to go back to work, that they are very dependable workers," Sadek said.

A half-dozen employers and an equal number of job-seekers have registered with the free service in its first week of operation, she said. "What we're hoping to do is get the two together."

Jobs which have been listed and requested include housekeeping,

secretarial and technical writing positions.

"We're anticipating that we're going to be quite busy," Sadek said.

The Senior Employment Placement Program is aimed at helping those who are 55 and older find employment.

Sadek said she is targeting part-time opportunities but hopes to expand and list full-time and temporary positions as well.

The non-profit service is free to job-hunters and employers.

The program coordinator will be at the senior center, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., from 9 a.m. to noon Mondays and Wednesdays and at other times by appointment.

For information call 974-6797.

Sun Health assumes center management

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Sun Health Corp. will assume management of the Olive Branch Senior Center Thursday without fanfare.

"We don't anticipate any changes at all. We're going to proceed as we have. The programs here now will be here still," said Ivy Glinski-Wixson, senior center director.

"We're just going to continue and try to make it even better," she said.

Since opening in 1988, the senior center has operated under the auspices of the Sun Cities Area Community Council. Under the terms of a contract with the Area Agency on Aging, the community council was the center's sponsor and Sun Health its operations manager.

The senior center, in the Sun Bowl Plaza at 107th and Peoria avenues, offers Sun City residents reduced-price lunches daily, health screening workshops, daily lunches, exercise and craft classes and a variety of recreational activities.

The center served 21,000 lunches during fiscal 1992-93, 2,000 more than the previous year, Glinski-Wixson said.

Sun Health manages Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital in Sun City, Del E. Webb Memorial Hospital in Sun City West and health-care programs and facilities in the retirement communities.

The community council is severing ties with the senior center because the agency has accomplished what it set out to do — implement and foster a community center for Sun City residents, Glinski-Wixson said.

The community council's role is to

assess and fulfill needs in a community. "When a program (like the senior center) is standing on its feet, the community council lets the program go."

Donations to the center previously channeled through the community council will go directly to the center.

The senior center receives about \$100,000 annually from the Area Agency on Aging for operating expenses. A Maricopa County Social Services grant that provides \$20,000 annually toward the center's lease payments will expire next fiscal year. The balance of the lease payments, plus insurance and other facility costs — about \$20,000 — is solicited from community organizations and individuals, said Mary Ellen Potash, executive vice president of extended care services for Sun Health.

The Sun City Community Fund has donated \$18,000 toward the center's 1993-1994 lease bill, Potash said.

Because additional funds are needed to augment operational and site costs, Sun Health officials already have begun exploring fund-raising mechanisms, she said.

The first in what likely will become a series of events benefiting the center — a dance revue and dinner — is set from 5 to 7 p.m. July 24. Tickets are \$6.95 per person.

"We knew that we had to start doing something in July to start raising money," Glinski-Wixson said, adding, "Sun Health has a lot of good ways of raising money."

For information on the senior center, call 974-6797.

Olive Branch expands food service to shut-ins

Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — A new Olive Branch Senior Center program offers a table for one, no waiting, for area residents who can't leave their homes.

The center's Food Emergency Express Delivery service — Operation FEED for short — began without publicity last month, said Ivy Wixson, executive director of Olive Branch, 10765 W. Peoria Ave.

The delivery service is intended to serve short-term needs, Wixson said. Operation FEED can deliver a hot meal for as many as three days for sick residents or those just returning from the hospital who haven't had time to register with Meals on Wheels, she said.

"Usually if they call that morning we can deliver a meal by noontime," Wixson said.

"It's just available to fill the void."

Sun City Meals on Wheels usually takes a day or two before it can begin service, said Jim Hauer, Meals on Wheels president.

Wixson said her service would deliver to Sun City, Youngtown and possibly Sun City West if there is a demand for it.

To sign up for the short-term delivery program, residents need to be referred by a social worker or hospital, she said.

In its first month of operation, volunteers have delivered about 15 meals to participants at the senior center who have been unable to come in for their lunches.

Wixson said she will send out a flyer about the program to local hospitals and social-service organizations to explain the program.

"There's not too many people that know about it," she said.

The senior center serves hot lunch



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Verna Baden, a volunteer at Olive Branch Senior Center, dishes up food to be delivered to a bedridden resident. Meals are delivered on a short term basis to meet the needs of the center's clients.

to an average of 75 people during the summer and 95 people during the winter, she said. The delivered food is the same as that served at the center and clients are billed the same \$2.25 price.

Wixson said the center's volunteers donate the value of their time and the gasoline they use while delivering the meals.

SPECIAL REPORT



Photo by TYSON KUHRT/Sun Cities Independent

Maricopa County's financial crisis means less operating funds for the Olive Branch Senior Center, located in the Sun Bowl Shopping Center at 10765 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City. The shortfall has sent senior center officials scrambling to find new sources of revenue. The center provides daily activities and hot nutritious lunches for seniors throughout the Northwest Valley.

SENIOR CENTER SHORTFALL

Lack of county aid sends local center searching for funds

By **KATHLEEN WINSTEAD**
Sun Cities Independent

Maricopa County's financial woes are no longer affecting only county employees and recipients of services provided by the county — the financial crunch is now impacting Sun City residents.

The county was \$67 million in the red by the end of fiscal year 1993-'94, a condition which has affected the sheriff's department, the county's health care system and, now, Sun City's own Olive Branch Senior Center.

Ivy Wixson, director of the Olive Branch Senior Center, says the center applied for \$20,000 from the county last April but has yet to see even one cent.

"They (county officials) said we'd get it and we haven't heard anything. In the past we used that money as seed money to cover half the rent," says Ms. Wixson.

The senior center was established by the Sun Cities Area Community Council after a study conducted in 1987 revealed the need for such a facility.

The senior center was initially located at a Northwest Valley church before it moved into its present location at the Sun

Bowl Shopping Center. The county assisted the facility by providing one lump of money when it first opened its doors.

A portion of the money was used to renovate the center while the remainder was to be used over a five-year period toward rent on the center's building, Ms. Wixson says.

"We ran out in 1993," she says. "So we don't have that money right now."

Rent on the organization's building in the Sun Bowl Shopping Plaza is

See ■ **SHORTFALL**, Page 12

\$38,000 a year, Ms. Wixson says.

In addition to relying on the county for funding, senior center officials are also dependent upon the Sun City Community Fund which usually donates \$20,000 to the facility annually.

"I'm applying for funds (from the Sun City Community Fund) as we always do," Ms. Wixson says. The center will not know the status of its application until summer.

In a typical year, the Olive Branch Senior Center, which is managed by the Sun Health Corp., receives \$77,000 from the Area Agency on Aging; \$43,000 from donations made by meal recipients; \$20,000 from the county; \$20,000 from the Sun City Community Fund; \$15,000 in donations from area residents, and 61 cents per meal served from the United States Department of Agriculture.

If neither funding from the county nor the Community Fund materializes, Ms. Wixson admits the facility could find itself in dire straits.

"I don't know what we'd do," she says. The senior center now is "just barely" making it, she adds. "We will need donations even more."

Unlike other organizations which typically decrease services when sources of funding evaporate, "even with the decrease in funding from the county, we've taken on additional programs," Ms. Wixson says.

The Olive Branch Senior Center offers area residents a variety of programs and services designed to provide socialization, recreation and companionship opportunities. The senior center also offers hot meals, supplemental food programs and health screenings which are

conducted by the Sun Health Staying Well Center.

Sun Health also provides the facility with "in kind" services including volunteer training, maintenance and housekeeping assistance, accounting and computer training, says Jean Kiernat, interim administrator for the senior center.

"Many people aren't aware of how much" assistance the Sun Health Corp. provides to the center, Ms. Kiernat says.

If funds from the county are not forthcoming, Sun Health officials hope area residents will step in to help the center.

"We believe the community has to be involved. This is a partnership

and a sharing," Ms. Kiernat says.

"People think it's just for the needy but we know there are a lot of lonely people in isolation. It's open to everyone."

For lunch reservations, call 974-6797 at least 24 hours in advance. A lunch donation of \$2.25 is accepted.

To raise money for the center, a pancake breakfast will be held 7-10 a.m. Jan. 14 at the center. Tickets are \$2 each and walk-ins are welcome.

Donations may be mailed to the Olive Branch Senior Center, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City, Ariz., 85351.

Bocce club delivers for Olive Branch

By J.J. McCORMACK
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Long-term stability is the goal of a fund-raising committee established for the financially strapped Olive Branch Senior Center.

The committee has initiated an internal campaign which has raised \$5,500 of a \$10,000 goal in its first two weeks, all from patrons of the center and their friends and relatives.

The people who use the center "know best the advantages the center provides," said Lee Weingarden, a center volunteer and fund-raising committee member.

A series of monthly benefit spaghetti dinners sponsored by the Bocce Club of Sun City kicks off March 31. The committee hopes to make about \$1,500 per dinner.

Other fund-raising opportunities being explored include a request for a grant from the Recreation Centers of Sun City, said Pete Cipriano, a former recreation center board member who once proposed a senior center be operated by the recreation centers.

A member of the fund-raising committee formed a month ago, Cipriano said the senior center has done tons and tons of good for a lot of people" since it began operating five years ago, first under the sponsorship of the Sun Cities Area Community Council and now as an affiliate of Sun Health.

"It gives people a reason for living and getting out of bed in the morning," Cipriano said.

Also serving on the fund-raising committee are Gene Gravlin, Peg Markovic and Ivy Wixson, executive director of the senior center.

The committee intends to bring



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Rose Marie Kirchen and Eloy Perea volunteer in the kitchen of the Olive Branch Senior Center every Tuesday. Kirchen also works the Brown Bag program on Thursdays.

some fund-raising continuity to the senior center — "something that can assure a flow of funds, because they aren't going to flow from heaven," Cipriano said.

The senior center, which is located in Sun Bowl Plaza West at 107th and Peoria avenues, has fallen on hard times since the loss of a \$20,000 annual grant from Maricopa County, Wixson said.

The \$20,000 loss was offset this year with the help of fund-raising activities, including a matching pro-

gram, a pancake breakfast and steak fry. The Daily News-Sun included the senior center in its annual "Caring and Sharing" holiday giving project, which netted between \$2,000 and \$3,000.

Proceeds of the internal campaign and spaghetti dinners will offset next year's operating budget, Wixson said. Additional revenue reductions are anticipated because of pending cuts in federal programs and budget crunches at agencies that help support the center, including the Area

Agency on Aging and the Sun City Community Fund.

Wixson said program cuts are not expected, because many of the center's nutrition, health and recreational programs are run by volunteers and because the center has been resourceful in getting the equipment and supplies it needs donated by businesses and non-profit groups.

The Sun Valley Gleaners, for example, donated new tires for the center van, she said.

Cipriano said fund-raising activities will be ongoing to keep money coming in while the committee studies other funding options. The spaghetti dinners may be scheduled twice monthly if they are well attended, he said.

"We don't want to wait and see what (money) we were going to get from where," he said.

"There's nothing wrong with us helping ourselves either. It's good for the soul," Cipriano said.

Lack of awareness about the senior center and the needs of the some-650 people who participate in center programs annually may stall fund-raising attempts initially, but Cipriano said he hopes as awareness increases community support for the center will heighten.

He said he has invited members of the recreation centers board to attend the first spaghetti dinner, an all-you-can-eat affair featuring a strolling musician and the cooking artistry of master chef Harold Shapiro.

Tickets for the dinner are \$5 and are available at the senior center. Dinner will be served in two seatings — at 4:30 and 6 p.m. March 31. For information, call 974-6797.

There's a whole lot of friendship going around at Olive Branch

If you're not yet convinced that people need people, pay a visit to the Olive Branch Senior Center. *1-3-96*

I spent a couple of hours there during lunch last week, and I had trouble figuring out who were the volunteer helpers and who were the patrons, the ones being served.

That's because they blend as one. No phony titles and no puffed-up egos here. "Fellowship for all" should be their motto.

The Olive Branch, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., is the only senior center in Sun City.

There are plenty of recreation centers

here, more geared to physical activities like bowling and golf than the Olive Branch, where the median age is 78.

"We deal more with socialization and personal interaction," said Ivy Wixson, manager of Olive Branch. "People get help here — lunches, legal assistance, health screenings. And there's a lot of friendships formed.

"We're kind of an extension of the recreation centers, but we're also unique because we serve food and address emotional and isolation issues."

Freda Rice, a 75-year-old Youngtown resident and one of the Olive Branch's 120 volunteers, didn't mince words when I asked her what the senior center meant to her.

"If it weren't for this place, I'd probably be popping up daisies," Rice said.

Rice started coming here a couple of years ago at the urging of Wixson, who

met Rice through a mutual friend.

"I was going through a lot of depression," Rice said. "Coming here gave me a reason to live. I feel lost when I'm away for any length of time."

Rice, you see, started as a patron but now helps run the center's program for the visually impaired and does odd jobs that have to be done, like making coffee and collecting lunch tickets.

Because Sun City is not incorporated, the Olive Branch receives no city funding. It depends on the generosity of several Sun City organizations, including the Sun City Community Fund, the Sun Health Foundation and the Sun City Host Lions, to help meet its \$300,000 annual budget.

The center does receive federal funds, but for the upcoming fiscal year it must raise \$78,000 to cover costs, Wixson said.

Volunteers and patrons make crafts to help defray costs, and the center holds

fund-raising breakfasts, dinners and dances to raise money.

It also features a wall-mounted year-round Christmas tree in the lobby that is made up of silk roses and the accompanying names of donors who paid \$25 each for the decorative flowers.

At last count, the tree was covered with 280 roses, for a total of \$7,000.

About 900 patrons use the Olive Branch's facilities in a given year, and an average of 110 come here each day in the winter. Customers are asked to pay \$2.25 for lunch, but it is not mandatory.

They pay \$2.04 per lunch on average, or \$46,563 in all for last year, Wixson said.

Betty McKenzie, 83, is the hostess in the dining room, but she does more than greet people.

She also entertains them.

"Honey, there would be no center here without the volunteers," McKenzie said.

"I sing and dance and greet them. I also visit people in hospitals and in their homes."

If you think McKenzie doesn't fit the fellowship theme here and is tooting her own horn, read on:

"I had a bum knee and was away from here for a long time," she said. "I felt miserable. I ended up coming back on crutches because this place keeps me going and keeps me happy."

Leo Dunnick, 90, is a regular lunch customer.

"This is the place to be," he said.

"There's nice fellowship and good food here. What else do you need?"

COLUMNIST



HERB
WHITNEY

Herb Whitney writes about the west Valley. He can be reached at 780-7129.

Thursday, August 10, 2000 THE WESTER

County donates \$20,000 to Olive Branch Senior Center

Maricopa Supvr. Jan Brewer delivered another year of funding for the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center last week. The grant, totaling \$20,000, is to support beneficial services for elderly area residents.

The grant for the senior center has been approved from County funds for the seventh year in a row. The funds will provide assistance for the Center's congregate meals program, multipurpose center operations, pantry program, senior legal assistance program, home delivery meal

program and the senior employment placement program.

"I am truly excited to have been able to deliver significant funds for the Olive Branch Senior Center over the last four years," said Supervisor Brewer. "The center provides many senior residents with vital services and programs to enhance their quality of life, I am really proud

to have helped play a part in this essential local program."

The Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center specifically provides a number of needed services and programs specifically designed to help Northwest Valley seniors enrich their lives physically, mentally and emotionally, while also assisting them to become self-reliant.

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT AUGUST 2-8, 2000

EXTENDING AN OLIVE BRANCH

Senior center awarded \$20,000 county grant

By **MIKE RUSSO**
Independent Newspapers

For the seventh straight year the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center has received a county grant to fund assorted senior-oriented programs.

Maricopa County Supervisor Jan Brewer announced last week that the center, located in the Sun Bowl Shopping Center at 107th and Peoria avenues, will receive \$20,000 from the county. The funds will provide assistance for the center's congregate meals program, multi-purpose center operations, pantry program, senior legal assistance program, home delivery

meal program and senior employment placement program, according to Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch executive director.

Ms. Wixson was delighted to learn of the grant.

"We have been getting county funding for seven years," Ms. Wixson said. "Ed King got the ball rolling when he was supervisor and Jan Brewer has been great in continuing.

"It really makes a huge difference in the programs we are able to offer," she continued.

"I am truly excited to have been able to deliver significant funds for the Olive Branch Senior Center over the last four years,"

Supervisor Brewer said. "The center provides many senior residents with vital services and programs to enhance their quality of life. I am really proud to have helped play a part in this essential local program"

Funds will be distributed to the center on a quarterly basis. "We have been notified by the county that we will be receiving the money but we have not received any of it yet," Ms. Wixson said.

The center offers a number of programs and services to enhance the lives of northwest Valley seniors physically, mentally and emotionally.



Photo by TODD FARRAN/Independent Newspapers
Sun City residents enjoy their lunch and entertainment at Olive Branch Senior Center.

11-20-11

MORE THAN 100 MEALS: United Way helps Olive Branch

JOHN SOKOLICH
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It's the food. It's the learning. It's the community. It's the friendship.

But it would all be for nothing if it wasn't for the Valley of the Sun United Way.

Five days a week for the past 12 years, the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City welcomes more than 100 residents for lunch.

"This is my second home," said center participant and volunteer Tim Ayres, who coordinates the center's transportation for the visually impaired. "The fellowship you get from the other participants is amazing, and everybody mixes well with each other."

The center's gourmet meals, made fresh daily, are nutritional

and filling enough to hold diners over until the next day.

"It's definitely not a soup kitchen," head chef Larry Long said with a smile during lunch time.

But all joking aside, Long takes his job seriously, according to center manager Ivy Wixson, because he knows that for some seniors, this will be the only meal they eat that day.

The Olive Branch Senior Center offers many programs to Sun City seniors, including computer classes, job placement and entertainment, but its main focus is the food — and plenty of it.

"We benefit from the United Way greatly, as you can see," Wixson said, looking over the full lunch hall. "If we didn't get the funding, none of this would be possible. For many seniors this is their home away from home since 1988."

Opening 12 years ago, the center depends on the help of United Way, which now incorporates the Sun City Community Fund, to purchase some food and continue its programs. In addition to the weekday lunches, the center also supplies food boxes to needy residents and delivers meals to shut-ins.

"We can always use additional funds," Wixson said, "because we are not in an incorporated area where we would normally get funding from a city. We pay the rent on the building and all the utilities."

Wixson said the center has expanded its programs to meet the changing needs of the residents, but each new program requires more funding. Just added to the center is a computer center and a basic computer

Center branches out for lunch



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Marian Keller delivers meals to hungry seniors at the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City. The center depends on many volunteers.

course geared toward seniors.

"We offer the basic course because we found that even beginner classes that are offered elsewhere in the community are sometimes too advanced for residents," Wixson said.

But because the computer program, and other activities, are so beneficial to residents, Wixson said the United Way is willing to assist with funding.

"They have a good process of screening the programs that they will fund, and we would not be able to function at the level we do without the United Way's funds," she said.

Another reason the center depends so much on United Way funding is because every year, more and more people come to it.

One such person is Donald Mack, a handicapped resident who rides his scooter to the center for lunch and assists with cleaning up the tables afterward.

Mack used to go to a different

center, but for the past year he has come to Olive Branch because of the convenience and friendship he has with other members, Wixson said.

Ayres said he looks at his volunteer work at the center more as a service than a job, and there is a lot of camaraderie between all the volunteers.

The center has about 240 volunteers who staff the programs. Many volunteers spend their time serving lunch and preparing the meals, but some teach classes and staff the center's gift shop.

A proud statistic of the center, and one that couldn't be reached without United Way's help, is that it has never had to turn anyone away.

"We are all grateful with the money we get every year from the fund, and it is with pride that we try to provide these services," Wixson said. "We try to make every day a little better for the seniors who come by."

The future of America



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Seniors eat lunch at the Olive Branch Senior Center. Census 2000 data show that 14 percent of Sun City residents are 85 or older, reflecting the longer life spans of senior Americans.

AN AGING NATION: Sun Cities stats give glimpse of America's future

BRUCE ELLISON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Census findings showing the aging of the Sun Cities could make the communities a textbook example of what the nation will face in dealing with the benefits — and drawbacks — of people living longer.

In Sun City, the nation's first planned retirement community, there are more than 5,500 people 85 or older, or about 14 percent of all residents, Census 2000 revealed today. Nationally, only 1.5 percent of all people are 85 or older.

That's more than 10 times the number of those 85 and older living

elsewhere in Arizona and is an increase of almost 40 percent from 1990.

The data also show, as expected, the population of Sun City West is growing older, while the median age in Sun City remains almost unchanged in the decade from April 1990 to April 2000.

"Sun City for a long time has been a microcosm of the future," said Sharon Harper of Peoria, who with her partner, Dr. Harold Gries, developed the Plaza del Rio retirement complex.

"The demographic changes in Sun City and how they're handled could suggest what lies ahead elsewhere in the nation — and what can be done about them," said Harper, a pioneer in Arizona in developing campuses for retirees. Harper also is credited with developing the state's Senior Living

Cluster, which pushed efforts to establish an Office of Senior Living.

Both Sun Cities are demographically unusual for two reasons.

First, they are age-restricted, so most of the population starts living here at age 55 or older.

Second, both communities now are completed and there is no room for additional people to arrive and change the makeup of the population unless someone dies or moves away.

As the residents age, they generally remain in the community. But because women, in general, live a decade or more longer than their spouses, the death of one person in a marriage does not open up a dwelling unit for a younger newcomer.



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Evelyn Kortie, 56, takes the empty plates from James Mannis, left, 80, and Floyd Whitney, 75, at the Olive Branch Senior Center.

OVER

Instead, the population falls while the age level increases, which is why Sun City West, which followed the original Sun City development by 18 years, has become older, rising in median age from 69.1 years in 1990 to 73.2 years in 2000.

That trend is likely to continue for another decade, as residents in their 70s age in place and few new arrivals move in.

In Sun City, by contrast, that bulge already is passing. There are many more one-person households than in Sun City West, and with the death of the second spouse, more homes are available for newcomers.

A couple in their late 50s or early 60s — typical of today's retirement choices — replaces the one 80-year old, pushing down the median age.

The bulge hasn't quite peaked, since the median age in Sun City rose to 75 from 74.5 a decade earlier, but unless life expectancies rise sharply in the coming decade, the community will quickly become younger.

In April 2000, Sun City had 5,527 people who were

age 85 or older, or almost 14 percent of the population. Those numbers are up from 3,324 people age 85 or older in 1990, or 9 percent of the population.

Statewide, the number of residents 85 or older is just 1.3 percent of the population, or a total of 68,525 people. That number, however, was an 81 percent increase over the same state statistic in 1990.

In Sun City West, those 85 and older rose to 1,576 from 327 a decade earlier, an increase of about 450 percent. But those older residents made up just 6 percent of the total Sun City West population in 2000.

The number of the very old in Sun City West already likely has risen, since 35 percent of all residents there last year were already 75 to 84 years old. That is the same percentage of 75- to 84-year-olds in Sun City.

Women easily outnumber men in both communities. In older Sun City, it's about three women for two men; in Sun City West, it's about 55 percent to 45 percent.

The large number of the very old in Sun City has both social and economic implications for the community.

● For instance, those in their 80s and beyond tend to have less retirement income than newer retirees.

Because of the way pension plans were crafted before 1974, and because fewer women worked in the 1950s and 1960s than more recently, income is less for those residents, meaning they could encounter financial problems.

● Transportation can be a problem for those in their 80s, as various infirmities eventually make them decide against owning an automobile. That means a greater emphasis on public or on-demand transit services.

● The very old, often no longer as active as they once were, become minimal users of Recreation Centers facilities. They may become averse to paying Recreation Centers dues, and vote against improvements in facilities they no longer use.

● Health deteriorates with age, and problems compound, increasing the need

for social services such as home care, aid with shopping and adult daycare.

● Shopping can become more complex, especially as the profusion of large chain store outlets along Bell Road gradually supplants local stores that were uncrowded and easy to reach. The battle over the closing last year of the Safeway store at 107th and Peoria avenues is an example.

● With limited incomes and fears of the need of nursing home care, some of the very old let property deteriorate, not from lack of pride but because they can no longer do the work themselves, have trouble hiring help, and may not be able to afford it.

But that social and economic situation isn't new, said Tom T. Rex, a business researcher at Arizona State University.

"That's very close to what happened in the early 1980s, when the real estate slump hit," he said. "It came at the same time the first group of Sun Citians, who arrived when they were 65, were turning 85."

Home sales were in a slump, stores were closing in local shopping centers, the Recreation Centers were in a budget crisis. But "it did turn around," Rex said.

In part, the turn-around came from the influx of new retirees, in their 60s, who bought inexpensive homes in the retirement community. The same trend is happening now, but the retirees are even younger, usually in their late 50s.

Some actions already have been taken to deal with the 85-plus numbers, experts say.

At Interfaith Services, established 20 years ago, "the median age of the clients we serve today is 84, so we know the problems and how to deal with them," said Michelle Dionisio, executive director.

Still, she said, "there will be an impact on all the social service agencies because there needs to be a support system for these people, to keep them staying at home as long as possible."

One problem with providing that system, Dionisio said, is the lack of workers, either paid or volunteer, to provide the shopping trips, day-care staff, bus drivers and other help.

"It's a challenge, yes, but also an opportunity we have to find new ways of doing this," she said. "And it will force policy makers to look at the problem of aging Americans rather than overlooking it."

Harper said the increased availability of congregate care and group living arrangements in Sun City, Sun City West, Peoria and now Surprise, would be a help.

Even though such residents are no longer "at home," they aren't institutionalized in the traditional sense, she said.

One benefit to the congregate living arrangements is that expenses tend to stay fixed over longer periods, and there is no sudden cost such as for a new roof or water heater.

"That lets people on limited or fixed incomes plan their yearly budgets much more easily," without the fear of an unexpected expense, Harper said.

The homes that were in poor repair in the late 1980s, and those in such shape now, increasingly are being bought by people who want to fix them up, as a do-it-yourself project, or with contractors, as a drive along Sun City's residential streets shows today.

The 1980s crisis also led to the formation of the Sun City Visitors Center and its efforts to promote the community after Del Webb Corp. completed its work there.

In Sun City West, community leaders have the experience of Sun City in the '80s to study, and have taken steps to forestall a similar crisis as that community ages.

The Sun City West Recreation Centers' budget is being increased — despite vocal opposition — to pay for maintenance and improvements, and both the Centers and the Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association have studied the potential for long-range problems in the community and options for prevention.

PORA collected funds for, and opened, a visitors center five years ago.

County buttresses Olive Branch

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: \$20,000 contract to be spread across six senior-center programs

STAFF REPORT

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors has awarded a \$20,000 contract to the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center to provide comprehensive support services to elderly adults.

The goal of the program is to increase the level of self-reliance and decrease the need for public support for the elderly. The Olive Branch Senior Center is a nonprofit affiliate of Sun Health and a provider of health-care

services to West Valley communities.

Chairwoman Jan Brewer said the center provides numerous things to support people in need.

"Maricopa County is delighted to be able to provide monetary support to the Olive Branch Senior Center," Brewer said. "The center provides an invaluable need in our community by providing comprehensive support services to senior individuals while assisting them to become self-reliant."

County funds were approved for six areas of the center's operations for this fiscal year — the congregate-meals program, multipurpose center operations, the Pantry Program, the senior legal-assistance program, the home-delivery meal program and the Senior Employment Placement Program.

Ivy Wixson, a manager at

Olive Branch, said the donation is greatly appreciated.

"It means a lot," Wixson said. "Every bit we receive is vital to the operation of the center."

Wixson said Brewer and the board of supervisors stepped up to the plate.

"I'm very grateful they saw the need here," she said. "It's not seeing the need, but acting on the need. We appreciate everything they do."

The \$20,000, Wixson said, will help enhance programs, and ultimately the quality of life, for all the participants at the senior center.

"We're so glad that we are able to touch the lives of so many people in the community," Brewer said.

The Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center provides a number of needed services and programs specifically designed to help Northwest Valley seniors enrich their lives, both physically

and emotionally.

Often the center meets crucial individual needs that include a hot, nutritious meal, supplemental food programs or health screenings. Equally important, but not always as obvious, are the needs of isolated senior citizens for socialization, companionship and mental stimulation.

The services the center provides help participants remain healthy, active and independent while providing them with a nurturing and stimulating environment. The center, conveniently located in the Sun Bowl Shopping Plaza at Peoria and 107th avenues, is the only such facility in Sun City.

Sun Health also operates the Boswell and Del Webb memorial hospitals, as well as other health-care services, including the Sun Health Care Center, Sun Health



JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

John Trace, computer instructor at the Olive Branch Senior Center, helps Lil Copas familiarize herself with her Internet browser Monday.

Home Care Services, Sun Health Community Education and Wellness Services and Health Residence for Alzheimer's Care, Sun Health Care Services and Residence, Sun Health Research Institute.

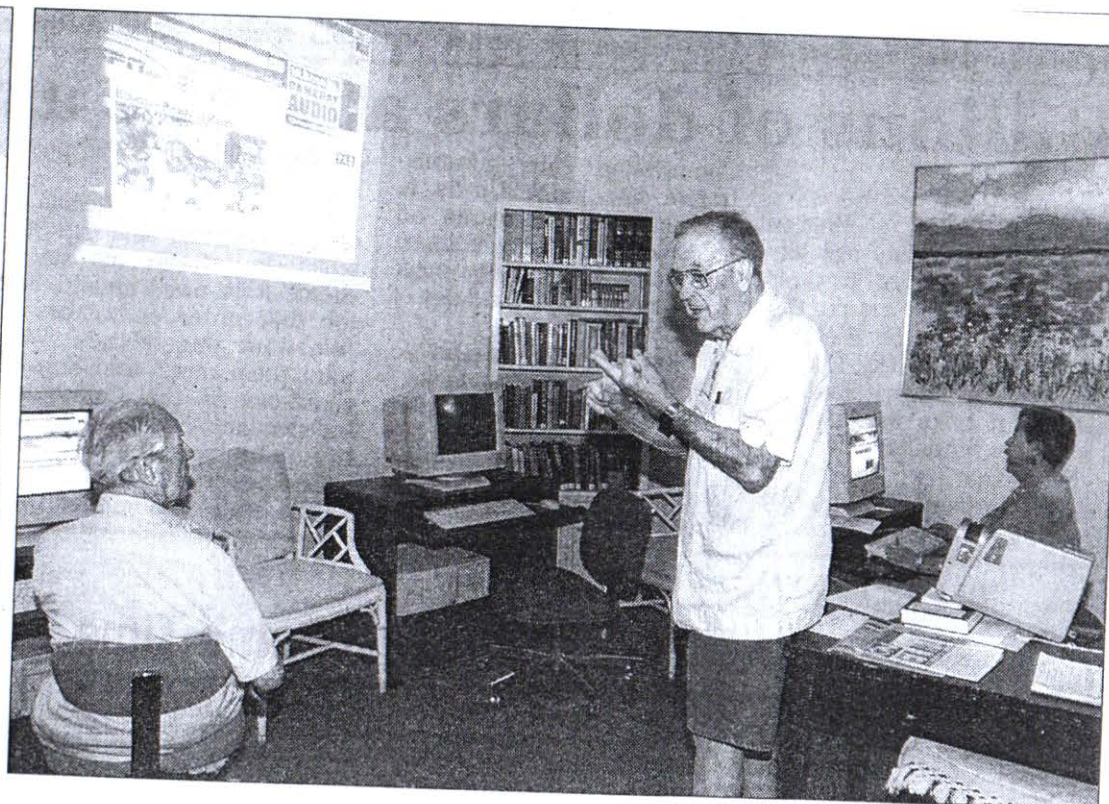
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VF OLIVE BRANCH SENIOR CENTER



Volunteers Julia Gilchrist, left, John Korak and Jim Campbell chop vegetables for today's meal at the Olive Branch Senior Center early today.

MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN



John Trace conducts a computer class Monday at Olive Branch Senior Center.

JOY LAMBERT/DAILY NEWS-SUN

SUN CITIES INDEPENDENT JULY 25-31, 2001

Olive Branch Senior Center receives grant for van from Area Agency on Aging

Sun Health's Olive Branch Senior Center soon will have a new set of wheels, thanks to a grant from the Area Agency on Aging.

AAA, a funding source for more than 40 senior centers Valley-wide, recently requested proposals from those who perceived a need for transportation support on site. Olive Branch was one of seven chosen to receive a new van, with delivery expected within 90 days.

The van will be used for transporting passengers and to carry home-delivered and mobile meals, according to Ivy Wixson, center manager.

"The timing couldn't be better, as

our need is great right now," Mrs. Wixson said. "We have a second route now for our home-delivered meal program and for the past two years, we have been relying on an old van donated from the estate of a 92-year-old lady who was one of our participants. This van has been a blessing, but it's on its last legs. Also we'll be able to help people in the area who need transportation to the center if Red Cross isn't able to provide it.

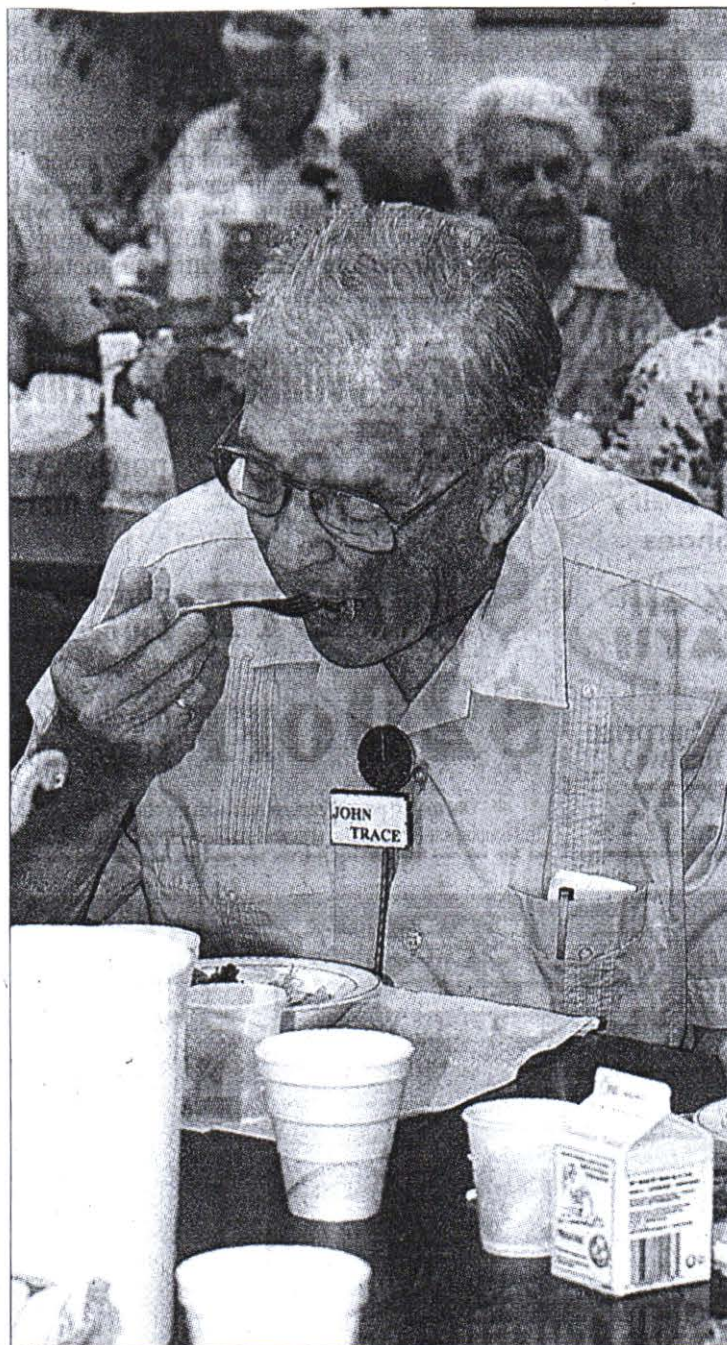
"Needless to say, we really appreciate this support from the Area Agency on Aging," Mrs. Wixson said.

This has been a fruitful year for

the senior center, which recently received grants totaling \$197,000. The donations include: \$117,000 from AAA, \$60,000 from Sun City Community Fund/Valley of the Sun United Way and \$20,000 from Maricopa County.

The center relies upon grants and donations to support its offerings to local seniors, including its congregational meal program, home-delivered meal program, senior employment placement program, multi-service senior center operation and the pantry program as well as health promotion and senior transportation.

Daily News-Sun • Thursday, Aug. 23, 2001



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

John Trace, 91, eats lunch Wednesday at the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City, where he teaches beginning computer classes and eats lunch every day.

Host of options serves up hearty meals for seniors

THOUGHTS ON FOOD: Challenge to stay well-fed increases with age

JEANNE WINOGRAD
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Two years ago — with his wife's health unexpectedly failing — John Trace found a new way to simplify meal preparation while maintaining good nutrition.

The then 90-year-old Sun City resident turned to community groups that provide food services to the homebound and seniors in need.

"Her death was sudden," Trace said. "I used to pick up meals (at Olive Branch Senior Center) and then they started delivering meals to us for the last year she lived, like Meals on Wheels. When she died, I started coming here to eat."

Five days a week for the past 12 years, the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City welcomes more than 100 residents for lunch, but is not the only option for those in need. Meals on Wheels programs — which deliver meals to homebound residents 365 days a year — operate in Sun City with service to Youngtown, and in Sun City West.

Locally, Meals on Wheels

in Sun City operates out of Boswell Hospital and has 240 volunteers serving 200 meals daily in Sun City and Youngtown. The Sun City West Meals on Wheels serves about 80 meals per week, prepared at Del E. Webb Hospital.

While Meals on Wheels is laudable and the only option for some, mobile seniors might not want to use the service as an excuse to stay home all the time. Those who can get out of their houses for a meal with others are likely to find new friendships and companionship. As for Trace, a change in eating habits was part of a new mission in life. Now 91, he is teaching between one and five classes a week at the Olive Branch. He teaches beginning computers, e-mail and Internet courses.

"Oh, my class is expensive, all of \$5 for three sessions or \$2 for one session," quipped Trace, a former school administrator in the American territorial islands in the Pacific.

Trace ticked off items in Olive Branch's balanced meal he had eaten for lunch Monday: tossed salad, orange juice, milk, ham with pineapple, carrots, rice, an apple with strawberries, and "the finest cake you ever saw."

Trace also has met a lady friend at Olive Branch who fixes a light evening meal for the two of them. For breakfast each day, he eats light, "just fruit, a donut or a roll, and coffee."

Bebe Turgeon of Sun City, who is taking Trace's class, also is a volunteer at Olive Branch and eats lunch there on the day she volunteers. When eating out, though, Turgeon and her husband eat only in places that offer discount coupons in the newspaper.

"More restaurants should offer coupons for seniors," Turgeon said.

Also taking Trace's class is Bertie Owens of Sun City, who is single, still cooks for herself and "eats out a lot at Luby's and Mimi's," two senior mainstays. Owens said she sometimes takes home leftovers because the two restaurants serve portions big enough for a second meal.

Meanwhile, Donald J. Mack of Glendale hops onto his electric-powered three-wheeler each day for the six-mile round trip to the Olive Branch.

"I don't use my oven, stove or dishwasher anymore," Mack said. "I use my microwave. On Saturday and Sunday I have eggs and coffee. I might have soup or a couple of sandwiches at night. This is my main meal of the day. Everybody is wonderful here."

Mack's buddy, Clarence Deitmeyer of Sun City, also visits the senior center's lunch room regularly since his wife of 61 years, Kathryn, died last November.

"She taught me how to do the dishes, but she didn't teach me to cook," Deitmeyer said. "I don't cook much. I used to fry a few eggs."

A study by Cornell University researchers published in the May issue of the Journal of Nutrition found that older people who could not obtain adequate food because of poverty and social isolation

OVER



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Irene Glischinski serves seniors lunch at Sun Health's Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City Wednesday, where a communal meal is served for seniors at 11:30 a.m. Monday through-Friday. Only a donation is requested for a complete hot lunch. Many people who no longer cook for themselves patronize the center.

consumed far lower amounts of nutrients such as protein, iron and zinc. As many as two-thirds of senior citizens who live by themselves have poor nutritional habits, according to the American Dietetic Association.

Senior citizens may not like how certain medications alter the taste of their food, or they may resist diet restrictions because they don't want to forgo the pleasure of eating their favorite foods in exchange for lower blood pressure or blood sugar, said Heidi Reichenberger, spokeswoman for the association.

"The big thing most of them miss out on tends to be protein because they may rely on cereal or toast. A lot of older people will have tea and toast for breakfast. But even a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich and a glass of milk is better than having just chicken noodle soup," Reichenberger said.

Aside from a Meals on Wheels program or a communal meal at a senior center, there is another option for seniors who no longer cook for themselves. Retirement homes can provide balanced meals that take the burden off those who don't want to or can't cook, but some seniors don't want to move into such facilities even if the only other option is staying home alone.

Sun Cities Meal Programs

- Sun Health's Olive Branch Senior Center, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City, offers communal lunches as well as a home-delivery program. Call 974-6797.

- The El Mirage Senior Center offers communal lunches and a home-delivery program. Call 937-0500.

- Interfaith Services offers a communal meal served by volunteers once a month in the Sun City West Community Services building, 14495 RH Johnson Blvd. Call 584-4999.

- Red Cross provides transportation to both senior centers. Call 934-4256.

- Sun City Meals on Wheels. Call 974-9430.

- Sun City West Meals on Wheels. Call 214-4233.



JEANNE WINOGRAD/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Donald J. Mack of Glendale, left, drives three miles each way in his battery-powered three-wheeler to get the daily lunch at the Olive Branch Senior Center. Pal Clarence Deitmeyer eats and volunteers at the center because, he says, he knows how to do dishes but not cook.

For \$2.50, pantry serves 'great' meals to needy

By Stephanie A. Miller
The Arizona Republic

Sun City resident Karen Anderson has been a volunteer at the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center for seven years.

The center is like a close-knit community, she said.

"A lot of the people who come here every day consider it a home away from home," she said. "We had one man who called us family."

Anderson volunteers at the center twice a week as a receptionist. She also has participated in the center's food pantry program, which furnishes meals to those in need for a small donation.

"You pay \$2.50 for a meal,"

Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center

Food Pantry Program
Manager, Ivy Wixson.
10765 W. Peoria Ave.,
Sun City.
(623) 974-6797

she said. "And our meals are so great. There's fruit, vegetables and eggs."

The program is a big help, Anderson said.

"Some people come because it's an incentive to help out their grocery bill," the 66-year-old volunteer said.

The food pantry program,

funded by Maricopa County, Valley of the Sun United Way and community donations, operates on food donated by Valley grocers. It provides meals to people 60 years old and older and their spouses. The center serves residents who live in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown.

Each weekday, volunteers sort through donations, which are distributed to the kitchen crew. Under the supervision of the food service director, the staff transforms the donations into a meal.

"What I think is really unique is that we can take food that's been donated by the store and turn it into a meal that looks like it's been prepared by a five-star hotel," said Ivy Wixson, the center's manager.

The program also has home delivery and mobile meal programs for those unable to cook for themselves. The center serves about 30 people in the government-funded mobile program and an estimated 20 people in its home delivery program, whose participants pay for services.

The food pantry program also distributes food boxes daily to those who qualify.

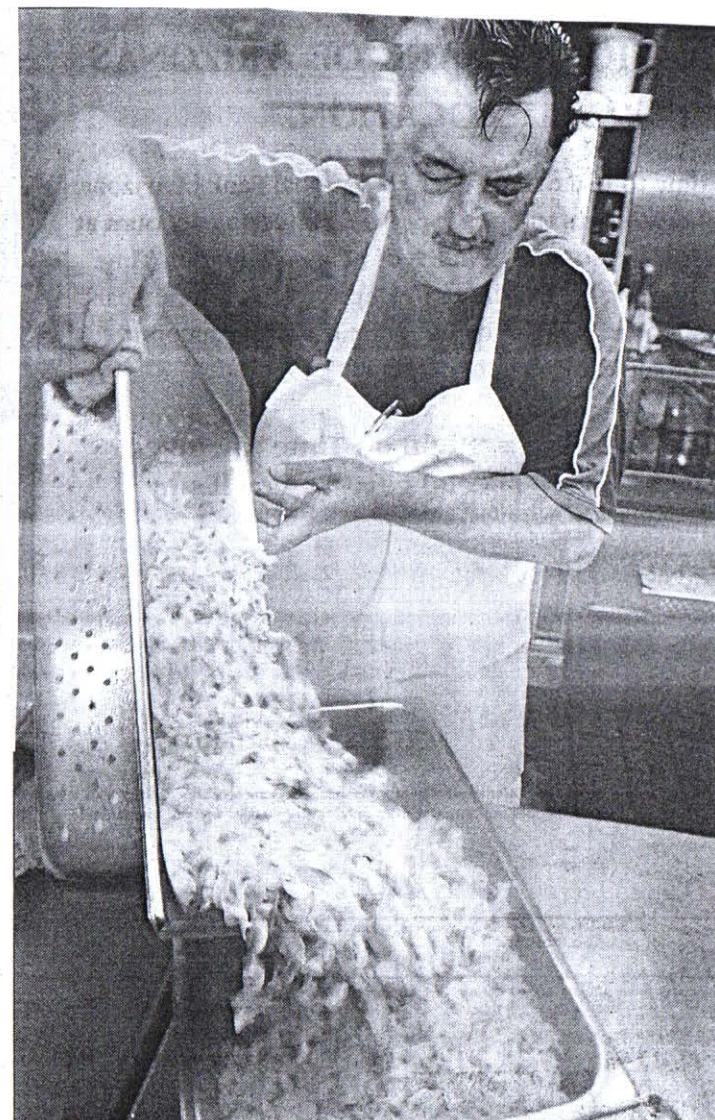


Michael Ging/The Arizona Republic

Kitchen volunteers (from left) Peggy Hicks, 72, Julia Jilchrist, 77, and Toni Kurzhal, 81, make salad at Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City.

Community organizations, including churches and social service agencies such as Haven of Hope, a Glendale center for abused and neglected children, also receive food from the program.

"It's just wonderful," said Karol Erwin, one of the center's volunteers and pantry participant. "It's good for everybody. People that you talk to think it's charity... But there's a lot more than food in life. It's about caring for one another."



Michael Ging/The Arizona Republic

Sun Health Olive Branch food services manager Larry Long makes noodles in the facility's kitchen.

Extending Olive Branch

Center in Sun City reaches out to all area seniors

ERIN REEP
DAILY NEWS-SUN

It is 10:30 a.m. on a Thursday, and many pairs of hands are working to prepare lunch at Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center.

Volunteers work quickly to provide meals for about 200 people — unloading groceries, peeling, snapping and chopping raw vegetables, cooking the food, dishing lunches into foil trays for home delivery, serving the crowd of seniors packing the 140-seat dining room, and cleaning everything up afterward.

"We have over 250 volunteers," said Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch manager, while giving a tour of the center.

"Last year, they gave 40,129 hours here at the center."

Newcomers to the Sun Cities often don't know about the center at the southwest corner of 107th and Peoria avenues, Wixson said. Olive Branch has been in existence for 15 years and has a variety of services for area seniors.

Olive Branch offers a meal-delivery program for homebound seniors, a senior job-placement program, classes ranging from basic computing to exercise, aid to the visually impaired, free mental-health counseling and legal counseling, blood-pressure checks and health screenings and a boutique with items for sale that benefit the center.

Seniors sat around tables Thursday morning playing cards, waiting for lunch and the entertainment to start.

Volunteers in the back kitchen scooped chicken and dumplings into foil pans for homebound seniors.

"We had 68 delivered meals (today)," Wixson said. "It's starting to increase, and we have people on a waiting



PHOTOS BY JOY LAMBERT-SLAGOWSKI/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Joanne Sadek, left, and Marilyn Schilcher carry food donated to the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center, which serves area seniors through a variety of programs.

list."

The meals must be delivered within a two-hour time frame to ensure they stay at a certain temperature, Wixson said.

Certified Chef Larry Long added spices to the sauce for the chicken.

"Meat and potatoes; they love meat and potatoes," he said, noting he has the best job in town.

Long said he has worked at the Arizona Biltmore and two country clubs, but prefers working at the Olive Branch, a job he missed for a number of weeks last year while he was recovering from hip-replacement surgery.

"I got more cards from these people than I have ever had in my life," he said. "They're like grandparents."

Food donations come to the Olive Branch by truck at various times throughout the morning. Local grocery stores and the Sun City Garden Club are among donors.

"We get grocery donations from the grocery stores, and we distribute those with our meals," Wixson said.

"I call this the 'grocery-store-mobile,'" she said, pointing to one of four vans filled with food donations. Boxes of fruit, packaged salads, sushi and other foodstuffs filled the van.

When the trucks arrive, Long "goes through it and gleans what he needs from it," Wixson said.

Volunteer Marilyn Schilcher and Joanne Sadek, senior placement coordinator, helped unload, carrying a box filled with potatoes, asparagus and squash.

Irene Ligammari, another volunteer helping unload food, said you do not need to be strong to volunteer at the center, but you do "hope you take off a few pounds."

Olive Branch is funded in part by Sun City Community Fund, Valley of the Sun/United Way and the Area Agency on Aging, Region One.

OVER

Maricopa County. It is also funded through donations, fund-raising activities and through its Unique Boutique.

The boutique sells hand-crafted items, donated goods and consignment items, Wixson said.

The average age of volunteers is 78, said Floyd Whitney, service coordinator Floyd Whitney, but would like to buoy the force with younger people.

"Some of the work is very physical, and we need younger volunteers for that," Wixson said.

The Senior Employment Placement Program, headed by Sadek, is a no-charge

service helping seniors find work.

John Trace teaches basic computer classes at the center, and said he enjoys helping seniors learn about computers and how to e-mail. The 92-year-old was teaching across the street at Fairway Recreation Center before he was recruited by Olive Branch.

"A lot of (seniors), I think they get a kick out of it," he said.

To contact the Olive Branch Senior Center, for information or to volunteer, call 974-6797.

Erin Reep can be reached at 876-2532 or at ereep@aztrib.com



Angela Zirngibl, left, Joan Bonner and Donald Mack play cards before lunch at the Sun Health Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City.



Chef Larry Long said his job at the senior center is the best he's ever had.



Shirley Wilson volunteers in the boutique at the center at 107th and Peoria avenues.

DAILY NEWS-SUN

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, AND SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2004

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Olive Branch earns \$20K grant

ANNIE KARSTENS
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Members of the Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City are thanking the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, especially Supervisor Max Wilson, who approved a \$20,000 grant to support their services.

"We really appreciate Max Wilson because we know the money is getting tighter and tighter and you really have to stretch it on their end and on our end," said Ivy Wixson, manager of Olive Branch. "We really appreciate him advocating for us. He's been wonderful."

Wilson's mother was involved in the center, which may account for his affinity for the organization, said his spokesman, Scott Isham.

Olive Branch, a Sun Health affiliate, is located at 10765 W. Peoria Ave. The center is devoted to working with seniors and handicapped people of all ages. Its outreach programs go beyond Sun City and spread across the state, with a variety of services including health and life-enrichment activities, recreation and social events. Participants can also enjoy hot lunches at the center or through its home meal delivery program.

"We have a really great program, and we do a lot for the seniors in our community, but it's really nice to have an outreach in the surrounding cities," Wixson said. "This money will benefit our congregate meal program, our home delivered meal program and the pantry program, which is like a food bank."

During the past five years, the county has awarded Olive Branch similar grants to continue its community efforts. The center's administrators must apply every year and go through a lengthy approval process.

"This \$20,000 will go a long way to continue and expand the many great services offered at the Olive Branch Senior Center," Wilson said in a statement released by his office. "I'm happy to support an agency that works so hard to continue a great quality of life for our Sun City residents."

Olive Branch weighs move

Senior center wants to grow

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

The Olive Branch Senior Center in Sun City is on the lookout for a new home, one that's bigger and cheaper.

For now, Olive Branch, which is contracted and managed by Sun Health, is located at 10765 W. Peoria Ave. In November 2006, the center's lease is up in Sun Bowl Plaza, and the staff is weighing the benefits of moving or renewing the lease.

"At this point, we may stay here, we may not. The actual building we're in now, we've outgrown," said Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch manager. "We would like to have a location that is bigger and it would be nice not to pay the hefty rent that we're paying now."

Though the center's quarters are too small, the location is ideal, Wixson said. Being south of Grand Avenue allows easy access for the community's oldest residents.

"If we did move, we'd like to stay south of Grand because of the Phase 1 population we serve," she said. "People do like us being south of Grand because many come in on golf cars. It's important for them to be able to easily access our services."

Genny Rose, executive vice president of Sun Health extended care, said the center's space is limiting and expensive.

"We have other programs and services we'd like to

provide to this population that we're unable to do in the space we have," Rose said, adding that Olive Branch is supported almost entirely by grants. "I would hope a new lease situation would perhaps lighten our (financial) burden."

Olive Branch is funded in part by the Area Agency on Aging, Region One, Valley of the Sun United Way/Sun City Community Fund and DES Rehabilitation Services.

Wixson said all possibilities are being explored, including a couple of spaces that could possibly accommodate the Olive Branch's growth while keeping the center south of Grand.

"Right now, we don't have anywhere to go," she said. "We're looking at all possibilities."

The center is devoted to working with seniors and handicapped people of all ages. Its outreach programs go beyond Sun City and spread across the state, with a variety of services including health and life-enrichment activities, recreation and social events. Participants may also enjoy hot lunches at the center or through its home meal delivery program.

Olive Branch has been housed in the Sun Bowl Plaza since 1990, and prior to that, operated out of the West Olive Church of Christ at 109th and Olive Avenues.

For information about Olive Branch Senior Center services, call 974-6797.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboone@aztrib.com.

Drive-thru convenience, better than fast food

ANNIE BOON
DAILY NEWS-SUN

For LaVerne Anderson of Sun City, drive-thru dining is more of a luxury than sit-down service.

But no McDonald's or Burger King for her — she said she's excited to start taking advantage of Olive Branch Senior Center's new drive-thru, take-out meal service that provides a hot lunch for \$3.

"I really appreciate the program. This is wonderful for me, it means a lot," she said. "The food is excellent. We don't do fast food ... and this is a good value."

Anderson, whose husband has Alzheimer's disease, said the drive-thru meal not only offers her husband a balanced meal, but gives the two of them a chance to share meals together.

Olive Branch Senior Center at 107th and Peoria Avenues serves a daily congregate meal, offers a mobile meals program and facilitates the Area Agency on Aging's home-delivered meal program. Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch manager, said to her knowledge, the senior center's new drive-thru and take-out program is the first of its kind in the nation. To participate in the drive-thru program, Sun City residents must first register with Olive Branch, she said. Pick-ups are between noon and 1 p.m.

Jackie Larkin, director of the drive-thru and mobile meal programs, said the drive-thru provides an alternative for those who may have trouble eating in public, such as at the congregate meal or in restaurants, because of Parkinson's or Alzheimer's disease which can make dining difficult or embarrassing. It's also helpful for caregivers who appreciate a grab and go meal option when they're caring



for someone at home.

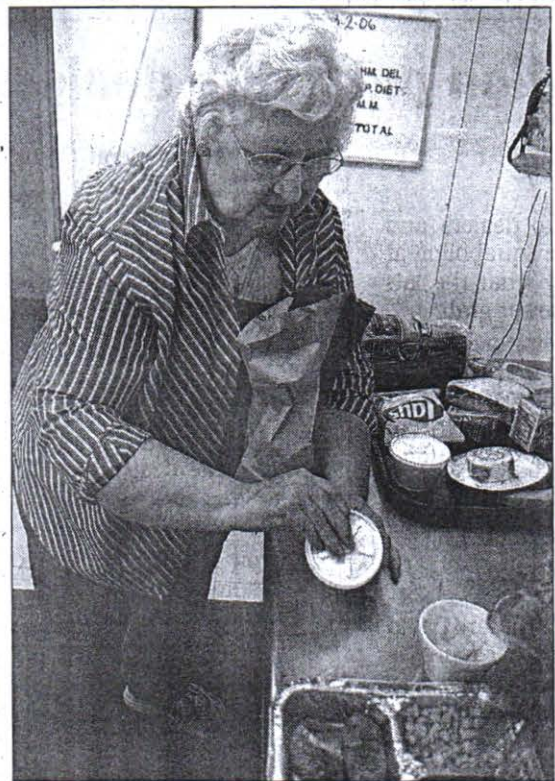
"It's for people who are home-bound or can't shop or maybe just got out of the hospital," Larkin said. "There's a real need for this in our community."

About 40 residents already participate in the center's mobile meal program that provides home-delivered meals twice a day Monday through Friday at a cost of \$40 per week. The program also provides a loaf of bread every Monday. Those who think they may qualify for the Area Agency on Aging's home-delivered meal program for low-income seniors also may contact Olive Branch.

Congregate meals are served Monday through Friday for a suggested donation of \$2.75 per person. One to three days advance notice by 3:30 p.m. the prior day is required for lunches. Sign in by 11 a.m. the day of the event to ensure reservation.

For information about Olive Branch Senior Center meal services, call 974-6797.

Annie Boon may be reached at 876-2532 or aboon@aztrib.com.



PHOTOS BY THOMAS BOGGAN/DAILY NEWS-SUN

In the top photo, Larry Long, head chef at Olive Branch Senior Center, jokes with LaVerne Anderson, who is a drive-thru, take-out meal customer. Above, Jackie Larkin, who is the director of the drive-thru and mobile meal programs, shows an example of meals provided by Olive Branch Senior Center.

Olive Branch to halt search

High cost
ends effort

By Matt Loeschman
Independent Newspapers

Following months of searching for a new Olive Branch Senior Center location, Sun Health officials have decided to stay put.

Because of the volume of services the center provides and a high level of senior participation, space constraints and parking difficulties have surfaced at 10765 W. Peoria Ave., Sun Health officials confirmed.

"Sun Health will continue to support the Olive Branch Senior Center and explore

possible enhancements at the existing site to benefit senior residents who take advantage of the center's many services," said Sun Health President/CEO Leland W. Peterson.

Volunteers expected more than 120 people for lunch May 12, creating major space issues with many seniors struggling to find a parking space.

Olive Branch volunteers indicated people have expressed frustration over the situation — however, they will make due with what they have since the expansion plan was shelved.

Olive Branch officials plan to renew their lease this

See Branch — Page 3

Branch

Continued From Page 1
November and remain at the site the center has occupied for more than 16 years. The site, although crowded at times, is considered conveniently located for center participants.

Officials said more than 100 participants use Olive Branch daily. Seniors utilizing the center come from across the West Valley, including Sun City, Sun City West and Surprise.

According to Sun Health's Web site, individuals 60 or older, their spouses and handicapped persons of all ages participate in a variety of programs conducted at the senior center. Programs include health- and lifestyle-enrichment events, recreation and socialization activities and lunches prepared in the center's kitchen.

Sun City resident Norma Greene said despite the space and parking issues, the center continues to provide a valuable service.

"It is a bit frustrating sometimes," she explained. "And they could sure use more space inside. But I have to admire the volunteers for pressing on — the work that they do is important for senior citizens in this area."

Officials considered relocating the center to another venue and various options were considered.

Discussions were held with United Church of Sun City officials about using their hall as a possible new site for the senior center. But it was determined needed renovations and additions would exceed \$1 million.

"We thank Senior Pastor James F. Fredette and the church members for their willingness to lease Witt Hall as a possible site for the senior center," Mr. Peterson said.

Already under way by the nonprofit Sun Health system are more than \$111 million in necessary expansions of both Sun Health Boswell and Del E. Webb hospitals that will add patient care beds, enlarge emergency departments and enhance surgical services.

Also under construction is a new \$5-million, three-story laboratory building to expand research into causes of and treatments for diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, arthritis and prostate cancer at Sun Health Research Institute.

With the costs of these major patient-care and research expansions exceeding \$116 million, the Sun Health board of directors determined that it was not feasible to take on more capital expenses.

Officials applied for a Maricopa County Community Development Block Grant to help cover a portion of the renovation costs, but no grant funds were awarded to the senior center.

Post your comments on this issue at www.newspapers.com/forum29. Reach News Editor Matt Loeschman at 972-6101 or mloeschman@newspapers.com.

Olive Branch center shifts to Sun Health

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

Vincent DeFrancis, president of the Sun Cities Area Community Council board in 1990, sounded like a proud father Wednesday.

DeFrancis was leader of the social service organization when it took responsibility for the lease of the Olive Branch Senior Center.

The senior center, celebrating its fifth anniversary this year, offers meals, crafts and activities to area residents.

Responsibility for running the senior center will shift from the Sun Cities Area Community Council to Sun Health Corp. on July 1.

Sylvia Cartsonis, executive director of the Sun Cities Area Community Council, announced the change to the community council membership at Wednesday's luncheon meeting.

The community council's job, DeFrancis said later, was to support the center "only until it can stand on its own legs and has money and then let it go."

Wednesday, the community council began letting go of its "child." The council has been instrumental in the founding of several now-independent social-service agencies, including Interfaith Services and Sun Cities Area Transit System.

Olive Branch relies on funding from the Area Agency on Aging, but

the community council has acted as prime contractor for the center since 1988. The council subcontracted the management and operations of Olive Branch to Sun Health.

On July 1, Sun Health will take the council's place as prime contractor and will continue to manage the center.

Ivy Wixson, Olive Branch director, said senior center activities and services would be unaffected by the change.

"We don't anticipate any big changes," she said. "I think that we've been lucky to have the assistance from the council."

The senior center was established in 1988 after a community council survey of area residents identified a need for social services.

The Area Agency on Aging and Maricopa County provided funding to establish the senior center, named "Olive Branch" because of its location at the Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave.

The center gradually outgrew the rent-free space provided by the church and moved to 10765 Peoria Ave. in 1990. With financial help from the county, the area agency and the Sun City Community Fund, the community council assumed responsibility for the lease.

Olive Branch Senior Center hosts party on Christmas

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Three years ago the staff and volunteers at the Olive Branch Senior Center found out that one of their regulars was going to spend Christmas alone.

"He didn't have any children and was all alone. We figured that we would have a dinner and party on Christmas for people who have no one or nowhere to go on Dec. 25," said Ivy Wixon, director of the center. "It's turned into a tradition."

Wixon said she did not expect many residents to attend the Christmas Day dinner in 1988, but about 100 Sun Cities area residents showed up.

This year the Christmas Day party at the senior center, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., in the Sun Bowl Plaza, will have more than 135 people attending, Wixon said.

"You think of kids opening gifts at Christmas but it's extra special to give one to an older person who would otherwise not have anything," Wixon said.

In the past donations to cover

the cost of the meal have been requested. But this year the Sun City Host Lions Club is sponsoring the event, said Gene Gravlin, first vice president of the club.

The meals will still be prepared in the kitchen at Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital, but the Lions will provide appetizers, goodies, entertainment and Santa Claus.

Gifts donated by the Lions and the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce will be given to all those attending.

The Sun City Branch of the American Red Cross providing free transportation.

Gravlin said the Sun City Host Lions hope to support a number of senior center projects in the coming year.

"Most people perceive the senior center as a place to get a \$2 meal. But if you go down there at 9 a.m. you will see people waiting to get in. This is their family. They want some social fabric to wrap around

themselves so they are not isolated. That is far, far more important than the meal," Gravlin said.

Although the club is helping out with the event, Gravlin said the members want to keep a low profile and promote this as a senior center project.

"We just wanted something a little different and to help make this a better party," Gravlin said. "The important thing is that we tried to dig out of the woodwork people with no place to go."

The senior center provides a variety of activities along with lunch to area seniors on weekdays. It operates under the sponsorship of the Sun Cities Area Community Council and Area Agency on Aging.

Sun Health Corp. manages the center and provides health and wellness events.

Meal reservations are required 24 hours in advance. The suggested donation is \$2.25 a meal. For information, call 974-6797.

Lonely no more

Inactive elderly find friends at Olive Branch center

By Lori Baker
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Les Weingarden knows of many Sun City folks who were "rescued" from a life of isolation.

Physically unable to participate in golf, bowling or the other activities that attracted them to Sun City a decade or two ago, these older senior citizens had no place to go, Weingarden said.

Until the Olive Branch Senior Center opened three years ago.

"Many of these people were hibernating in their houses because they had long given up participating in the Recreation Centers' activities," Weingarden said. "This center has rescued people from lonely, inactive lives. Many new friend-

"This center lends itself more to socialization. There is a lot of sitting down and talking. This facility has been wonderful in developing friendships for people who would otherwise be alone."

Ivy Wixson

Director

Olive Branch Senior Center

ships have started."

Weingarden, who has lived in Sun City for 14 years, serves as chairman of the center's project council, which organizes activities. He's been coming to the center

five days a week since it opened.

Two-thirds of the 932 people using the center last year were at least 78 years old, Ivy Wixson, the center's director, said.

"These people are independent, and many live alone," Wixson said. "People at the center are like their family because they either don't have any families or their families are out of state."

The center is even open on Christmas. Seniors receive an elegant meal and presents donated by area merchants, Wixson said.

Olive Branch provides a different service than Sun City's recreation centers, which are sports-oriented and for people involved in special clubs, Wixson said.

See CENTER, Page 2



Mark Henle / Staff photographer

Senior citizens line up in front of the Olive Branch Senior Center to receive surplus food in the "Brown Bag" program run by the Sun Valley Gleaners Association and the Westside Food Bank.

CENTER

"This center lends itself more to socialization. There is a lot of sitting down and talking," Wixson said. "This facility has been wonderful in developing friendships for people who would otherwise be alone."

Because of the center's success, Maricopa County Supervisor Carole Carpenter would like to see the county provide a permanent home for Olive Branch in expanded quarters. On Nov. 5, county voters will decide the fate of a \$736.5 million bond election, which includes about \$4.2 million for the senior center.

"The Olive Branch Senior Center is critical to meet the needs of older, more frail and more isolated senior citizens who can't participate in active lifestyles," Carpenter said.

Expansion needed

An expansion of the center is needed, she said.

"It will provide for the most disabled day care, and for those who can still participate in some activities, hot meals and a variety of social and counseling services," Carpenter said.

Not only would Olive Branch be enlarged, an adult day health center would be opened for disabled seniors, and a kitchen would be built to serve both facilities. It has not been decided which agency would operate the day health center.

Also, there would be space for the county's Community Action Program, through which low-income families receive financial help in paying rent and utilities and receive commodities.

Under the proposal, the county would buy the estimated 7,000-square-foot portion of the Sun Bowl Plaza, 10765 W. Peoria Ave., where the Olive Branch now is located. About 7,000 square feet in the center also would be bought to allow expansion.

The Sun Cities Area Community Council, a non-profit agency that raises money through community donations, has been paying the \$3,500-a-month rent for Olive Branch.

Permanent funding

"The bond issue is important because it would provide a permanent source of funding for the center," said Sylvia Cartsonis, executive director of the Sun Cities Area Community Council.

"Providing this facility should be the responsibility of the county because Sun City is not a municipality," Cartsonis said. "Peoria and El Mirage provide senior centers for their communities."

When the Community Council first started Olive Branch in 1988, it was housed in a Peoria church. In 1990 it moved to larger quarters in the Sun Bowl.

As Sun Citians get older, they suffer many losses — their spouses, relatives and friends, Cartsonis said.

"It's easy for them to isolate themselves and get depressed," she said. "They don't eat well, and they don't function well. With the center, they look forward to seeing each other and get a nutritious meal."

Olive Branch is managed by Sun Health Corp. and operated with money from the Community Council and the Area Agency on Aging.

Hot meals, for which a \$2.25 donation is requested, are catered by Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital.

Many free activities

Other activities — with the exception of some Rio Salado Community College courses — are free. Microwave cooking, relaxation techniques and early Arizona history are among college courses provided.

Cards, exercise, ballroom and tap dancing, arts and crafts, consumer education, entertainment and guest speakers are among the center's regular programs. Free legal services and counseling also are offered.

"We have activities for the visually impaired," Wixler said. "Many of them live alone, and it's remarkable what they can do. The secretary of our project council is blind. He takes minutes in Braille, then types them up."

A popular service at the center is the "Brown Bag." Through the

Sun Valley Gleaners Association and the Westside Food Bank, more than 400 seniors receive surplus food and other items from grocery stores every Thursday morning. Cost is \$12 a year.

On one recent morning, people were lined up at the door at 9 a.m., waiting to receive their share of popcorn, yogurt, green beans and bread.

"These are items that are shelf-dated so the stores can't sell them, but they are still good," Wixson said.

The center is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Transportation is available to the center through the Red Cross and Sun Cities Area Transit Inc. vans.

Bond package seeks funds for new senior center

If approved, new facility would replace Olive Branch Senior Center at Sun Bowl

Now lined up with other major projects for Maricopa County, a proposed new senior center for the Sun Cities area "made the cut," and is included in a bond package that will go to a vote of the people Nov. 5.

The \$4,251,000 Olive Branch Senior Center is just one project in a total \$750-million bond proposal that includes developments for the county's criminal justice, health and general services, parks and recreation and public works departments.

The Olive Branch facility currently is housed in the Sun Bowl shopping center at 10765 West Peoria Ave. in Sun City. It is contracted by Sun Cities Area Community Council, managed by

Sun Health and funded by the Area Agency on Aging, Region I.

The county Board of Supervisors approved the bond issue July 24 and set a date for the November election. Board members announced that the proposed projects, if approved by the voters, would require "virtually no property-tax increases" and that property tax rates for the county debt would be stabilized through 1999.

If the facility is not approved at the polls the Sun Cities area and Area Agency on Aging will be expected to pay rent and operations cost for senior services.

In that case, the county Human Resources Department reports, the center's stability could be jeopard-

ized and services to seniors could terminate.

Capital projects included in the bond-issue package are those designed to meet "critical needs" of county residents, including those in the Northwest Valley retirement communities.

According to Maricopa County Health Services, some 4 percent of the seniors living in Sun City, or 2,327 residents, are living at or below the poverty level.

County Human Resources Department records show that the Sun Cities area and Area Agency on Aging "need to construct a community center containing a senior program and a Community Action Program."

In its bond projects summary, the County Human Resources Department records show that construction of a new facility

would allow for a site designed especially for the program.

Linda Wallace, spokesperson for the county Health Services Administration, says the citizens committee studied services currently provided by Olive Branch Senior Center and found programs were inadequate to meet a growing demand for social services.

The proposed new center would be designed to provide a senior program and a Community Action Program and will provide facilities for state Department of Economic Service programs and other itinerant services.

The executive vice president of extended care services for Sun Health Corp., Mary Ellen Potash, says Sun Health would "be happy to manage a more-expanded facility."

The center has operated for two

years, she says, first in quarters on the Church of Christ campus and now at the Sun Bowl Plaza, where an area was renovated for the activities.

During the last year, 1990-91, Ms. Potash says there were about 938 individual participants who came to the center, some every day and others on a more limited basis. "And we served about 19,500 meals during the year."

After studying the needs of the community, the 1991 Citizens Bond Committee determined that a new senior center should offer necessary programs (now not covered because of inadequate facilities) to area seniors who currently seek assistance in the Peoria and El Mirage senior centers.

The Peoria facility is the closest

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OVER

■ BOND

From Page 1

to Sun City but is considered overcrowded because of the number of seniors from surrounding areas who participate in its programs.

As Olive Branch Center programs expand, low-income seniors from the area would be eligible to receive community and social services such as case management, rent assistance, energy assistance, advocacy, transportation services and income-benefits assistance.

In looking at alternatives to the bond issue, the County Human Resources Department considered the following:

■ That the Sun Cities area and

Area Agency on Aging currently hold a three-year lease on a building paid for with county funds. There is no further commitment on the county's part to provide for additional funds to pay for rent. In that case, a community group could purchase or donate and then renovate a building.

■ That there could be an attempt to seek Community Development Block Grant funds.

Looking at the total bond package, Martin Shultz, co-chairman of the bond committee's campaign panel, says the projects won't get the county every project or facility it requested.

Olive Branch serves up more than lunches



Daily News-Sun photo by Mollie J. Hoppes

SPEAKING OUT — Ken Oring reads announcements to a group gathered for lunch at the Olive Branch Senior Center. Oring also leads the recital of the national anthem.

By KIM ECKHOFF
Daily News-Sun intern

Sun City resident Jennie Laico says attending the Olive Branch Senior Center is a lifeline that helps keep her juices flowing.

"I work four days a week," said Laico, who has volunteered more than 1,000 hours over the last two years at the center answering telephones, keeping records of volunteer hours and registering seniors for lunch. "It feels good to have a purpose. I enjoy getting up in the morning to come work for and spend time with the elderly."

The Olive Branch Senior Center, located in the Sun Bowl Plaza at 10765 W. Peoria Ave., Sun City, is open to all people age 60 and over. The center offers lunch, crafts, exercise programs, health talks and guest speakers who provide information on various topics.

"Many misconceptions have arisen about the purpose, programs, and users of our senior centers," said Vincent De Francis, a board member of the Sun Cities Area Community Council which, along with Area Agency on Aging and Maricopa County Social Services Department, oversees the operation of the Olive Branch center.

Senior centers are not the same as recreation centers or adult day care centers, said De Francis. Senior centers are for healthy seniors who choose less active social activities, he said. Recreation centers are geared more toward active retirees who prefer more vigorous activities such as golf, squash, or bowling, he said, while adult centers provide individualized, personal



Daily News-Sun photo by Mollie J. Hoppes

SENIOR GREETERS — Jennie Laico, left, and Tillie Cattoni greet folks dining at the Olive Branch Senior Center in the Sunbowl Plaza. Laico has volunteered for three years and Cattoni four years.

and supervisory care.

Physical well-being is dependent upon a good social outlook and having friends, said De Francis. "As people are widowed or live alone, they often become isolated, and begin to neglect their own nutritional needs. The best way for socialization is through eating together."

Activities at the center are managed by a professional staff, but participants volunteer their time to help implement planned programs, said Wixson. Olive Branch volunteer Ken Oring is often relied upon for his emcee capabilities and Laico shares her talents and teaches needlepoint.

Use of the center has increased in recent months, said Margaret Headson, another regular volunteer at the center. "A lot more people have started coming to the center recently, partly because they now are

more aware of what the center has to offer after reading about it in the paper," she said.

"The Olive Branch Senior Center is a place where we may not like the zucchini being served with lunch, but we sure like each other," said another frequent visitor at the center.

"What makes our center unique is the involvement of the very people the center is there to serve. This is their center," said Wixson. "We have rules and regulations that everyone has to follow, but we want the seniors to feel that this is their show."

"You see a lot of the same faces almost every day," said Lois Sahlberg, a senior citizen who volunteers her time assisting with activities at the Olive Branch Senior Center. "When I see a new face in the dining room, I make a point of saying 'hello', so they will want to

come back again."

The Olive Branch Senior Center relies heavily upon the senior volunteers who help to keep activities running smoothly, said Ivy Wixson, director of the Olive Branch Senior Center.

Time volunteered by the seniors benefits the community as well, said Wixson. The Westside Food Bank and the Sun Valley Gleaners together implement the Senior Brown Bag Program which provides pre-registered senior citizens with donated goods, ranging from laundry detergent to pastries, on a weekly basis.

The Olive Branch Senior Center volunteers average 300 hours per month sorting through donated goods, bagging them, and organizing their distribution, according to Debbi Dorman, a spokesperson for the Westside Food Bank.

Working toward self-sufficiency

New program offers help to sight-impaired

By TIFFANY MEANS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Craft work, although popular in the Sun Cities, probably doesn't affect most people as it does Dorothy Nowak.

To create a decorator jewelry box means another step toward the self-sufficiency Nowak thought she lost in December along with the majority of her sight.

She also welcomes the freedom to share her frustrations with people who are in a similar situation, Nowak said.

The craft work and the social setting are available to Nowak through the month-old Visually Impaired Program, which is based in the Olive Branch Senior Center, 10765 W. Peoria Ave.

The Sun Cities Area Community Council and state operations sponsor the free program that has targeted a membership of 1,000 residents from the Sun Cities, Youngtown, Peoria and surrounding areas.

Merwin Graubart, VIP administrator, directs the pro-

gram's meetings from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. each Monday and from 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. each Friday.

On Monday, the group is involved in topical discussions, craft work, card games and other social activities. On Friday, the program hosts counseling meetings for members who live alone.

Participants who need transportation may arrange it by calling Graubart at 972-5032.

Nowak, one of two Sun City West residents who attend VIP, has used the transportation service to attend meetings since she discovered the program about two weeks ago.

"It's my cup of tea. I have been depressed not getting out of the house," she said.

Two Sun City residents attend mainly to play bridge. Nancy Bjorndahl and Ruth Catlin are both blind and deaf.

The women use Braille playing cards and are signed information by their mothers, who come to the meetings with them to help them communicate.

Bjorndahl and Catlin attended another service program, which Graubart directed, but like the new location better, said Catlin's mother, Louise.

For one thing, Louise said, they enjoy the hot meal service that is provided through the senior center.

"It sure beats peanut butter sandwiches," Louise said.

Sophie Yanko of Youngtown also used to attend the other service program Graubart directed before he began work with VIP in May.

Yanko likes the program for the most part, but said there have been some problems because of the newness of the operation and meeting in the senior center.

"It's too crowded here. There are always new people coming in and we (regular members) don't get a chance to talk," said Yanko, who is legally blind.

She already knows much of what newcomers will learn through the program and said that she most appreciated the instructors who visited her home.

They taught her how to perform household tasks despite being visually impaired, she said.

That type of instruction will be offered in July, Graubart said, and will increase, along with more personal counseling services, when the program becomes more established.

The state will soon provide an orientation and mobility teacher, as well as a rehabilitation teacher, Graubart said.

That will free Graubart, a professional social worker, to begin more counseling services,



Daily News-Sun photo by Frances Guarino

A STITCH — Sara Grossman, left, helps Lucile McNeil, a member of the Visually Impaired Program, correct an error in her knitting work. Grossman is a volunteer instructor for the program, which meets at the Olive Branch Senior Center.

he said.

But the program's atmosphere may never match the degree of intimacy and personal closeness that participants desire, Graubart said.

One of the goals of the pro-

gram is to maintain the group's identity while integrating it with the general senior center program, he said.

"If you have separation, you may have a haven or a sanctuary, but you don't have the real

world," Graubart said.

Because visually impaired people must live in a sighted world, Graubart said, he would like to teach the program's participants to mix with sighted people.

FACT SHEET

NAME: Olive Branch Senior Center

LOCATION: Sun Bowl Plaza
10765 W. Peoria Avenue
Sun City, AZ 85351 (602)974-6797

STAFF & VOLUNTEERS: Ivy Wixson, Director; Irene Donahue, Activities Coordinator; and Donald Dresser, Program Aide. Approximately 75 volunteers assist regularly at the Center.

SERVICES: Services offered recognize the benefits of socialization provided in a stimulating environment along with a hot meal. Services include recreation activities such as crafts, table games and exercise programs. Health programs and life-style enrichment events as well as intergenerational programs are conducted periodically at the Center. Hot nutritious meals are served at noon each weekday.

WHO MAY ATTEND: Services are available to all individuals 60 and over and their spouses as well as the handicapped or disabled of any age. There are no income criteria.

SERVICE AREA: The Olive Branch Senior Center serves the Sun Cities, Youngtown and neighboring northwest communities.

HOURS: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Weekdays

TRANSPORTATION: Transportation to and from the Center is available through Red Cross or SCAT.

FEE: None. Cash donations, both for meals and transportation, are asked for those who are able to give. Suggested donation for each meal is \$2.00. Donations in the form of time and talent are welcome if you wish to volunteer.

RESERVATIONS:

Meal reservations and requests for assistance with transportation are required 24 hours in advance. Call 974-6797.

STATISTICS:

The Center opened in May 1988. Statistics for FY 1988-89 follow:

- . Number of persons attending Center: 539
- . Male 34 % Female 66 %
- . Couples 43 % Singles 57 %
- . Age Range 60 to 98
 - 60 to 74 50 %
 - 75 & older 50 %
- . Number of meals served 20,930

AFFILIATION:

Working together the following organizations are responsible for the success of the Olive Branch Senior Center.

. Sun Cities Area Community Council sponsors the Senior Center and is responsible for establishing and maintaining a permanent facility for the Center.

. The Area Agency on Aging Region I monitors and provides funds for operating the program.

. Sun Health Corporation manages the senior center. Hot lunches are catered by Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital's food services department and health programs and events are arranged by Sun Health's CHOICE Program. Speakers are provided on a regular basis through Sun Health's Speaker's Bureau. In addition, a number of in-kind services are provided by other Sun Health divisions.

CONTRIBUTIONS:

Donations are essential for future program development and for maintaining a permanent facility for the senior center. If you wish to contribute, checks should be made payable to the "Sun Cities Area Community Council for the Olive Branch Senior Center."

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Rev: 4-16-90

Senior center to host public on Thursday

By TIFFANY MEANS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The Olive Branch Senior Center will have a public grand opening of the center's new building, 10765 W. Peoria Ave. at 9 a.m. Thursday.

That day, April 19, has been designated by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors as "Olive Branch Senior Center Day."

Supervisor Carole Carpenter, D-Dist. 4, will present the keynote address to officially open the center, which serves the Sun Cities, Youngtown and neighboring northwest communities.

"They are moving to a new, more permanent facility that will allow them to serve an increasing number of citizens," Carpenter said. "The county is very much in support of what they are doing."

The proclamation cites studies showing that 19 percent of the county population is over the age of 65.

The board designated the special day to recognize that Olive Branch promotes good physical and mental health for older Americans.

Sun Cities Area Community Council, center sponsors; established the center in the

permanent facility.

The Area Agency on Aging monitors and provides funds for the program's operation and Sun Health Corp. manages the center.

But the move has created a community obligation, said Vincent DeFrancis, Community Council president.

"Funding comes from a number of sources; the principle funding for the operation in sense of staffing, supplies and lunches, is through the Area Agency on Aging. When funding occurs, there is an obligation on the community to match it," he said.

The level of funding necessary from the community will be about \$40,000 a year now, DeFrancis said. He said he expects much of that money to be obtained through center fundraisers and contributions.

"We have the potential for a great part of this through a bingo operation. We have given a lot of thought to that, and a lot of people asked us to hold bingo in the afternoon," he said.

That would mean opening the building for bingo after the center closes at 4 p.m.

Before its recent move, the

Church of Christ donated space for the center on its property, 10935 W. Olive Ave. in Peoria.

The new site, Program Aid Don Dresser said, offers three times the space available at the church.

Maximum capacity of the former site was 102 people; at the new site, maximum capacity is about 250 people, DeFrancis said.

But only about 200 people can eat in the lunchroom at once, DeFrancis said.

Last fiscal year, 539 people ages 60 to 98 attended the center, which served 20,930 meals.

People over 60 and their spouses, along with those of any age who are handicapped or disabled, qualify for the center's free services offered from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays.

The center's program includes serving hot meals at noon each weekday and offering activities such as crafts, table games, exercise programs, health talks, and assistance with legal and other problems.

Transportation to and from the center is available through the American Red Cross or Sun Cities Area Transit.

Senior center relocating to Sun Bowl Plaza

By Connie Cone Sexton
Staff writer

SUN CITY — A senior center for area residents is moving a little closer to home.

The Olive Branch Senior Center soon will relocate from its Peoria location to Sun Bowl Plaza, 10765 W. Peoria Ave.

"The move puts us in the heart of phase one" of Sun City's development, director Ivy Wixson said. The area, built up along 107th Avenue between Grand and Peoria avenues during the early 1960s, has a higher average age than other portions of the retirement community.

"More people will be able to walk to the center. And by being in the shopping plaza, they can get their groceries or visit other stores," Wixson said.

For two years, the center has been housed in space donated by the Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave., Peoria.

As the church grew, however, the space was needed, causing a search for another center site.

"The church has been wonderful. We are very grateful. They gave us time to get on our feet," Wixson said.

A flea market to raise money for the relocation is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at the plaza location.

Donations of items for the sale are being accepted through Thursday. Furniture, clothing, appliances, utensils, and home, auto and personal accessories are needed, Wixson said.

Response for donations has been good, but more items are needed, she said. Those wanting to donate may call the center at 974-6797 to arrange pickup of bulk items.

"Furniture sells well. Items we have received include tables, bikes, clothing, crystal, toasters, a coffee pot, patio furniture, televisions and lots of books," Wixson said.

"We've already begun the process of pricing everything. We had some ladies from the Boswell (hospital) Thrift Shop help us with

that. But we're willing to negotiate, if there's something that somebody really wants and they don't want to pay that price. By the end of the day, if it's not sold, we'll sell it at their prices."

The center is still operating out of the church but probably will move by early March into Sun Bowl Plaza.

"Everything we use here is moving. We're hoping to continue service at the center without interruption," the director said.

Attendance at the center probably will increase with the move, she said.

"We've been at capacity every day here in the church," she said.

"We can serve 107 (for lunch) now, but we hope to serve 150 in the new center. The need is growing."

The center's size will double to about 7,000 square feet. Three stores are being converted into several rooms for the facility, including rooms for dining, lectures, arts and crafts, meetings, offices, a lounge and a kitchen.

"We have all kinds of people coming in to use our center. Half of the people — 244 of them — are from age 60 to 74," Wixson said. "And exactly the same number are age 75 to 98. There is a need here, and we really are fulfilling it."

The center, which is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, serves a daily lunch. Participants are asked to make a \$2 donation.

Other programs include entertainment, speakers, bingo, consumer education, card games, and arts and crafts.

Many residents of Sun City do not participate in golf or other strenuous recreation offered in the community, said Wixson, who pointed out that the senior center's more passive activities provide a chance for people to socialize.

"We've had so many people say this has been a godsend," she said. "A lot of the people are recently widowed. And there's a high population of people here who have no children. The center is like a family environment for them."

*Az Republic
Feb 2, 1990*

Alterations underway at new Olive Branch Senior Center site

By PEG KEITH
Sun Cities Independent

Alterations and interior work to provide a kitchen, dining room, play area and lounge are under way in a suite of rooms at the Sun Bowl Shopping Center, 107th Avenue and Peoria.

The improvement program is taking place in what will be the new location of Olive Branch Senior Center.

The Senior Center was established May 1988, under auspices of the Sun Cities Area Community Council. Sun Health, as co-operator, provides the staffing.

"The Community Council is responsible for setting up the Senior Center ... we'll have the major obligation of carrying the center," says Vincent De Francis, Community Council president, adding that Sun Health will share responsibilities of operating the facility.

Hopes, now, are for the center to be ready for use early in December. "It has been a tremendous job," Mr. De Francis says.

Since its opening in the educational building of the Church of Christ, the center has been serving the area's elderly citizens with a nutritious lunch, educational and recreational programs, entertainment and special events.

The center operations will move into its new location, 10765 Peoria Ave., when alterations are completed.

The Community Council president has praise for the church, which has hosted the center. "They have been very accommodating and obliging. They know we are anxious to release the premises ... we're doing the best we can."

However smoothly the transition is made, there may be stressful moments ahead.

"We're sitting on an anxious seat, for a number of reasons," says Mr. DeFrancis. "We don't want to over-stay and are looking forward to the change. We now will have a greater capacity"

An enlarged program and facility will add responsibilities for operations: funds and staffing.

The program will be enhanced, and that calls for some additions to the staff to take care of the larger participation.

The Community Council anticipates a substantial increase in participation. There will be increased costs to face, as well.

There are estimates that center sponsors will need to raise about \$45,000 a year to support its end of the operation.

From the time the senior center opened, attendance has been brisk. "It's documented and confirmed that the space in the new location is needed," says Mr. De Francis.

While there are many recreational advantages for active retirees in Sun City, the Council saw a need for some type of socialization and a nutritious meal for the elderly who no longer use those facilities.

The pressure is not only on those who plan, the council president says. Getting people to help, finding the support that will be needed — the people power — is very critical.

He says that some of the people who use the center have voiced a desire to help in any way they can, and, in addition, the center is actively seeking co-sponsoring organizations able to pledge ongoing support.

"We anticipate a fund-raising campaign," he says.

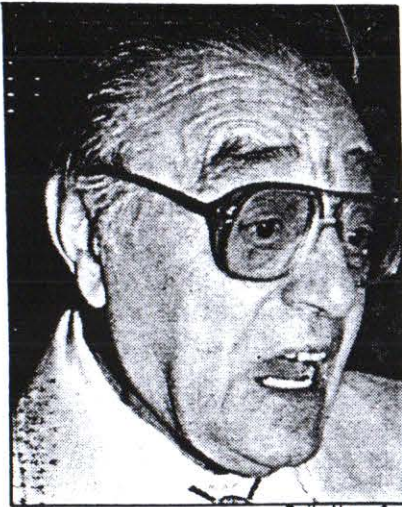
The search, now, is for people to handle the telephones — a function that probably can be done out of a volunteer's home.

Are residents who can assist will be invited to come in to the center, perhaps for a day or a portion of a day, to become acquainted with the program.

After that, Mr. De Francis anticipates that many of the volunteers can operate out of their houses and simply report on their progress.

For information on helping at the center, call 972-9372, the Sun Cities Area Community Council

Olive senior center to move



Daily News-Sun

VINCENT DEFRANCIS — President of the Sun Cities Area Community Council, outlines new fund needs.

By **CONNIE STEELE**
Daily News-Sun staff

9-14
89

SUN CITY — The Olive Branch Senior Center will be moving to a new home in the next couple of months.

A lease on a new center site was signed Wednesday, said Vincent DeFrancis, president of the executive board of the Sun Cities Area Community Council, the center's governing agency.

"We've got a budget of nearly \$45,000 to meet every year now," DeFrancis said. "We have our hands out, not one but both.

The budget will cover the cost of center personnel, daily expenses, utilities and meals. Operating costs, are paid by the Area Agency on Aging, Region I, he said.

DeFrancis made the an-

nouncement about the new site at the Wednesday luncheon meeting of the Community Council hosted by Camelot Manor.

The meeting launched the new season after a summer hiatus and included county and state officials and some out-of-state visitors.

The lease will take effect Friday, DeFrancis said. It provides the center use of three adjoining stores in the southwest wing of the Sun Bowl Shopping Plaza at 107th and Peoria avenues. Renovations will have to be completed before the senior center can call its new quarters home.

The new senior center will fill space once occupied by a men's clothing shop, a women's clothing shop and a Del Webb Realty

office.

The combined space should equal 7,000 square feet and will accommodate up to 200 persons at a time, twice the number the center can now accommodate.

Persons attending the Community Council meeting were told that the senior center had burst out of its seams just a couple of months after it formed in May 1988, recently lost its home at the Church of Christ just outside Sun City, and now faces bills of \$3,300 to \$3,500 a month.

DeFrancis' announcement sparked applause. That was just after DeFrancis held up keys to the center's newly leased quarters.

Not many details are known
See Senior, A4

OVER

Senior center signs new lease

—From A1

right now about the move or the cost of renovation, DeFrancis said. But he told the audience of some 80 council members and supporters of elderly concerns that a fund-raising effort soon would be in place.

"I appeal to you to pitch in to provide us with the sinews that we will need to accomplish the intensive, and possibly ongoing, fund-raising we will need," he said.

DeFrancis said that Pete Cipriano will head fund-raising efforts.

DeFrancis and other Community Council leaders, including Sylvia Cartsonis, executive director of the council, toured the

space after the council meeting.

"I know some people will say, 'They're crazy to pay that kind of money,' but we've looked high and low for donated facilities and there was no alternative."

The senior center has been housed by the Sun City Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave, Peoria.

Cartsonis said, "We're hoping they'll let us stay until the transition takes place."

Elton Griffith, an elder of the church, said the church has needed the space for some time now, but will work with the senior center any way it can.

"We were fortunate for this first year and a half that was donated," DeFrancis said.

DeFrancis said the Community Council had some money on hand but not enough to pay for all the necessary alterations to the center's new quarters.

"We can initiate the necessary alterations, but we don't have enough to complete them," he said.

Ivy Wixson, senior center director, said it will take a lot of work to bring the new space up to county and state standards for a senior center.

A kitchen will have to be constructed, walls have to be washable and other structural changes will have to be made before the center can open.

Wixson showed particular interest in the electrical system.

"We can't use the dishwasher and the typewriter at the same time without blowing a fuse," she said.

The new center will need furnishings, DeFrancis said. Among the items mentioned were tables and chairs, a good television set and lounge furniture.

Of people served by the senior center, De Francis said, "These are people who have gone out of the mainstream, this (the senior center) brings them back."

Last year, Wixson reported at the meeting, 569 different people attended activities at the senior center; 203 were men and 366 were women. Of those, 278 ranged in age from 60 to 74, and 289 were 75 years or older.

Olive senior center to move



Daily News-Sun

VINCENT DEFRANCIS — President of the Sun Cities Area Community Council, outlines new fund needs.

By **CONNIE STEELE**
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — The Olive Branch Senior Center will be moving to a new home in the next couple of months.

A lease on a new center site was signed Wednesday, said Vincent DeFrancis, president of the executive board of the Sun Cities Area Community Council, the center's governing agency.

"We've got a budget of nearly \$45,000 to meet every year now," DeFrancis said. "We have our hands out, not one but both."

The budget will cover the cost of center personnel, daily expenses, utilities and meals. Operating costs, are paid by the Area Agency on Aging, Region I, he said.

DeFrancis made the an-

nouncement about the new site at the Wednesday luncheon meeting of the Community Council hosted by Camelot Manor.

The meeting launched the new season after a summer hiatus and included county and state officials and some out-of-state visitors.

The lease will take effect Friday, DeFrancis said. It provides the center use of three adjoining stores in the southwest wing of the Sun Bowl Shopping Plaza at 107th and Peoria avenues. Renovations will have to be completed before the senior center can call its new quarters home.

The new senior center will fill space once occupied by a men's clothing shop, a women's clothing shop and a Del Webb Realty

office.

The combined space should equal 7,000 square feet and will accommodate up to 200 persons at a time, twice the number the center can now accommodate.

Persons attending the Community Council meeting were told that the senior center had burst out of its seams just a couple of months after it formed in May 1988, recently lost its home at the Church of Christ just outside Sun City, and now faces bills of \$3,300 to \$3,500 a month.

DeFrancis' announcement sparked applause. That was just after DeFrancis held up keys to the center's newly leased quarters.

Not many details are known
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Senior center signs new lease

—From A1

right now about the move or the cost of renovation, DeFrancis said. But he told the audience of some 80 council members and supporters of elderly concerns that a fund-raising effort soon would be in place.

"I appeal to you to pitch in to provide us with the sinews that we will need to accomplish the intensive, and possibly ongoing, fund-raising we will need," he said.

DeFrancis said that Pete Cipriano will head fund-raising efforts.

DeFrancis and other Community Council leaders, including Sylvia Cartsonis, executive director of the council, toured the

space after the council meeting.

"I know some people will say, 'They're crazy to pay that kind of money,' but we've looked high and low for donated facilities and there was no alternative."

The senior center has been housed by the Sun City Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave, Peoria.

Cartsonis said, "We're hoping they'll let us stay until the transition takes place."

Elton Griffith, an elder of the church, said the church has needed the space for some time now, but will work with the senior center any way it can.

"We were fortunate for this first year and a half that was donated," DeFrancis said.

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Senior center to relocate in Sun City

Public facility to move to Sun Bowl location

By PEG KEITH
Sun Cities Independent

Senior centers throughout Maricopa County provide meals and activities for older adults in a variety of settings, from storefronts to churches and community buildings.

The Olive Branch Senior Center, a joint project of the Sun City Area Community Council and the Area Agency on Aging, Region 1, has been leasing space on a short-term basis in the Church of Christ at 10935 W. Olive Ave., Peoria.

The Community Council announced at the June 14, meeting

that the senior center was facing a move, and called for support from the community at large.

"The church is saying they need the space," says Community Council President Vincent DeFrancis.

At the same time, he adds, the center has outgrown its quarters, and needs more space to provide services.

"We're negotiating a lease," says Mr. DeFrancis.

The Community Council proposes moving into a storefront facility in the Sun Bowl Plaza, located on the corner of 107th and Peoria avenues, Sun City.

Negotiations have been complicated because managers of the shopping center recently declared bankruptcy. Discussions have

been continuing with the receivers.

According to Mr. DeFrancis, the Community Council is anticipating a facility with about 7,000 square feet of space in three adjoining store fronts in the shopping center.

"We're anxious to get in as soon as possible," he says.

There has been good response to the senior center from the area, Mr. DeFrancis continues, estimating that between 85 and 90 percent of those using the facility are from Sun City.

"The community should know that these things don't come freely. We're faced with a sizeable rent ... we will have to pro-

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• CENTER *From page one*

vide most of the rental ... and other expenses.

"The storefront will need some structural changes to convert to a center. There will be alterations, as well as other costs we will have to face."

Physically, says Mr. DeFrancis, there's not much in the way of furniture and furnishings to be moved, as most of the property currently in use in the senior center belongs to the church.

The new setting will require tables, chairs and appurtenances.

The Community Council will receive some funding from the Area Agency on Aging. Funds

for staffing, he says, will be carried on as it has been in the past.

Robert Hernandez, spokesman from the Area Agency on Aging, explains that senior centers are funded federally from the Older Americans Act and also receive funds from state, city and county.

The Area Agency on Aging, federally mandated, is the agency that disburses the funds.

their own city money, and, if they're fortunate, get additional funding from United Way.

"The doors of any senior center are open to anyone, 60 years of age or over."

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Homelike: Warmth, fellowship draw seniors to center

By YOLANDA MUHAMMAD
Sun Cities Independent

Sixty or so people sit enjoying their meals.

The din of sociable conversation moves merrily through the room. One woman has orange and yellow silk flowers wound around her cane.

A man in a fancy bola tie and wild printed shorts leans across the table, waving his hands to punctuate an amusing story. All around them are bright and smiling faces, people having a good

time.

It's the lunch hour at The Olive Branch Senior Center.

In the kitchen, Ivy Wixson, director, is dishing up birthday cake with a big purple rose on each piece. Every month the center holds a month-end party to celebrate. For May there are 48 names.

Out in the big room, Jamie Bryant, in shorts, straw hat and jaunty garter, calls out to the crowd, "Who remembers Al Jolson?" Everyone responds in the affirmative, as she knew they

would, and then she breaks into a snappy rendition of, "Me And My Shadow," while her musical partner, a tiny motorized, fuzzy pink pup shuffles its paws in little circles across the dance floor. The audience loves it.

Mrs. Wixson says since the center opened on May 4, 1988, 519 different individuals have been served. The daily average is 85 people.

"We get the best attendance on the days that we serve prime rib or fried shrimp for lunch," Mrs. Wixson says. Another very pop-

ular feature at the center is the bridge lessons, taught on Monday and Thursday by Ted Armdt.

The significance of the meals goes far beyond the nutrition, it is a chance for people to get together to socialize. A wide circle of friends is established for visitors to the center.

"We have one group of men who come every day to play cards," Mrs. Wixson says. "They sit together and drink coffee, and when it is time to leave, they all leave together. It's just

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OVER

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great to see."

She says that about half of the people who come to the center regularly are 60 to 74 years old and the other half are 75 through their 90s.

"We have a wonderful mix of professional people, a few women in their 80s with master's degrees and people who may not have had a lot of education, but have led very interesting lives," she says.

Seventy-five percent of the senior center visitors are from Sun City, 43 percent are couples and two-thirds are women according to Mrs. Wixson.

"We have a lot of widows and widowers too."

Even with the inevitable summer slow down, there are regular activities at the center.

Irene Donohue, who is activities coordinator at the center says, "We have super-nice people who come by.

"They all smile and we have fun, even though some of them are not well."

In addition to the daily noon meals, which are a requested \$2 donation and require a 24 hour advance reservation, there are 9:00 a.m. card games, crafts classes, exercise classes and guest lecturers.

During the summer there will be a program called, "A Walk Down Memory Lane," in which center visitors tell about interesting past experiences.

A few weeks back, Sun Citian Leon Weingarden told about his Hollywood days as an executive at United Artists, where he rubbed elbows with John Wayne and was named "United Artist Man Of The Year."

Coming up, a man who was Lizzie Borden's (the infamous axe murderer's) paper boy will tell about his fabulous life and career.

There are about 50 people who volunteer their time to clean tables, roll silverware and napkins and do whatever is needed at the center. Both Mrs. Wixson and Mrs. Donohue say they could not get along without the volunteers.

"One woman walks over every day, rain or shine, to help set up."

Free transportation is provided by Sun City Red Cross drivers and the center will pay SCAT to drive some people in for the lunches.

Building space is provided by the Church of Christ. The center is contracted by Sun City Area Community Council, managed by Sun Health Corp. and funded by the Area Agency on Aging, Region I.

Mrs. Wixson says there are plans to move into a building at Sun Bowl Plaza before the end of the year.

The center conducts an outreach program to contact the indigent and people who may be ill, lonely or in need of a hot, nutritious meal.

Most of the visitors to the center are not poor, Mrs. Wixson says, but they have seen a few cases where a person has lost all their savings in a year's time because of illness and high medical bills.

"They don't like to let us know it has happened to them, but we can usually tell," she says.

The good thing about The Olive Branch Senior Center is that it can provide comfort and company.

Call 974-6797 for more information on meals and activities.

VF OLIVE BRANCH SENIOR CENTER

Local senior centers report increase in use

By GEOFF GORVIN
News-Sun staff

PEORIA — The Olive Branch and Peoria senior centers are proving that they don't have to compete for participants — there is a large enough need in the area to easily support both.

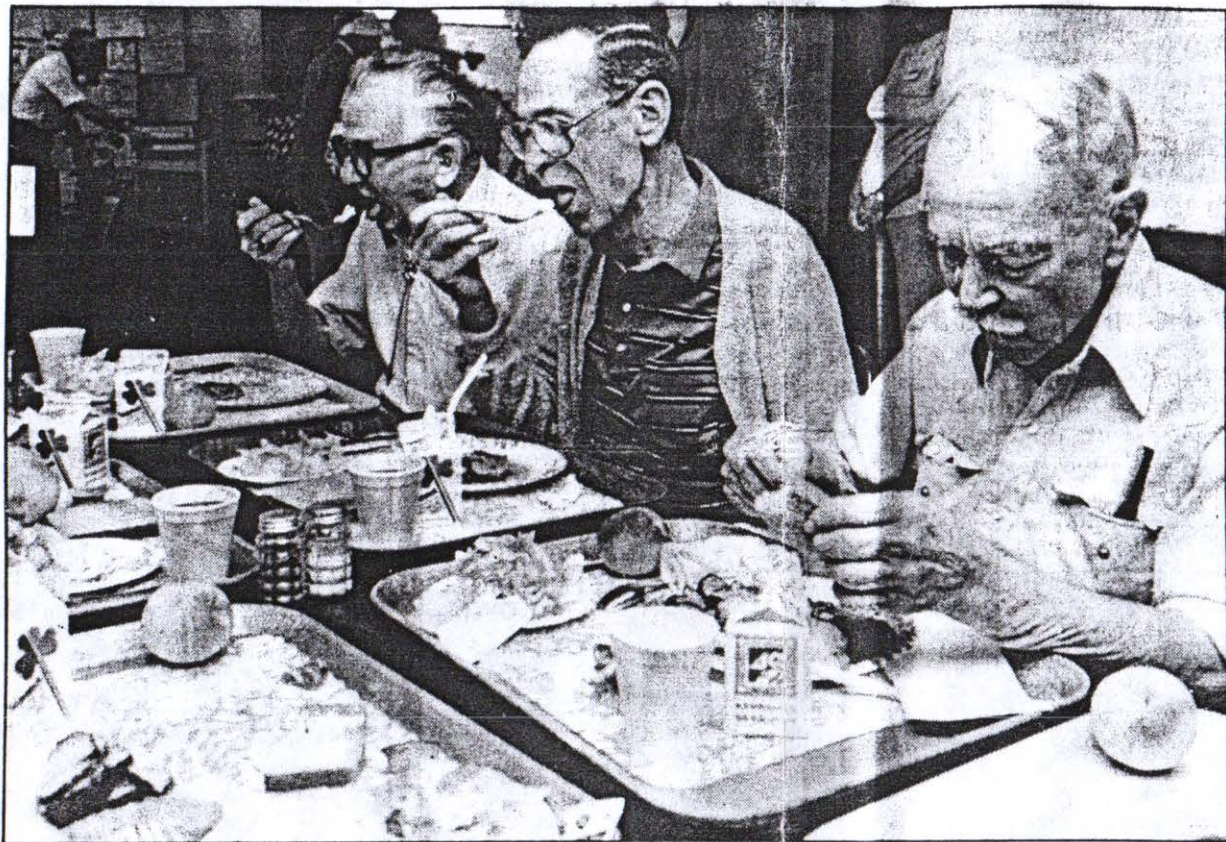
Even though the senior centers are within four miles of each other, they continue to see more and more participants, apparently serving different needs.

The Olive Branch Senior Center opened 10 months ago and has been so successful that it's outgrowing its temporary facilities at the Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave., an official says. The organization is considering moving to larger quarters.

Officials from the Peoria Senior Center say they haven't noticed any decrease in participation since the Olive Branch opened. In fact, participation has increased significantly in the last six months compared to the same period one year ago.

The two senior centers are proving that there is a large and varied need for the services provided by senior centers in the Sun City area. And both are proving that they can be successful.

That's because the two centers serve different populations, said Ivy Wixson, manager of the Olive Branch.



News-Sun photo by Mollie J. Hoppes

OLIVE BRANCH PATRONS — Sun Citians Ken Oring, Joe Lambert and Robert Babbitt eat a warm lunch with others at the Olive Branch Senior Center, 109th Avenue and Olive. The three are among a growing number of local residents using the center.

"There is no comparison (between the types of people served)," Wixson said. "We have our own group of people."

Rosemary Nava, director of the Peoria Senior Center, 8335

W. Jefferson St., agreed.

"I'm sure it has had some effect, but not to where we're concerned," she said, referring to the Olive Branch center's opening. "I think there's room for

been averaging about 90 meals a day and about 1,700 meals a month.

It's not unusual to have to turn people away because too many come for lunch, Wixson said. Last month alone, there were about 60 people denied lunch.

"We have a group of regulars," Wixson said. "There's a big population of regulars that come at least three times a week. It's about 100 people."

Wixson said most of those who eat at the Olive Branch are from Sun City. There are others from surrounding communities as well, such as Peoria and Youngtown.

"The intent of the center was to fill a need in Sun City and the neighboring communities," Wixson said. "There are a lot of people coming to this center who were never going to another center."

"We did have some Peoria people come over at first out of curiosity, but that's their home. You don't leave your home," Wixson said of the Peoria center.

The Peoria center served nearly 1,500 more meals in the last six months than it did in the same period last year, according to statistics. The average number of meals served between July 1 and March 1 was 94

compared with 82 in the same six-month period last year.

The number of registered participants also increased to 374 from 299.

Nava said the center continually turns over a certain percentage of its participants, but the program has been growing apparently by word of mouth.

"They seem to enjoy the programs," Nava said. "They like what they see, I guess."

The Peoria center has a capacity of 200 people. To provide more comfort, the center reduced the capacity to 150, Nava said.

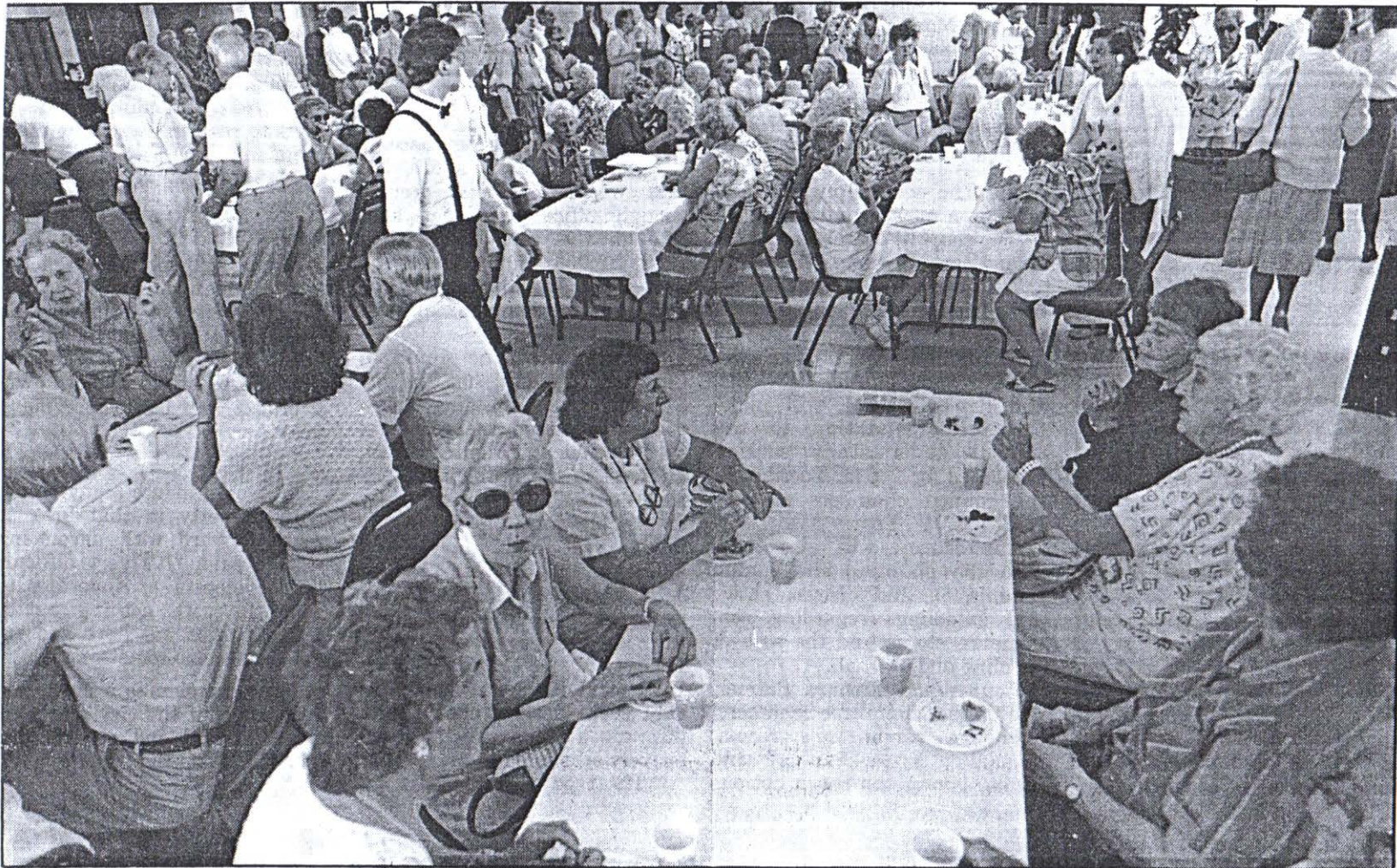
The two lunch programs are much the same. The Peoria center has a cook who helps set the menus and cooks all the meals in the community center kitchen.

The Foundation for Senior Living Inc., a non-profit organization, pays the majority of the program's cost with help from the city. A \$1 donation is asked for each meal.

The Olive Branch has its meals catered from Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital. The center asks for a \$2 donation a meal.

Boswell's parent company, Sun Health Corp., manages the Olive Branch center under contract with the Area Agency on Aging and the Sun City Area Community Council.

Senior center officially opens



News-Sun photos by Stephen Chernek

CELEBRATION FOR CENTER — More than 250 people attended the grand opening of the Olive Branch Senior Center, formerly the Northwest Senior Center, at the Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave.

They gathered Friday in the new senior center for juice, pastries and fruit after the ribbon cutting ceremony. The center is for the Sun Cities and Youngtown.

OVER

By JACQUE PAPPAS

News-Sun staff 1252A

SUN CITY — More than 250 area residents on Friday celebrated the culmination of hard work, planning and determination to establish a senior center for the Sun Cities and Youngtown communities.

Local dignitaries and social service officials attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony that officially gave birth to the Olive Branch Senior Center.

The center, which opened May 4, offers socialization, a hot meal and a variety of structured activities to senior residents in the area, said Ivy Wixson, its director.

"I've noted the enthusiasm of the people coming to the center to enjoy food, socialization and recreation," Wixson said. "It makes me feel good to see people enjoying themselves in here. This is an important step. And the volunteers have been so helpful ... in the daily operation of the center that is so important."

Wixson said three area residents came up with the name for the center, located in the education building of the Church of Christ, 10935 W. Olive Ave.

The public festivities began at 9 a.m. with musical entertainment and remarks from representatives of community service organizations that worked to bring the senior center to fruition in its temporary site.

"A slow beginning has blossomed into an enormous growth," said Vincent De Francis, president of the Sun City Area Community Council, which co-sponsors the center. "At the beginning of the week we had around 80 people here and today more than 100 will eat lunch. This center will also provide preventative health programs that keep the elderly informed."

The senior center operates Area Agency on Aging and the Sun City Area Community Council. Sun Health Corp. manages the facility and balanced hot lunches are provided by the kitchen of Walter O. Boswell Memorial Hospital, Sun City.

Short- and long-term goals for the center have been established with the Maricopa Human Resources Department, said Supervisor Carole Carpenter, D-Dist. 4.

"If you want something to get done you keep pushing until you get it and that's what these communities have done," Carpenter said. "As you get older, the worst thing is to feel isolated from other people. This is a place for people to go and get together and meet with friends. This is a really great achievement."

Although many organizations participated in establishing the senior center, Ruth Houghton, executive director of the Area Agency on Aging, praised the Church of Christ especially for leasing its educational building at minimal cost.

"It wouldn't have been open so soon if it was not for the generous help of the Church of Christ," Houghton said. "I congratulate all members of the community council because they made the community effort that makes something like this happen."

In 1985, Houghton said the Area Agency on Aging and community residents sponsored a survey of 999 residents in Phase I of Sun City (south of Grand Avenue) to evaluate the need for a senior center.

As a result of the survey, community agencies joined to establish short- and long-term goals with the Maricopa County Human Resources Department, Houghton said.

Now, the center will provide a program of planned activities designed to meet the special needs of senior adults and as-

sure that individuals receive well-balanced meals.

But Sylvia Cartsonis, executive director of the Sun City Area Community Council, said the church site is not permanent.

Cartsonis said the community council will continue to work with the county to establish a permanent site for the senior center.

"We have a council with enthusiasm that knows no boundaries," Cartsonis said. "This is an exciting moment for all of us. The best part of the experience

is the cooperation we have had from all the community organizations involved."

"I feel like this is the first big step and it's only the beginning because it's temporary," she said. "We will need a larger site soon and the church will need their facility."

The center, which primarily serves residents in the Sun Cities and Youngtown, is open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays.

Suggested donation for meal service is \$2 and reservations must be made 24 hours in advance at 974-6797.