

Legislation seeks to block schemes, protect retirees

By MIKE GARRETT
Daily News-Sun staff 3/23/93

SUN CITY WEST — The 15-member Governor's Advisory Council on Aging is sponsoring several bills in the Legislature targeting financial frauds and abuses and other elderly issues.

Formed by Gov. Fife Symington in 1991, the Council on Aging has attempted to address statewide issues affecting seniors, Executive Director Anne Lindeman told Sun City West Republican Club members at a Monday meeting in Crestview Restaurant.

Lindeman, a former 14-year state Legislator, said "Our purpose is to bring these issues and problems to the attention of the governor and the Legislature."

In addition to addressing financial abuses of the elderly, the council has an Alzheimer's disease committee trying to improve support services for Alzheimers victims and their families, she said. They also have a social and health services committee that oversees needed support services to seniors and a task force that is seeking to remove senior employment barriers.

The council's senior employment task force has helped introduce a bill to remove the 70-year-old age cap for employment in the state, Lindeman said.

"More people are finding they need to work part time to supplement Social Security or whatever, but a state law says you can be let go ... if you're 70," she said. "We have a lot of very lively 70 year-olds who are very vibrant and healthy and are interested in working part-time."

The financial fraud task force, with members from the state banking, insurance and brokerage community, is targeting telemarketing (telephone) scams, living wills and trust abuses and financial planners who prey on the elderly, she said.

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'We urge people to call the attorney general's office and senior specialist Anita O'Riordan at 542-2124 anytime they have a situation that they think is fradulent. If something looks too good to be true, it is.'

**Anne Lindeman
Executive director
Council on Aging**

torney general's office and senior specialist Anita O'Riordan at 542-2124 anytime they have a situation that they think is fradulent," Lindeman said. "If something looks too good to be true, it is," she said.

She advises seniors who get suspicious calls from telemarketers never to give their bank or credit card account number and Social Security number over the phone under any circumstances.

"Any one of those three will give that person on the other end of the line all the information they need about you, including how much money you have," she said.

Seniors should also guard against purchasing living wills they don't need from people they don't know, she said.

Living wills are designed for people with significant assets to protect and are often sold by people who have no background selling them, Lindeman said.

"It's sign up, fill in the blank, change your investments over to their investments and you're out the money."

"Watch out when they say they'll save you \$3,000 to \$4,000 in probate

costs when the average probate cost in the state is about \$850 with an attorney."

The council is also concerned with the state's lack of a regulatory agency to ensure that financial planners are qualified to give sound financial advice, Lindeman said.

A bill in the state Senate scheduled for a Wednesday hearing calls for all state financial planners to register with the Securities Division of the Arizona Corporation Commission and pay a \$100 annual administrative fee.

"Registering them will provide background information of the person and qualify them so we can find out who these people are," Lindeman said. "This area is so wide open with so many abuses of the elderly, it's really frightening. We have any number of people who have been taken by "financial planners."

Updating the Sun City West Republican Club on recent legislative activities were District 15 legislators Sen. Austin Turner and Reps. Ned King and Jerry Overton.

Turner said a 350-bed substance abuse prison proposed for El Mirage appears to be a dead issue now that Marana has become the leading site candidate with the Arizona Department of Corrections.

"But I'm keeping an eye on it," Turner said. "I'm still getting calls from people who are concerned about it because we need to change the site location on the bill (HB 2372)."

Turner's bill to exclude state commercial property taxes on the non-profit Property Owners and Residents Association building has also passed a key House committee, he noted.

Rep. Overton said the recent legislative session was successful in passing a small state income tax decrease and increasing medical deductions on retirees over 65.

Posse, block watch aid local anti-crime efforts

By TRACY CHARUHAS
Daily News-Sun staff

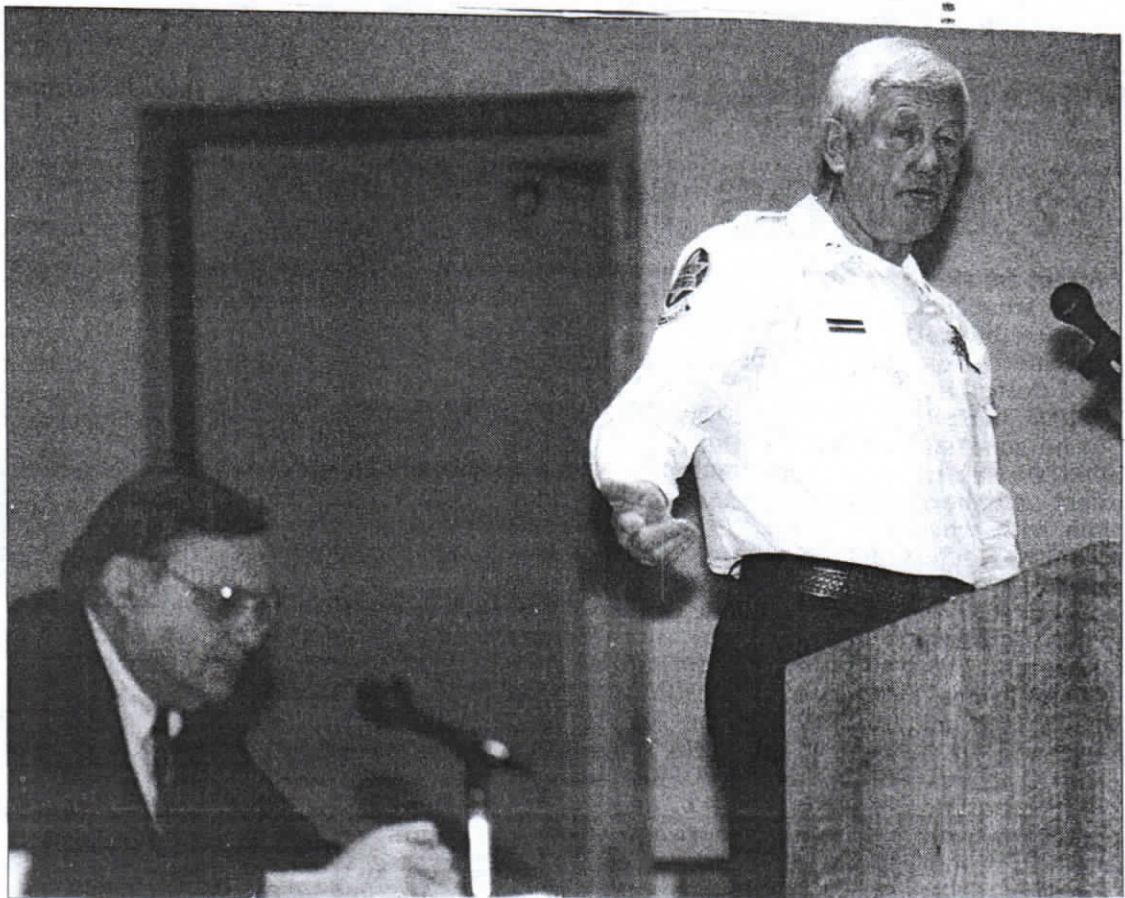
SUN CITY WEST — Most residents of Sun City West say they feel insulated from crime, however, three speakers at a crime seminar on Thursday said even the Sun Cities are vulnerable to criminal activities.

"There isn't a big fence between Phoenix and this area," said Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. "This

community is not immune to crime." Joining Arpaio at the Property Owners and Residents Association's seminar, "Crime in the Sun Cities," were Donald Schorg, commander of the Sun City West posse, and James F. Ahearn, head of the Arizona FBI.

Ahearn said that while the Sun Cities have seen very few violent crimes, the community is highly susceptible. See Volunteers keep, A3.

Sun City West Posse members, above, stand and show off their various uniforms at a meeting of the Property Owners and Residents Association. At right, Posse Cmdr. Donald Schorg speaks while Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio listens at the session Thursday.



Volunteers keep area safe



Steve Cherek/Daily News-Sun

—From A1

ceptible to white-collar crime.

"There is a tendency for con-men to deal with older people," he said. "Anytime you are offered something that is too good to be true, it probably is."

Ahearn commended the residents of Sun City West for their unique ways of fighting crime. He cited the Sun City West posse and the block watch program.

The block watch was taken over by the posse in July 1992. The watch is active in 20 percent of the homes in Sun City West.

"Sun City West has a very low crime rate. Your involvement in crime watch will help keep the rate low," Schorg said.

"I have never seen a community come together like this one," Ahearn said. "The posse and the block watch are the most solid answers to combat violent crime."

"The block watch is simple, Schorg said. "We get together and watch each other's places." Schorg said there are currently 241 posse members but that they must recruit

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**James F. Ahearn
FBI**

even more for the low crime rate to continue.

"We need more people," Schorg said. "Ideally we would like to have four or five patrol cars for Sun City West."

Schorg said the current headquarters are "getting tight" and that some of the posse vehicles need replacing. The growth of the expansion area has increased the need for more posse members he said.

Audience member Bob Hart said people in Sun City West should learn a lesson from the victims of last month's earthquake in Los Angeles.

"Neighbors who didn't even know

each other came together to help one another. I think people here should get to know each other before a crisis situation occurs," Hart said.

Another threat to the safety of valley residents is the increased number of organized crime figures moving to Arizona. He said this trend is the result of legalized gambling in the state. Ahearn has spent most of his FBI career fighting organized crime figures.

"Legalized gambling scares me. Organized crime will follow quickly after gambling is legal," Ahearn said.

The majority of audience members said they found the seminar to be informative. Glenn Sadberg, past PORA president, said he feels safe in Sun City West.

"The speakers gave us a lot of information about what is going on in law enforcement procedures. They are trying to protect us," Sandberg said. "This was a good opportunity for people to voice their concerns."

Curfew violations hold at 3

By JULIE LARSON
Daily News-Sun staff

Area law enforcement officials have only encountered three violators in the Sun Cities since Maricopa County's juvenile curfew was enacted about three months ago, said Maricopa County Sheriff's Sgt. Bob Weeden.

The curfew, which became effective in the first week of January, prohibits youths under 18 from loitering in Sun City and Sun City West between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. daily.

The three violators, all Phoenix residents, were found in Sun City shortly after the curfew went into effect and were ordered to leave the area, Weeden said.

Sheriff's Lt. Phil Yale said law enforcement officials may find more violators this summer when "historically you can expect kids to be out later when school's not in."

"Some of the thought behind (enacting the curfew in Sun Cities) ... was some of the incorporated areas around Sun Cities have curfews, and as those cities enforced them the thought was it would likely drive the juveniles into the county area," Yale said. "This is a preventive measure to try to avoid problems in the future. It allows the officers to be on top of the problem and prevent it before it happens."

Arnold Asterino, commander of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City, said, "We have no problems at all in Sun City with the curfew. Our patrols are out every night and we haven't had any violations, and we're hoping it stays that way."

"We are happy that the curfew is in effect and we're happy there aren't any violations."

Don Schorg, commander of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West, said, "We have had absolutely no curfew violations. ... from an overall community standpoint ... I don't think we had a problem, but I'm still a very strong supporter (of the curfew law)."

"It was a preventative step and I strongly support it."

Sheriff takes crime talk to Sun City West

Private info theft report erroneous

JOY SLAGOWSKI
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Crime concerns dominated the Sun City West Property Owners and Residents Association board meeting Monday.

In light of the break-in that occurred May 2 at the Recreation Centers of Sun City West administration building and Sports Pavilion at R.H. Johnson Rec Center, Lt. Henry Brandimarte of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office District 3 substation, shared information on the sheriff's plans to help combat crime in the area.

The MCSO has made a change in prioritizing suspicious person calls, increasing from priority three to priority one, "which makes it the same priority as a crime in progress, or a traffic accident" Brandimarte said.

"This should help cut down on quality-of-life issues," Brandimarte said.

Brandimarte and Capt. Scott Penrose, District 3 commander, delivered a similar presentation last week to the Sun City Home Owners Association.

In related news, the RCSCW released a statement indicating that incorrect information was released by a

local television station, indicating that personal information such as Social Security numbers was stolen during the burglary.

The Recreation Centers verified that the thieves broke into three safes and took about \$3,700 in cash, as well as a number of checks. No personal information, files or computer records were taken from any of the locations, including the Member Services, which is what the television station reported.

The Recreation Centers is working with its insurance adjuster and banks to ensure that if any of the stolen checks are used, the money will be recovered. And they are contacting all residents whose check may have been taken.

Brandimarte also said the MCSO is working with the Maricopa County Events Center, which is scheduling between 50 to 100 different events, to coordinate better security and traffic control, he said.

Brandimarte said that the No. 1 complaint he receives concerns speeders who are cutting through Sun City West to get to Grand Avenue and avoid Bell Road.

The department has received approval to purchase an unmarked car specifically for traffic enforcement, he said.

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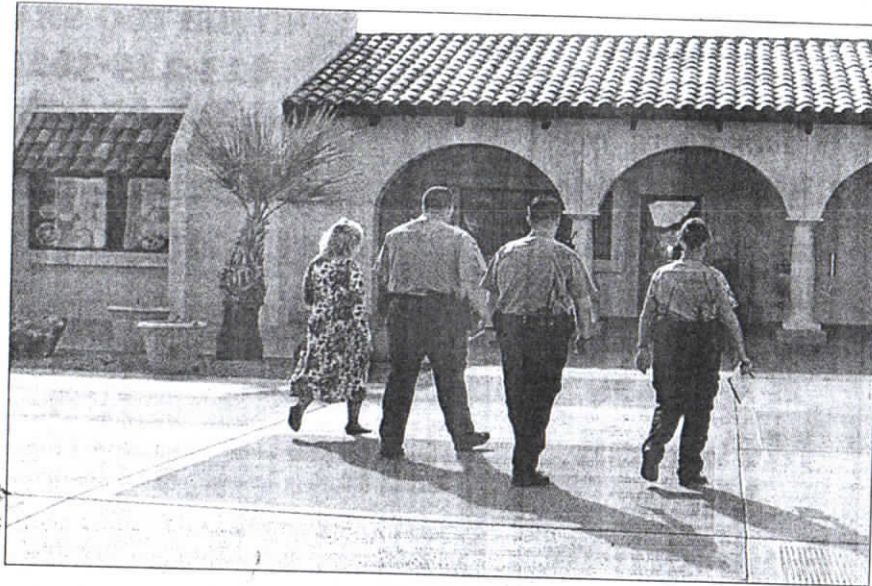
VF

SCW

CRIME

DAILY NEWS-SUN
TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2006

Denise Babirak, human resources officer for the Recreation Centers of Sun City West, escorts Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies into the administration building, scene of an overnight burglary.



SUBMITTED PICTURE

Burglars hit rec center

STAFF REPORT

Sometime Tuesday night or early this morning, burglars invaded R.H. Johnson Recreation Center and got away with cash from several locations after prying open safes and rummaging through drawers.

When Recreation Centers of Sun City West employees arrived at work this morning, they found the administration building, the Sports Pavilion, the Village Store and JiMichael's Strike Zone

restaurant on the north side of the center had been burglarized.

Officials said it's not clear what was taken from each location, other than cash.

The member services offices in the administration building, the nearby Rip 'N' Sew club room, the Village Store and the Sports Pavilion are closed today while Maricopa County Sheriff's Office deputies investigate. JiMichael's Strike Zone restaurant is open.

No further details were known as of press time.

The RCSCW is asking for the community's help in nabbing the burglars.

Anyone who saw any suspicious activity at R.H. Johnson Recreation Center Tuesday night or early this morning or knows of other burglaries in the area is asked to contact Denise Babirak, RCSCW Human Resources officer at 544-6102 or the MCSO at 602-876-1011.

SCW

Veteran Rhythm Tapper, husband report armed break-in

SCW home invaded by three masked men as couple watch TV

By Jack Hawn

Longtime Sun City West residents Marty and Val Gitter, initially reluctant to publicize an armed robbery break-in at their home at 12610 Gable Hill Drive, reconsidered last week after circulating rumors have distorted



Sun City West residents Valerie and Martin Gitter were victims of armed break-in and robbery Dec. 13.

the facts.

Val Gitter—who was a three-time president of the Rhythm Tappers (1991-'94-'99) and still performs with the dancers—at first declined to talk about the robbery which occurred at 9:05

p.m. Dec. 13.

"There are a lot of rumors going around," she said last Thursday when she called this reporter to provide an accurate account of the crime. "Some things (being said) are not true. I think people need to know what really happened."

When Gitter began relating details, she checked her calendar to recall the date of the front-door break-in by three men wearing gloves and ski masks.

"It was a week ago Friday," she said, eyeing the calendar, "Friday, the, uh, 13th. Oh my goodness. I didn't realize that."

Val Gitter reported that she and her husband were watching television, and when she left to go to the laundry room, she heard a "loud bang."

"I ran back to my husband and heard a louder bang," she continued. "The whole house seemed to vibrate. I thought a plane had crashed. I screamed."

Gitter said she saw a man in a

ski mask entering the Arizona room from the kitchen archway.

"He was pointing at us," she continued. "He was pointing his finger, but I thought it was a gun. Another man came into the room. He had a gun and he pointed it at Marty's back."

Told to stop screaming, Val and her husband were ordered to get on the floor when a third intruder appeared, all reportedly having entered by kicking in a locked double front door.

"It was not a security door, but a bolt came out from the kicking," Val Gitter continued. "Marty was face down on the floor; I was sitting down. They took the jewelry I was wearing—my ring, necklace and bracelet—and my purse."

She said the men also took the money from her husband's wallet, but left the wallet and the rest of its contents. Her purse contain-

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C/P TIME

VF

COUPLE: Reports armed break-in, *from Page 1*

ing credit cards, driver's license and other items has not been recovered.

Initially ordered at gun-point into a bedroom pocket-door closet while the intruders searched unsuccessfully for additional cash, the couple later were separated, Gitter said.

She was ordered into the bathroom; her husband was told to wedge himself into a small space between the floor and shelf in a linen closet. He protested, saying it was impossible, but managed to cram himself into the space as best he could.

"I could hear (them talking)," she continued. "They were getting nastier every minute. I really thought I would never see my husband again. After awhile there was no more noise. I thought I

heard a car pull away."

Val Gitter said the men—described by her as in their mid-30s, at least two of them Hispanic—also stole additional jewelry (some genuine, some sentimental pieces) her husband's 40-year coin collection and disabled their cell phone.

"They took three portable phones but left the house phone untouched," she added. "I called the police. They came and set up a crime scene."

Val Gitter said the men, who spoke "in rapid Spanish," were in the house half an hour, "but nobody heard anything, nobody."

She reported seeing only one small hand gun.

The location of Gitters' home, she said, is not near a quick exit from the community.

Golf Clubs Stolen From Webb Security Employee

By Jack Hawn

When a Del Webb employee assigned to security in Sun City West is robbed, that's news.

Ron Ames, who patrols the community three nights a week guarding Del Webb property, including company-owned homes,

reported a recent theft of his golf clubs.

He said the clubs were taken off the back of his cart, parked in his garage at the corner of Caballero and Tom Ryan Drive in the expansion area.

A six-foot, four-inch golfer who carries a one-handicap, Ames said he had specially designed Ping clubs, which he valued, along with a newly purchased bag, at \$1,800.

"I left the garage door open," he regretfully acknowledged. "I was about to close it when the phone rang. It was an old buddy from Ohio, and I guess we must have talked half an hour. When I went back out to the garage, I saw they were gone."

The theft occurred "in broad daylight," he added, "about 6 o'clock in the evening."

Ames, who had no insurance, reported the loss to the sheriff's office.

Ames said the deputy who investigated told him two other

Employee
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Clubs Stolen from Security Employee

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sets of clubs had been reported missing in Sun City West the same day—all daylight thefts.

"My eyes are open all the time now," Ames said. "If I see anything that doesn't look right I investigate, or any suspicious cars traveling around, I make sure I get the license number and follow it to see where it's going."

"I want to make sure it doesn't happen to anybody else."

Ames said he would like to get his clubs back, but he is putting together a new set and will be back on the course soon.

"Life goes on," he said matter-of-factly. "You just have to put it behind you."

Daily News-Sun

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Sun City West says no to crime

By MIKE GARRETT
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY WEST — This community of 21,000 is serious about keeping its neighborhoods crime-free.

Taking a cue from its neighbor — Sun City — Sun City Westers are working to set up block watches.

More than 250 residents have attended the last two block watch organizational meetings in the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West headquarters office at 20450 Stardust Blvd.

"Neighborhood watch is caring and sharing," said Sun City West Block Watch coordinator Merle W. Bodine, who doubles as the home security officer of the Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West.

Bodine said the Sun City West program will be patterned after what has worked in Sun City, but will

be on a smaller scale.

"We're thinking of a regional plan like Sun City. They have divided into 75 regions and are looking for 750 volunteers to man those regions," he said. "They want a regional coordinator in each region who will seek out captains on each block to develop it. We'll probably need 20 regions."

Bodine said the program is catching on much faster than he anticipated.

Thursday's meeting was attended by 94 residents representing 14 Sun City West neighborhoods. The Trail Ridge and Alta Loma neighborhoods had 35 representatives each at the January meeting.

"We'll continue to have two block watch meetings a month as long as people are interested," Bodine said Thursday.

"Right now we have developed 10 block watches in the community," he said. "We have a potential here of probably 500 block watches. We're just scratching the surface but interest is very high."

Sun City West residents interested in forming their own block watch program or to find out meeting times should call the Posse at 584-5808.

While crime prevention is its primary objective, the block watch program includes neighbors keeping an eye on neighbors for possible health problems or changes in routines.

"What it really does is bring people together in a specific geographical area," Bodine said. "Some of these people didn't know each other before they had a block watch meeting. Now they're getting together

See Block, A5

OVER

Block Watch grows in SCW

—From A1

quite often. Some of them even have their own little newsletter."

Sheriff's Deputy Ron Greth, who conducts and organizes the meetings, said block watch groups start when residents get fed up with crime in their neighborhoods.

"These people are serious about what they're doing," added Bodine. "Block watch will reduce the number of incidents of burglaries and other crimes in Sun City West."

Bodine usually tries to attend the first neighborhood meeting to establish a block watch captain and give everybody a chance to meet their neighbors and exchange basic information needed whenever someone is away from home for an extended period.

Capt. Gil Pantea, Sheriff's Posse of Sun City West commander, stressed that Sun City West is not a hotbed of crime with only 55 reported incidences of burglaries and break-ins during 1991 and seven this year.

Greth said burglaries were up overall in Sun City last year but

were almost non-existent in neighborhoods with an organized block watch.

Greth described a number of preventive measures people can take to hinder or discourage burglars, who are usually opportunistic members of youth gangs looking to steal things they can sell quickly.

That means not letting newspapers and mail collect, getting a neighbor to put trash in your can, putting your lights on timing devices, taking advantage of the Posse's free home security checks and engraving valuable personal items with a driver's license number.

Observant neighbors are the real key to block watch, he said.

He related one incident where a block watch neighbor's accurate description of three men and their car after they stole a set of golf clubs from an open garage led to an arrest and conviction.

While at least half the crimes in the Sun Cities occur during daytime hours, Greth said they are unique in one respect. "Anything that moves in the Sun Cities after 10 p.m. is suspicious."