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The Official Newsletter of the

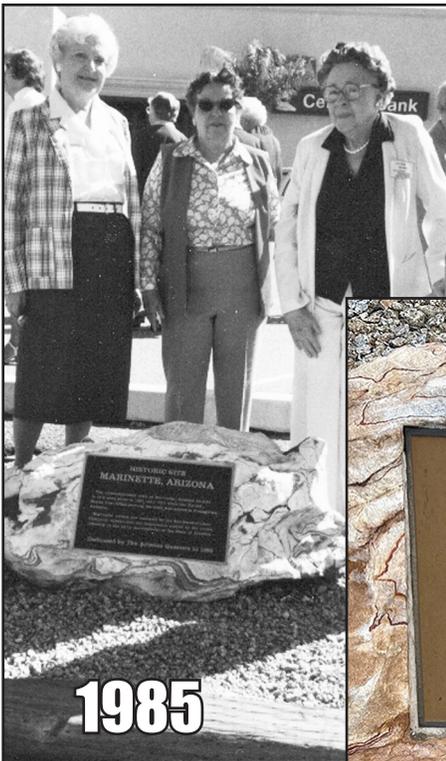
Sun Cities Area Historical Society

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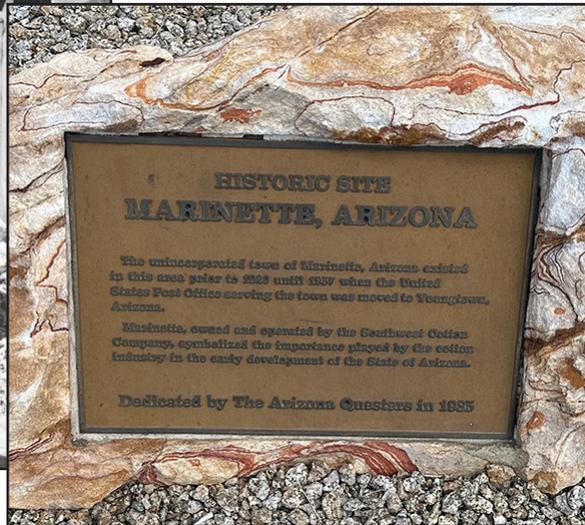
New Home for Local Landmark

Marinette plaque relocated to museum

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1985



2025

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A Sense of Community

A "shared vision" remains crucial to Sun City/SC West success.

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The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is the recipient of a generous donation from the West Valley Art Museum. The historical society owns and operates the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum and the donation will help fund operations at the museum. Constance McMillin of the WVAM Board of Trustees, presents the donation to Andy Kindler, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society Board of Trustees. Standing, from left, Jacquie Mitchell, WVAM administrator; Sue London, WVAM board member; Linda Borton, Del Webb Sun Cities Museum office manager.

West Valley Art Museum donates to Del Webb Sun Cities Museum

Art museum's story ends, but its contributions to the community live on

By Bret McKeand

The West Valley Art Museum has presented a significant gift to the Sun Cities Area Historical Society to help fund operations at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

The art museum -- one of the very first professional nonprofit art museums ever established in a retirement community -- recently ceased operations and dispersed its remaining funds to several West Valley organizations.

The donation was presented by Constance McMillin, secretary/treasurer of the West Valley Art Museum Board of Trustees. Ms. McMillin is well known for her support for local theater and arts organizations, and is a past president and long-time supporter of the Sun Cities Historical Society.

The art museum's roots in the community date back nearly 50 years when a few ambitious Sun City residents first envisioned a local art museum to exhibit fine art from all parts of the world.

In October 1976, a group led by Rex Staley (then president of Sun City Bank) leased a wing of the Merrill Lynch building on Bell Road and 98th Avenue that would become the organization's first temporary home.

Over the next few years, small exhibits were held in banks and churches while funds were raised to build a permanent facility.

In 1983, the Del Webb Development Company donated land for a Sun City Art Museum on land located at 111th Avenue and Thunderbird Road in Sun City.

The plot, however, was small and limited the organization's opportunity

for future expansion. At the same time, museum trustees learned of Arizona State University's plans to create an ASU West campus on land in the Agua Fria River valley off Bell Road, between Sun City and Sun City West.

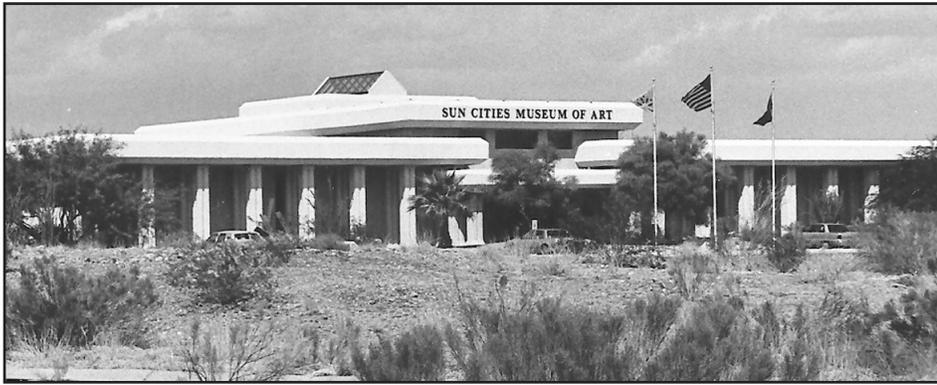
DEVCO agreed to swap the land in Sun City for property between 115th and 114th avenues, deeding it to the museum free and clear.

Construction on the first phase of the museum began in 1984. Despite ASU eventually opting not to build its west campus on the property, the museum forged ahead and officially opened in spring 1985.

The location of the new facility and the growing population of Sun City West prompted a name change to the Sun Cities Art Museum.

The museum's success and continued fundraising efforts led to addition-

Continued on next page



The Sun Cities Art Museum (later the West Valley Art Museum) for many years was located between Sun City and Sun City West off Bell Road on the Avenue of the Arts. Today, the building is home to the Salvation Army. Upper right, the museum's first free-standing building was to be located at 111th Avenue and Thunderbird Road in Sun City. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held in 1983 before the location was moved to Bell Road. Bottom right, During a Peoria City Council meeting, Constance McMillin receives an award presented by the City of Peoria recognizing the museum's contributions to the West Valley.



al expansion. By 1996, the museum's size was three times its original opening size. In addition to art galleries and the Shields-Marsh Gift Shop, by the mid-90s, the art museum included the Hoover Great Galley, the Schuld Library, the Stone Tea Room, Helene's (Gumina) Kitchen and a Sculpture Garden. A secure collections area, a work area and a loading dock were added as well.

The enormous growth of the surrounding cities of Surprise, Peoria and El Mirage prompted a third name change in 1997: The West Valley Art Museum.

Growing community enthusiasm and acceptance of the museum's programs led to the purchase in 1999 of 2.7 acres of adjacent land on the east side of the building, allowing for an entrance on 114th Avenue. The City of Surprise would later rename 114th Avenue to "Avenue of the Arts," which it remains to this day.

Over the years, the museum hosted a number of significant exhibitions that received attention and praise equal to those hosted by professional art galleries in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

Notable artists whose works have been featured at the museum include Phillip Curtis, Joe Tyler, Robert Mc-

"The museum was a beacon for art and culture in the West Valley community."

Call and Paolo Soleri.

The National Watercolor Society and Arizona Artists Guild are among the recognized art organizations featured at the museum.

The economic downturn experienced between 2007 and 2010, however, turned devastating for the West Valley Art Museum.

Debt and the need to borrow money to upgrade the facility prompted officials to use its building and land as collateral for a loan. When the bank failed in 2009, the museum was forced to sell the building.

The City of Peoria stepped in and provided storage for the museum's collections and by 2011, the West Valley Art Museum resumed its public exhibitions at Peoria City Hall.

Since then, the West Valley Art Museum has remained an integral part of the West Valley's art environment

-- hosting a number of exhibits, juried artists competitions and more.

A few years ago the City of Peoria announced plans to renovate and upgrade city hall. Those plans impacted the space used by the art museum and both parties mutually agreed that it would be best if the museum gave up their space at city hall.

After much deliberation, the museum's board of trustees opted to close its doors forever -- dispersing its remaining collections to art galleries and nonprofit cultural organizations.

The board also decided to disperse its remaining funds to cultural organizations throughout the Valley, including the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

"I often reflect on the wisdom and work of the (museum) founders and over the decades the people who shared valuable family art treasures or donated quality fine art pieces from their global travels to be displayed and enjoyed by the community," said Ms. McMillin.

"Plus, the countless regional, national and international artists whose works were presented in our exhibits. The museum was a beacon for art and culture in the West Valley community."

Lakeview Recreation Center raises the curtain on Sun City's second decade



When Sun City initially opened in 1969, its original boundaries were restricted to approximately 10,000 acres. Due to the community's tremendous popularity, who soon placed, the Del Webb Development Company (DEWCO) was on pace to sell most of its available lots and the company eventually made the decision to "jump the tracks" and expand Sun City north of Grand Avenue.

In 1968, DEWCO advanced plans to begin a "second phase" of Sun City. This new phase would be better and architecturally more advanced to appeal to a new generation of retirees. Phase II would include several features that would drastically set it apart from the design of the original Sun City south of Grand Avenue - and structures that remain iconic images central to the community's identity.

In addition to the main-made lake, other innovative elements first introduced to Sun City with the creation of Phase II were the community's first hospital, as well as a signature feature that would set Sun City apart from nearly every other residential project in Arizona: circular streets.



Most important, the new development would include Sun City's fourth recreation center. Built along the shoreline of the new Viewpoint Lake, the new recreation center would be called Lakeview.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the \$1.7 million recreation center were held June 16, 1969. The center would be located on the southeast corner of Thunderbolt Road and 107th Avenue (lots to be rezoned Del Webb Boulevard north of Grand Avenue).

Lakeview Recreation Center officially opened Jan. 3, 1970, and kicked off a month-long celebration to mark Sun City's 10th anniversary. Located on 15 acres, Lakeview was twice as large as any other existing facility in Sun City.



Learn more about the history of Lakeview Recreation Center. Also view world-class photos of the QR code to visit the full story!

Viewpoint Lake: A Sun City Treasure!



When Viewpoint Lake opened in October 1968, it was not only an engineering marvel, but it dramatically changed the landscape of Sun City and gave residents an early glimpse of what was to come as the community prepared for its second decade.

The Del Webb Development Company in 1967 announced plans to expand the community north of Grand Avenue and begin work on what would become Sun City Phase 2. Initial plans called for two lakes, circular streets, a golf course, a recreation center, a hospital and commercial lots.

Workers began excavating the lake in 1968 - removing 16 million cubic feet of material to reach the lake's desired depth of 10 feet. The lake would be approximately 1,850 feet in length and 950 feet wide and combined with its lagoons would provide over two miles of shoreline.

Most of the soil removed was taken across the street to use in the building of the new hospital, while some of it was used to build Lookout Mountain, the small park to your right overlooking the lake. Today, the hill is commonly referred to as Meeker's Mountain, a tribute to John Meeker who served as president of DEWCO.

Two wells with a combined capacity of pumping 3,000 gallons per minute were used to fill the lake. It took 20 days to fill the lake to its final capacity of 1.05 million gallons of water.



Opening Festival 1968

Sailor parade



Boating on Viewpoint Lake



Enjoying the Lake



A grand opening festival for Sun City Lake, as it was then called, was held the first weekend in October 1968, along with the introduction of 18 new model homes to be sold in Phase 2. In addition to several water-skiing exhibitions, entertainment that weekend included a parachute band and sky divers opening their parachutes and gently landing on the lake's serene surface!

Boat races were organized by the Arizona Navy and the lake stocked with fish to tempt anglers who could fish from their own boats or a large pier. Paradeboats, two sailboats and two row boats equipped with 5 horsepower engines were available to rent. The Del Webb Company gifted the lake to Sun City in 1977, and it remains a Sun City treasure and a popular visitor attraction.

Of special note, a polyethylene liner was installed at the bottom of the lake prior to it being filled. The liner prevented water from draining through the porous material left behind after excavation. The original liner was guaranteed to last 25 years - but remained in service for 55 years, only to finally be replaced in 2023!



Lakeview Recreation Center opened June 3, 1970



Meeker Mountain, waterfall, picnic area and lagoons

Learn more about the history of Lakeview Recreation Center. Also view world-class photos of the QR code to visit the full story!

Contact The Sun Cities Area Historical Society / Del Webb Sun Cities Museum for more information

Del Webb Sun Cities Museum partners with RCSC to share community history

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum continues its partnership with the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc. to share with local residents the history of each recreation center.

The museum is creating an historical panel to be installed at each of the recreation centers, and so far this year has completed panels located at Oakmont, Fairway and Lakeview recreation centers, as well as the Sun Bowl and Viewpoint Lake.

Each of the panels provides a glimpse of the history of each center - from its beginning to present state - as told through a brief narrative and, of course, photos from the museum's archives.

"The history panels allow us to share our community's history with those who visit our recreation centers and introduce our museum's efforts to those who might not otherwise be aware of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum," said Andrew Kindler, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society Board of Trustees.

A single panel has been installed near the entrances at Oakmont and Fairway recreation centers. Two panels tell the story at Lakeview Recreation Center and at the Sun Bowl.

Panels remain to be completed for Sundial, Bell, Marinette and Mountain View recreation centers.

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum has created historic panels to tell the history of recreation center facilities and amenities. Completed panels can be found at Oakmont, Fairway and Lakeview Recreation Centers, as well as the Sun Bowl and Viewpoint Lake.

The Sun Bowl Amphitheater, A Gem That Continues to Shine!



1969 Myra Fain / Laurence Wick's Orchestra



1968 Mackey Fain's Handy Tom's musical group

Del Webb was called a "visionary" Webb was a genius, but so were many key employees. None more than John Meeker whose name is synonymous with Sun City's success. An example was Meeker's determination to build the Sun Bowl in 1966, which provided one of the best marketing tools in Sun City's storied history.



1970 Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians

After constructing and dedicating the Sun Bowl in 1966, Webb, Inc. began bringing celebrity entertainers to appear in what was billed the "Sun Bowl Celebrity Series." The first act was Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians appearing on February 5, 1967. Tickets were \$1.50, and all 7,000 tickets quickly sold, as Lombardo was at the height of his fame.



1971 Laurence Wick's Orchestra / 7,000 plus attendance



1972 Family Circus

In following years, the Celebrity Series became the hottest ticket in town. Besides residents, attractions brought by Sun City. After watching Sunday afternoon shows, guests were "lured" to the largest set of model homes, which helped sell countless numbers of houses.



1973 Sun Bowl Amphitheater

1974 Family Circus

In the late 70's, Webb, Inc. began Sun City West and built the majestic Sundome Center for the Performing Arts. With that completion, the company wanted to build off of the Sun Bowl and offered ownership to the RCSC on a 3-year trial basis. Operational costs were projected at \$70,000 per year, which raised concern. In April of 1981, RCSC sent a ballot to the membership asking for a YES or NO vote. Ownership would require a \$2 per year increase in annual assessments from \$40 to \$42. The outcome was overwhelming: 15,575 Yes, 0-288 No and 2,059 no preference. Fortunately! The vote outcome has provided an entertainment venue and host for special events for succeeding generations.



1975 Christy Minotrels Rich Little



1976 Laurence Wick's Orchestra

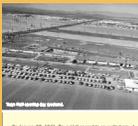


1974 Family Circus

Learn more about the history of Lakeview Recreation Center. Also view world-class photos of the QR code to visit the full story!

Contact The Sun Cities Area Historical Society / Del Webb Sun Cities Museum for more information

FAIRWAY RECREATION CENTER



Town Hall...Jaw Fairway Recreation Center

The Webb Development Corporation (DEWCO) chose a site for Sun City's fourth recreation center in 1967. The site was located on the southeast corner of Thunderbolt Road and 107th Avenue (lots to be rezoned Del Webb Boulevard north of Grand Avenue).

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the \$1.7 million recreation center were held June 16, 1969. The center would be located on the southeast corner of Thunderbolt Road and 107th Avenue (lots to be rezoned Del Webb Boulevard north of Grand Avenue).

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OAKMONT RECREATION CENTER



Oakmont Recreation Center was the 1967-1968 recreation center constructed in Sun City. A benefit as a major first point and key attraction that welcomed residents to Sun City, when the community first opened in January 1, 1969. A large recreational recreation center placed a site in Del Webb's new vision of the "Sun Bowl" which included a large pool, a tennis court, a playground, a picnic area, and a large parking lot. Along with a large golf course, housing, a school and a large shopping center, the center provided a complete Sun City lifestyle at that time.

For the remaining pool, however, several "rival" images of "Crazy Club" site, along with a "Rival Club" site, agreed. The "Rival Club" site was built in 1969.

Originally named Community Center, the facility was renamed Sun Bowl South. Sun Bowl South was built in 1969. The "Rival Club" site was built in 1969. The "Rival Club" site was built in 1969. The "Rival Club" site was built in 1969.



Learn more about the history of Lakeview Recreation Center. Also view world-class photos of the QR code to visit the full story!

Recreation Centers of Sun City West celebrates opening of Lizard Acres Pub

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West, Inc. in October officially opened Lizard Acres Pub in the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center.

The pub's name pays tribute to Lizard Acres, the name of the ranch that once existed in the area prior to the Del Webb Development Company creating Sun City West.

Back in the 1940s, R.S. Spurlock and J.C. Wetzler of Holbrook, Ariz., were looking over a proposed 1,900-acre site for a new ranch located one mile east of the intersection of Grand Avenue and Bell Road.

It was Spurlock who reportedly declared, "Jumpin' Jehosophat, this country isn't fit for raising anything but lizards!"

The name stuck, and Lizard Acres became the popular name for the land officially owned by the Circle One Livestock Company.

The company would become one of the largest and most successful cattle companies in Arizona. Cattle



Katy O'Grady of the Recreation Centers of Sun City West, Inc. and Alan Schlemmer of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum admire the new panel greeting visitors to Lizard Acres Pub.

and people lived on the land for the next 30 years, until DEVCO took over the land and began building Sun City West.

Near the entrance to the pub is a panel explaining the pub's name and sharing the history of the famed cattle ranch.

The panel was created by Katy O'

Grady, activities director for the Recreation Centers of Sun City West, Inc., and Alan Schlemmer, vice president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society Board of Trustees.

Historical photos included in the panel were provided by the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

Museum hosts holiday party December 2

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum will celebrate the holidays with its popular annual Christmas Party planned this year 4-6 p.m. December 2.

Admission is free to members; \$5 for non-museum members.

Light refreshments will be served and entertainment will be provided by the Sun City Poms.

As always, the museum will be festively decorated throughout each room.

Docents display traditional holiday decorations, many of them from their own personal family collections.



The museum's living room will once again feature a 1960's aluminum Christmas tree illuminated by a revolving lighted color carousel lamp.

Visit the museum's website at www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org for additional information and updates.



An official publication of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society © 2025 SCAHS 10801 Oakmont Drive Sun City, AZ 85351 (623) 974-2568 email: scahsm@gmail.com www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is certified by the Arizona Historical Society

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and presentation of the records and artifacts for Sun City, Arizona, (the world's first Active Adult Retirement Community), and its sister city, Sun City West. The Society's headquarters are located in the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, in one of the five original Sun City model homes.

Museum Hours: noon-3 p.m. Sunday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday (Or for groups of six or more by appointment) Admission: \$5 (18 and over) Free to Museum Members Museum open Thursdays January through May. Hours reduced in June.

Board of Trustees

- Andy Kindler President Alan Schlemmer Vice President Michael Marting Treasurer Barb Wagers Secretary Tim Ericson Anne Levig Catherine DuBois Sue Clark Pat Popp Paul Webster

Office Manager: Linda Borton Newsletter Editor: Bret McKeand

Message from the President

Member support is the driving force behind YOUR Museum!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, I want to say a big, heartfelt THANK YOU to all our museum members and for their continued support.

The support from our members is vital to the success and growth of the Sun Cities Museum.

As we prepare to send out annual membership renewals, I hope you will not only continue your value support -- but encourage your friends and neighbors to consider becoming loyal friends of the museum as well.

We hope you have had an opportunity to view the oral history videos that are available in the Sundome Jr. Theater, on our website or our YouTube channel. The project exceeded our expectations as the history makers who were interviewed did an exceptional job at telling their individual stories about working with Del Webb and John Meeker. If you have not watched them, I encourage you to take some time to do so. You will not be disappointed.

Other highlights from 2025 include:

Relocating the granite marker designating the town of Marinette to a permanent home at the Museum. The need for the relocation was precipitated by the sale of the property where it was previously located. The marker is important in the Sun City story as it was the predecessor town on



Andy Kindler 2025 President Sun Cities Area Historical Society

the land where Sun City is today. Watch your email for notification of our dedication ceremony targeted for November. We hope you will join us.

Our Sun City story is now documented in a newly released bestselling book titled, "Coming of Age in Retirement," written by Tom Marks. Mr. Marks visited the Museum for over six (6) hours to learn more about Del Webb's vision of a new option for retirement lifestyle. He became so enthralled on what has happened in Sun City and Sun City West over the decades that he wrote two chapters of his book on our communities. If you are so inclined, it is an easy read that puts a unique spin on how Americans adapt to retirement.

The Acquisitions and Preservation Team has continued to digitize historical documents from Sun City and Sun City West, and we encourage you to go to our website to peruse their work. They have converted over 20,000 documents and are continuing their mission.

The Museum has continued to work with both RCSC and RCSCW to create historical panels to

be displayed at the Recreation Centers and other key landmarks.

As we look toward 2026, the Museum Trustees have been asked to work with the RCSC staff to plan a celebration and event to open the time capsule that was put in place under the Liberty Bell in November 1976. Stay tuned as this should be a fun, historic and nostalgic day.

We look forward to your continued support for 2026. Your support allows us to continue to upgrade and add new displays to the Museum.

Our docents frequently hear comments from guests expressing that the content and presentation of the information in the Museum was a pleasant surprise. This reaction cannot happen without the commitment of our members as they choose to include us in their annual giving.

We have shared with you before that our mission is to "promote and preserve" the history of the Sun Cities. Most of our operating funds come directly from membership dues. Annual memberships begin as low as \$25 - and entitle you to free admission at the museum and our events throughout the year.

Please encourage your friends and neighbors who are new to the Sun Cities to stop by the original model home and walk through history. Better yet, why don't you come visit with them!

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A New Home for Historical Landmark

Marinette marker relocated to Del Webb Sun Cities Museum

By Bret Mckeand

After 40 years of sitting next to a parking lot and going unnoticed by most passersby, the historical marker denoting the original site of downtown Marinette has been relocated to a more fitting home: the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

The Marinette Chapter of the Arizona Questers dedicated the plaque in 1985 to mark the original location of Marinette, the farming community that once existed before Sun City was created in 1960. The plaque, attached to a large rock, was located next to a church on 105th Avenue, just south of Grand Avenue.

The marker was inconspicuous, and some might even say hidden. At times it was obstructed by overgrown bushes. Even after the bushes were

removed it was easy to miss. There were no signs pointing out the marker or explaining what it represented.

The marker simply sat in plain sight, but seemingly invisible. The road adjacent to the monument experienced very little traffic. Even those who went looking for the Marinette marker would often pass by it several times before finally stumbling over it.

Earlier this year, the church sold the building to a medical company. The building has remained empty most of this year and plans for its future have yet to be determined.

In a move to protect and preserve the marker, museum officials reached out to both the building's new owners and Maricopa County to inquire about obtaining the monument and relocating it approximately one mile away to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum.

The original chapter of The Questers that purchased the monument had

long since folded, but the museum did reach out to the state chapter to inform them of its intentions. The state organization expressed its support for the plan.

The new owners of the building were pleased with the museum's interest in saving the marker, but as it turns out, the Marinette monument sat on county property. Past Museum Board of Trustee President Bret McKeand reached out to County Supervisor Debbie Lesko for assistance.

"Our concern was that one day the Marinette marker would simply disappear. It's an important part of Sun City's history and we wanted to do everything we could to protect and preserve the monument," said Mr. McKeand.

"Obviously, the museum is an ideal permanent home for the marker. The

Continued on next page



Far left: The dedication of the plaque in 1985. Above, center, the plaque next to a building on 105th and Coggins in Sun City prior to its move to the museum. Left, county workers place the marker at the museum. Above: Paul and Nancy Herrmann and Andy Kindler welcome the plaque to the museum.

museum already celebrates the history of Marinette with exhibits inside our building, and having the monument located outside gives it the attention it rightfully deserves,” adds Mr. McK-eand.

Supervisor Lesko stepped up and provided invaluable assistance. Not only did she provide permission for the museum to take ownership of the marker, but she also arranged for the county to move the monument to the museum at no charge.

On July 24, a Maricopa County Department of Transportation team of workers officially moved the marker to its new permanent home at the museum. The move went off without a hitch and the Marinette plaque is now prominently located in the museum’s front yard, next to the driveway.

“We are very excited that this piece of history was able to be saved and relocated to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum,” said Andrew Kindler, president of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society Board of Trustees. The historical society owns and operates the museum.

“It allows us to continue to share the beginnings of the community that eventually became Sun City,” he added.

Plans are to create a permanent panel next to the marker to explain its history – and journey – and to encourage visitors to learn more about the history of Marinette at exhibits inside the museum and on its website.

The outdoor panel will be installed later this fall and unveiled at an official ceremony to celebrate the relocation of the Marinette Historical Monument.

“On behalf of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society, we are extremely appreciative and thankful to the crew from the Maricopa County Department of Transportation who relocated and placed the marker to its current location,” said Mr. Kindler.

The history of Marinette dates back over a century.

Marinette was initially a simple train stop established in the Northwest Valley in the 1890s. Two men from Marinette, Wis., purchased land surrounding the tracks and established a water stop, naming it after their hometown.

Developer R.P. Davie purchased the land in 1912 with the intention of creating a residential community called The Orchard Town of Marinette. No community was ever built, and Mr. Davie sold the land in 1920 to the Southwest Cotton Company.

For the next 40 years Marinette was a cotton farming community. Stretching from approximately 103rd Avenue to 111th Avenue on both sides of Grand Avenue, Marinette at one time had a school, two stores and a cotton gin.

By the mid-1950s, the land was owned by the J.G. Boswell Company. Concerned with the diminishing water table, James Boswell worked out a deal to sell the land and all that he had accumulated – which by that time included nearly all the area now encompassing Sun City and Sun City West – to the Del E. Webb Development Company.

In July of 1959, the Webb company began building Sun City, the nation’s very first active-adult retirement community. The Town of Marinette still existed, and farming continued while the first Sun City homes were constructed.

Several of Marinette’s buildings still stood the day Sun City opened on Jan. 1, 1960, but within a few years, all traces of the community had disappeared.

The story of Marinette can be found at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, Sun City.

Museum begins work on SC West 50th anniversary book

By Bret McKeand
Marketing Chair

Many of our members are familiar with the “Images of America: Sun City” book published by Arcadia Publishing and released in 2011 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Sun City.

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society, owners of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, is pleased to announce we are now partnering with Arcadia to publish a companion book showcasing the history of Sun City West just in time for its 50th anniversary in 2028.

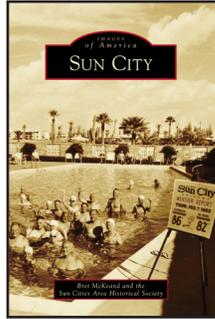
The book will be part of Arcadia’s “Images of America” series and is expected to be released in early 2027.

The book will be very similar to the “Images of America” Sun City” book in format and content. All author royalties earned by the sale of both books benefit the Sun Cities Area Historical Society.

In addition to the museum, the book will be available at Amazon, all major book stores and many other locations throughout the community.

Museum volunteers will pull together the photographs and historical information to be included in the book. As with the Sun City book, I'll oversee the effort and work with the Arcadia team on developing the final product.

I'm looking forward to the project, and I think our members will be happy with the finished product. The Sun City version has sold quite well over the years and remains our top seller in



Bret McKeand, author of the Sun City "Images of America" book, published in 2011, will oversee a Sun City West version scheduled to be published in 2027.

the museum gift shop. But visitors always ask us about doing a Sun City West edition – so this new book will be a nice companion to the Sun City book.

Photos for the Sun City West version will come primarily from the archives of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, the Recreation Centers of Sun City West and Independent Newsmedia Inc. USA. The book will showcase the community over the past five decades and provide a look at the development of the recreation centers, commercial development, the Sundome Center for Performing Arts, local health care and clubs and organizations and more.

The initial Sun City edition was the brainchild of Jane Freeman, one of the founders of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society. In 2008 she recruited Paul Herrmann (at the time the executive director of the Sun City Visitors Center)

and I to put together a book to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Sun City.

Arcadia Publishing was just then launching its ‘Images of America’ series nationwide and we thought their format offered the best way to promote the museum, showcase our great

collection of photographs and raise funds for the organization.

I recall spending many weekends with Jane going through the SCAHS photo archives – always wearing gloves and handling each photo as if it were an original version of the Declaration of Independence! She personally chose many of the photographs published in the Sun City book.

Jane passed away in 2013, but her memory remains our guiding light at the museum.

Note to museum members: Do you have a unique Sun City West photograph that we might consider including in the book we are about to publish? We are especially looking for photographs that depict social gatherings and community events.

If so, drop me an email describing the photo or if possible, send me a scanned photo. Send suggestions to scibret@aol.com.



Museum recognition

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum was recently recognized as a "Certified Historical Institution" by the Arizona Historical Society. The society presented the museum awarded the museum "Tier 1" status for 2025.

Building a sense of community

A 'shared vision' by developer and residents continues to sustain the Sun Cities

By **Bill Pearson**
Historian

We refer to Sun City as the "Community that Changed a Nation," but what is often lost in our evolution over the years is how and why Sun City and Sun City West became so unique in comparison to the 3,000 other age restricted communities across the country.

We know those who tried to copy DEVCO could build homes, recreation centers, golf courses and start clubs. That was the easy part, especially when almost every one of them that followed were smaller, and more focused on selling them off quickly, as opposed to shaping a community from within.

When looking at our two communities, we see a plethora of support organizations most other senior communities don't have. We were constructed in ways that others opted not to embrace. In many cases, it was because they were built in cities where those services were paid for by tax dollars. Both Sun City and Sun City West have fascinating histories regarding incorporation. Rather than belabor the point here, suffice to say, residents didn't want to become a city.

Which is the point of this article; why did those living in Sun City and Sun City West reject the idea? There's a lot to the question and someday down the road, we can dig into it. For now, let's



look at my perspective; as my old friend Ben Roloff would say, from the point of view of a self-proclaimed historian.

It just happens to coincide with my argument why our two communities were so successful. DEVCO spent a lot of money ensuring we would not only survive, but flourish and it goes well beyond the investment of the physical structure. We often refer to Del Webb's remarks about being able to build the buildings -- but only those living here could make it a community.

Therein is the answer and it is one that should never be forgotten or overlooked. Initially the company tried a hands-off approach, allowing the members to solve their own problems. John Meeker saw and better yet, understood the importance of working in concert with the members.

Holding their hand, helping them find their direction and bringing those living here together at every opportunity was critical to our success.

Events were a constant feature. From monthly gath-

ings, to new home openings, to recreation center's massive parties, life was an endless array of celebrations of the new active way of life. In the coming months we will highlight those events.

Let me conclude with my opinion on the out-

come John Meeker strove to achieve in Sun City and Sun City West: His vision was to do everything in his power to build a sense of community. One that would outlive his time with the company and leave us all with a bright future.

When I read John's journal, it was clear it wasn't the money that drove him. He was most proud of building two communities where responsibility, accountability and ownership were the foundation of our existence.

He understood our survival was reliant on those living here embracing the concept that a sense of community mattered.

It still does.

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Visit our website to dive deeper into the history of the Sun Cities



<https://delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org/>

The Community That Changed A Nation!

Museum joins Arizona's efforts to celebrate nation's 250th birthday!

Sun City citizens celebrated the nation's bicentennial in 1976 by creating an exact replica of the famed Liberty Bell that remains on display at Bell Recreation Center.

Thanks to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, the community's Liberty Bell will also play a role in the nation's 250th birthday celebration!

Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes has created the Arizona America250 Commission with the goal of compiling and promoting a comprehensive list of activities throughout the state designed to celebrate the nation's semi-quincentennial in 2026.

The commission is creating an interactive "Passport250" to highlight 250 remarkable places across Arizona, from iconic landmarks and hidden gems to must-try restaurants and cultural destinations.

Part of the commission's plan is to create a traveling museum that will visit communities throughout Arizona and promote not only the nation's 250th anniversary, but the rich heritage of Arizona as well.

In addition to a traveling museum, the commission will also post an expansive list of events and activities specifically created to celebrate the nation's independence in 2026. Included in that list will be the opening of a time capsule buried in the base of the Sun City's Liberty Bell.

The museum was one of the first organizations to meet with Mr. Fontes and his commission. Earlier this year, Mr. Fontes toured the museum and was excited to learn more about the history of our Liberty Bell.

The Sun City Liberty Bell arrived in Sun City on July 5, 1976, and was officially dedicated on Nov. 11 in Memorial Garden at Bell Recreation Center. The bell's base contains a time capsule set to be opened in 2026. Whatever is included in the time capsule will be of-



The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum has partnered with the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc. to host an exhibit in 2026 to showcase the items included in the time capsule located in the base of the Liberty Bell at Bell Recreation Center. The time capsule is set to be opened during a special ceremony in 2026, marking the 50th anniversary of the creation of the bell.



<https://azsos.gov/az250>

officially exhibited at the museum once the capsule is opened.

The information on the Sun City Liberty Bell will be included in the Arizona America250 Commission celebration. Once plans for opening the capsule are finalized, that information, too, will be included in the commission's online calendar.

The history of the Liberty Bell can today be found at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum, 10801 W. Oakmont Drive. Visit the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum website to learn more about the Sun Cities Area Historical Society and its beginnings.



Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes visited the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum earlier this year to learn more about the community's famed bicentennial Liberty Bell and to enlist the museum's participation in the Arizona 250 project. The project is compiling a list of popular statewide events aimed at commemorating the nation's 250th birthday next July. Above, Mr. Fontes visit with SCAHS President Andy Kindler and VP Alan Schlemmer.





Welcome to Sunshine Service

People, meeting needs of people is what Sunshine Service is all about. Sunshine Service lends medical and children's equipment to residents of Sun City and we have been doing so for over 52 years. We are a charitable non-profit Arizona corporation and are funded by voluntary contributions and memorial gifts.

While the equipment is available for the use of all residents or visitors staying with residents, the equipment must not be taken out of Sun City on a permanent basis. As a matter of control, equipment is loaned only to Sun City residents.

Records show that as the population of Sun City grew, so did use of our medical equipment. Savings for Sun City residents have been calculated periodically; in 2015, it was estimated that residents saved over two million dollars in cost of equipment for that year alone.

Sunshine Service, Inc has received local, state and national recognition. Awards received include the George Washington Honor Medal for services to the sick and handicapped from the Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge in Pennsylvania.

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Friends of the Museum



A huge thank-you to the Sundial Men's Club for its continual support of the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum. The club once again donated \$2,500 to the museum. Museum President Andy Kindler, right, accepted the gift.



Past President Bret McKeand presented a history talk in October to the Sun City Rockhounds Club at Fairway Recreation Center. In a show of appreciation, the club donated \$150 to the museum. From left, Museum Office Manager Linda Borton, Rockhounds Vice President Cherly Alvord and Bret.



Beverly Taylor visited the museum earlier this year. Her parents -- LeRoy and Grace Davidson -- were part of Sun City's opening day activities on Jan. 1, 1960.

Del Webb Sun Cities Museum: We Love Our Visitors!



Garden Club of Sun City

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum offers group tours featuring fascinating stories about Sun City and Sun City West.

Call us at 623-974-2568 to book a group tour. We look forward to welcoming you to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum!



The Colonnade in Surprise



Special Visitor!!!!



Prof. Anna Andrzejewski, Department of Art History (University of Wisconsin-Madison) visited the Museum as part of her ongoing research on the history of the architecture of retirement communities. She's currently completing a book on Florida's post-WWII vacation and retirement communities, and came to the museum for a comparable perspective. Anna is also working with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, which was also related to her visit to the Valley of the Sun.



Tip Top Dancers entertain at Del Webb Birthday Party

The Tip Top Dancers helped the museum celebrate the Del Webb's birthday during our annual Del Webb Birthday Party in May.

The group performed several dance routines and took time to admire a paver located on the

museum's Pathway of Friends.

A history panel will be on display at the museum through the end of the year recognizing the group's four decades of entertaining local audiences.



Docent Karen Herzog giving a tour to new Sun City residents from Washington State and their friend visiting from Tucson.

Become a docent at the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum

Help bring the history of the Sun Cities to life!

Are you passionate about local history? Love meeting new people? Ready to share the stories that shaped Sun City and Sun City West? Join our amazing team of volunteer docents and be part of something truly meaningful!

As a docent, you'll become a storyteller, guide, and ambassador, connecting visitors to the vibrant past of the Sun Cities. Whether you're leading tours, sharing fascinating facts, or chatting with guests, you'll play a key role in preserving the legacy of our community.

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a training manual, training program, and pair you with a seasoned docent to guide you every step of the way.

This is a fantastic opportunity to learn, share, and be part of a team that brings history to life. All you need is curiosity, a love for learning, and a heart for community.

Training begins November 8, 15, 22 at 10:00 a.m. at the museum.

Help us keep our history alive ~ one tour at a time!

Get started today! Apply online <https://delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org/docent-information/> or give us a call at 623-974-2568.

Speakers Bureau has a story -- or stories -- to tell!

Is your club, organization or business looking for a speaker to present a program showcasing the history of the Sun Cities and the Northwest Valley?

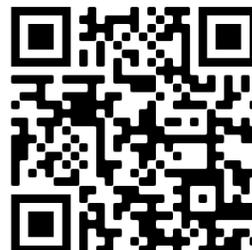
The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is pleased to provide professional speakers to share programs on several interesting topics, including the history of Sun

City and Sun City West, as well as talks highlighting the careers and companies built by Del E. Webb and Jim Boswell, two men hugely responsible for the success of the Sun Cities.

Talks are presented free of charge, although donations to the museum are always appreciated!

Visit our website or scan

the QR code below with your phone camera; find speaker topics under "Contact Us."



Alan Schlemmer presenting a talk on the history of Sun City West during a recent TORCH Academy class.

Sun Cities Area Historical Society/
Del Webb Sun Cities Museum
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