

SUN CITY WEST
INDEPENDENT

Clubs

Club window salutes Fourth of July holiday; **15**



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EPCOR meets with residents to discuss rates, consolidation

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Sun City West residents have paid the same rate for water since 2019, but later this week the process will begin for EPCOR Utilities, Inc., to raise the water rates.

The company is filing a water rate case with the Arizona Corporation Commission for all of its water districts, excluding San Tan. According to a statement from EPCOR officials, the proposal includes three primary components: consolidating smaller systems — Gateway, Sun City, Sun City West and Rio Verde — into the larger Sonoran district, introducing a more gradual approach to adjusting certain costs over time and revising the water usage tiers in Paradise Valley.

According to Sarah Skaggs, associate director of customer operations at EPCOR Utilities, Inc., the company will file this month. Standalone rates with no consolidation and a three year phase in

• See **EPCOR** on page **5**

Directors meet consensus to move ahead with R.H. Johnson pool deck repair



The R.H. Johnson pool, 19803 R.H. Johnson Blvd., will have the pool deck replaced this fiscal year. (Submitted photo/Recreation Centers of Sun City West)

AquaFlex was the suggested product for the deck surface

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West Governing Board directors continue looking at the pool deck at R.H. Johnson Pool and the failures with warranty repairs.

According to Christine Novello, governing board president, the board set this fiscal year goals last September and put the pool deck at the top of the list. The board reached consensus during a recent workshop to recommend moving forward with an option called AquaFlex.

Capital Improvement Projects Manager Herschel Workman presented several options including EPDM, EPDM with coating, acrylic deck, AquaFlex and Life Floor. All of these options coat the existing concrete deck.

Other options such as travertine pavers, porcelain pavers and artistic pavers, which require the removal of the existing concrete deck, were considered.

Herschel said the purpose is to achieve consensus on which surface to install with the $725,000 in the next fiscal year upcoming budget. This was narrowed down to AquaF-

• See **Pool** on page **8**

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HEAT DOESN'T STOP SUN CITY WEST HIKERS

Six hikers braved a very warm June 11 while hiking at McDowell Sonoran Preserve, the Brown's Ranch Trailhead, in Scottsdale. The large loop hike included the trails of Upper Ranch Trail, Cone Mountain Trail, Upper Ranch Trail, Brown's Ranch Road Trail and back to parking lot, covering 5.5 miles with an elevation change of 182 feet and 308 feet of total gain. The total time was two hours and 15 minutes with a move time of one hour and 59 minutes, for an average of 21.4 minutes per mile. Those participating were David Stringham, John Mitchell, Julie Szafraniec, Kurt Weber, Michael Weingarten and Michael Anenen. (Submitted photo/Michael Anenen)



CLUB MEMBERS CRAFT KEEPSAKES

During a recent Saturday morning, Scrapbooking, Papercrafts & More Club member Lynne Marion taught others how to make the easel card. Easel cards feature a front panel that, when removed from an envelope, lifts upwards and bends at an angle so the card may be displayed like a framed photo. The unique style transforms a greeting card into a pretty home decoration. SPAM meets in the Beardsley center's Agave Room on Thursday (9 a.m.-3 p.m.), Friday (9 a.m.-3 p.m.) and Saturday. (9 a.m.-5 p.m.). Call Sandy Cryer, club president, at 623-640-9387, visit scrapbooking.scwclubs.com or email scwscrapbook@gmail.com for more information. Pictured, Marion explains the construction and set-up of the portrait-styled easel card to club members DeeDee Runner and Kiplyn Packer (bottom left). (Submitted photo/Christina Hecht)







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EPCOR

• From page **1**

gradual step to about $54.41 for all customers using about 7,000 gallons.

The current rates residents are paying are based on 2019 and 2021 cost of service levels, while inflation has increased by approximately 25%-30%, she said. Proposed consolidation helps to establish a shared rate structure, stabilizes rates with costs spread across customers, reduces large rate swings, improves reliability with connected systems and helps control costs and support long term water planning, said Skaggs.

Based on the graphical information provided by EPCOR officials, the proposed water rate change for a 4,000 gallon water user is $39.87

About $.32 of that goes into capital investment, $.31 covers operating costs and $.34 goes to taxes and regulatory items. That leaves about $.03 return on investment, but Skaggs said it is just an opportunity, not a guarantee.

"As costs increase, it directly reduces that margin and at some point we cannot continue to absorb that," she explained.

She said $56 million is needed annually to maintain the current service.

Skaggs said this formal rate request can take up to two years to review and is based on the cost from 2025. Customers are notified to share comments and attend meetings, and every question will be reviewed.

She said this is needed to protect the community and water supply today and in the future by replacing aging pipes, well and facility and expanding the water systems and strengthening storage and delivery. Water can be moved where it is needed, when it is needed.

Skaggs said Sun City West operates solely on a ground water system and is now interconnected with Agua Fria.

Interconnecting means water can be moved to where it is needed, and no one experiences outages.

Consolidation is being proposed between Sun City, Sun City West and Rio Verde.

"It is a shared grade structure sharing the same people, facility, customer services and access, which helps establish rates, reduces large rate swings and improves reliability," said Skaggs.

She said other challenges include Arizona facing a growing water supply challenge, an ongoing drought and increase in demand. She said utilities like EPCOR must plan and invest and said there is plenty of water for Sun City West residents and there is no risk whatsoever for water resources at this time.

Residents can review materials at epcor.com, where the entire rate application will be available for review.

Additionally, if individuals want to know how this will specifically impact a water bill that is not 7,000 or 4,000 gallon usage, they can contact EPCOR customer service and information will be provided about what this rate increase means specifically to an individual bill. Email mywater@epcor.com.

Residents in attendance asked several times about data centers and water usage. Skaggs said EPCOR officials believe growth pays for growth and if a large industrial customer comes into the area, they must pay their own way.

"If we have to build infrastructure or upgrade, they pay for that and either they build it or give it to us to maintain," she added.

The Property Owners and Residents Association officials attended the meeting and said this is a starting point letting individuals know they are filing for a rate increase, but no further information is available yet.

"We will get a copy of the presentation and put it on our website and RUCO (Residential Utility Consumer Office) will help us, too. They said to wait until EPCOR files with the Arizona Corporation Commission, and they will know exactly what they are talking about," said Cindy Putman, PORA director.

Cynthia Zwick, Arizona RUCO director, said these in-person meetings provide an opportunity for customers to have a private conversation with company leaders.

"Kudos to EPCOR at this point for holding these information sessions before filing. I do believe the company is coming to those communities to truly hear what their customers have to say about it, and that is incredibly important. This is an opportunity to have customer concerns and support heard," she explained.

Zwick said once EPCOR does file, RUCO will file a motion to intervene in the case 30 days later. She said throughout this entire process, it is unusual for a company to get everything they are asking for, but the exact outcome is unknown until the ACC votes.

Email ratecasequestions@epcor.com.



Sarah Skaggs, Associate Director Customer Operations at EPCOR led the presentation on Sun City West water June 23 in Surprise. (Independent Newsmedia/Jennifer Jimenez)



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THEATER

Theatre West offers August acting workshops

Theatre West will offer a series of acting classes in August, featuring guest instructor Helene Benigno, a director, teacher and playwright with experience throughout the greater Phoenix theater community.

The classes are open to RCSCW cardholders and are designed for both beginners and experienced performers who want to strengthen stage skills, build confidence and explore character development, improvisation and scene work.



Helene Benigno

All classes will be at Stardust Theatre, Performers Door, 14401 W. R.H. Johnson Blvd. Fees range from $5 for single-session classes to $10 for two-session workshops.

Improvisation will be 10 a.m.-noon Saturday, Aug. 8. The fee is $5. This high-energy class focuses on the fundamentals of improvisation while helping participants build confidence, spontaneity and comedic timing. Students will practice thinking on their feet, embracing the unexpected and connecting with fellow performers in real time.

Partner Scene Work is a two-session class scheduled for 2-4 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 11, and noon-2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 15. The fee for both sessions is $10. The workshop will focus on subtext and motivation, encouraging actors to explore the dynamics between scene partners and the unspoken intentions that drive a scene.

During the first session, actors will participate in collaborative exercises, then be paired with a partner and assigned a staged reading scene to take home. In the second session, participants will review, warm up, rehearse with their partners and receive one-on-one time with the director. The class will conclude with scene presentations for the group. Memorization is not required.

For more information or to sign up for classes, visit theatrewestscw.com or call Pat Martin at 360-490-0182.



PICKLEBALL CLUB PROVIDES ACTIVITIES FOR COUPLES

The Sun City West Pickleball Club provides options for couples to play together during daily drop-in sessions and organized round robins. The organizers keep games running smoothly by assigning numbered courts, often using playing cards and timing each rotation. Rotating playing partners can help players improve their skills, meet new people and enjoy the social side of the sport. Couples like Pam and Oscar Waltz, pictured, regularly organize games with other friends and couples they've met through the pickleball club. They have fun and play together four times a week, including a Saturday drilling session to sharpen their skills. They will also be taking over to run the ladies ladder group in the fall with a new format and website. Visit scwpickleballclub.com/contact-us for more information. (Submitted photo/Marla Peters)

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SCAMS

Consumer scams highlighted at upcoming Attorney General's office presentation

Residents must register for the event

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

The Sun City West Foundation will host a Consumer Scams Presentation in partnership with the Arizona Attorney General's Office.

Residents can attend the event from 10-11 a.m. Tuesday, July 7, at the Sun City West Foundation, 14465 W. R.H. Johnson Blvd.

Officials will present information to help residents protect themselves from common scams, including computer fraud, phone scams and other deceptive tactics that impact Sun City West. They will share examples, key warning signs and practical steps people can take to safeguard personal information.

According to Sun City West Foundation official Teresa Brown, they strive to provide the community with the relevant information and tools needed to thrive in today's changing world.

"This important topic is especially relevant to seniors, we felt it was the perfect time to offer this workshop to our residents," she said.

Officials are also working on other summer events including Music Bingo in August and partnering with the Sun City West Witches Ride for Charity in October.

Brown said officials strive to keep the calendar full with educational and social events.

Residents must register to reserve a spot for the presentation at scwfoundation.org/events/consumer-scams-presentation.

Pool

• From page 1

lex coating and artistic pavers. If the pool were being built from scratch, he would suggest the artistic paver option. However, since that is not the case, he is recommending AquaFlex.

Aquaflex has a durable, 15-year life, is easy to maintain, is slip resistance and installation time is 30 days opposed to artistic pavers which is 60 days and six week lead time. This company he said has been around for 20 years and has approximately 20 different locations in Las Vegas and four or five here in the Valley.

AquaFlex has a asset life of 15 years and costs $585,000 with additional periodic maintenance of $45,000 every three years. Artistic pavers' asset life is 25 years and the cost is $665,000 with no cost for periodic maintenance, and Herschel said it should basically look the same in 25 years.

The directors suggested negotiating a warranty program with the company that will ensure maintenance is a top priority. Herschel said the warranty tier can be upgraded to a yearly program where everything is deep-cleaned and a new top coat is added, along with any repairs for a different maintenance cost.

General Manager Stephen Erno said the bulk of what AquaFlex has demonstrated success including mega resorts in Las Vegas where they see thousands of people abusing the pool, and it is a very good product that withstands and is the reason from an operations standpoint officials are recommending this product.

Any option including concrete removal was challenged by several board directors, which can cause issues such as damage to the existing pool liner, underground piping, relocation of the drain system, rework of the railings and umbrellas and is time consuming.

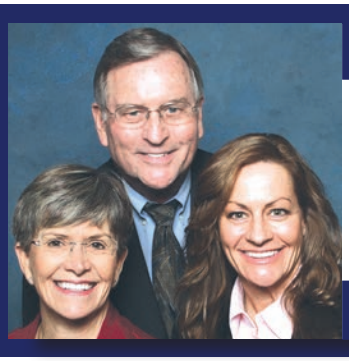
Novello said she feels quite a bit of personal responsibility as they move forward with this project.

"We have all spent an in ordinate amount of time questioning staff and vendors closely, and while there is no perfect solution we want to ensure we are making the best choice. And it would be very easy for us to check the box and nod our heads to staff, and that is not he kind of board that you have elected," she explained.

Erno said the biggest thing is stability of the company and why AquaFlex is being recommended. Ensuring the contract is reviewed by the legal team and is in a good place for the association will be important. He said he has a high level of confidence in this company and while nothing is perfect, he is confident in the is surface and the team that will maintain it.

Reporter Jennifer Jimenez can be reached at jjimenez@iniusa.org. Please submit comments at yourvalley.net/letters or email them to AzOpinions@iniusa.org. We are committed to publishing a wide variety of reader opinions, as long as they meet our Civility Guidelines.

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LETTERS

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Setting the record straight on budget comments

On page 5 of the May 27, 2026, edition of the Independent, commentary is attributed to me at a recent board meeting. The comments are not complete and are missing context.

In regard to persistent overbudgeting and underspending, this practice has gone on for years, and I've been vocal about it. But the message just doesn't seem to be understood by the recreation centers.

So here it is, one last time: The budget for salaries and wages includes the cost of phantom employees that residents pay for.

For years, our community has consistently had an average of 15 to 20 open jobs year after year. They include the potential cost of every one of those jobs in the budget, despite knowing they won't be filled.

As of the end of April, the surplus was $1.2 million, with every penny from our dues. Does this go right into reserves as is claimed? Not quite, for reasons too long and complicated to review here.

Next, "(Bagnato) ... said the notion of a special assessment for future unknowns is another money grab by the administration." Not quite. What I said was the idea that an extra $20 annually, conveniently added to dues instead of being subject to a resident vote as a special assessment is a money grab.

Why? Because those funds are supposed to be a set aside for some master plan bling idea. No one can tell us what that bling is, when it's going to be purchased and what it's going to cost. It's kind of like going to the grocery store and being told you'll have to prepay now for next year's groceries even though you don't know what you will buy, when you'll buy it or what it will cost.

Who would agree to that? I suspect none of you, nor should you.

Frank Bagnato
SUN CITY WEST

EPCOR's rate hikes unacceptable

Water and wastewater rate adjustments to Sun City West are proposed by EPCOR Arizona Utilities and approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission.

The last wastewater system adjustment, an increase of about 20% for Sun City West, was approved under a consolidation of systems procedure.

This was an excessive rate increase for Sun City West that gives us some of the highest wastewater rates in the state for medium-size utility service.

At the last hearing, commissioners Kevin Thompson and Nick Myers voted to approve the new wastewater rates.

They are up for reinstatement this year. I, and hopefully others, will not be voting for them.

Under the system-consolidation procedure, some utility rates were lowered significantly. This indicates to me that we are paying for improvements to other water and/or wastewater systems that are not associated with Sun City West.

I do not like paying for other system improvements of no benefit to Sun City West.

Now, EPCOR has proposed a drinking-water system rate adjustment for Sun City West and others that may include additional consolidation.

The senior citizens in the Sun Cities need to be treated fairly.

Jim Scanlan
SUN CITY WEST

Unhappy with proposed APS, EPCOR rate hikes

It does not matter in which state you reside, if you have a majority Republican corporation commission, I believe the corporations are going to win every rate hike.

I don't believe Republicans have ever met a corporation they did not love. Mitt Romney, former Republican presidential candidate, said in 2011: "corporations are people, my friend."

I saw this in Kansas, and again here in Arizona with the EPCOR consolidation and rate hike for sewer. I recently received a card from EPCOR stating they are going for a rate hike for water.

After all, it worked perfectly on the sewer hike.

In my opinion, any raise the Arizona Corporation Commission grants APS above 4.2%, the current inflation rate, is obscene and undeserved. Raising costs for home solar owners is wrong. APS is getting power cheaper than they can make it.

Please vote in the next election, and remember if you vote the Republican ticket in July, you do not have to do so in November.

The money you save will be

• See **Letters** on page **11**

SCORES

GOLF

DT Winners
Played at Echo Mesa Golf Course
1st flight: (Handicaps 5-15)
Glenn Warrington (Low Gross) 62 Mike Dmitriev (Low Net) 60
Richard VanVulkenburg and Ron Heller (Tied at 61)
Michael Anenan and Mike Bashaw (Tied at 62)
2nd flight: (Handicaps 16-20)
Mike Byers (Low Net) 55 Scott Klein-58
Gary McGrath and John Vignati (Tied at 59)
Jim O'Neil, Don Giese, Tom McNally and Don Bols (Tied at 60)
3rd flight: (Handicaps 21-30)
Chuck Anderson (Low Gross) 76
Randy Geidt and James Dunn (Low Net Tie) 58
Rich McAndrews-59 Michael Anastasio and Jim Deminsky (Tied at 60)

Echo Mesa Women's Golf Club
June 16
Low Net
Flt. 1 19 - 42 Low Net
Corlean Kuhl 54
Sally Hamill 55
Karen Brown 55
Linda Geyer 55
Ginger Emerson 55
Stacy Hoenig 58
Janet Eriksson 58
ReNae Keuck 58
Nine Holers
Jeanne Pribnow 25

Desert Trails Ladies Golf
June 16
Flight 1 Low Gross D. Craig 69 Low Net K. Wallace 56
Flight 2 Low Gross E. Scheneberger 83 Low Net D. Phillips 58
Flight 3 Low Gross M. Dorcette, J. Frey 87 Low Net J. Moore 56

GAMES

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June 15
1st Brenda Zeimet and Darlene Jenks 5320
2nd Barb Laundone and Carl Ramsey 4070
3rd Carolyn and Ray Murphy 3970
4th Marilyn Sage and Rich Cornelius 3820
Small slams: Barb Laudone and Carl Ramsey

SCWCBC Tuesday Division Bridge
June 16
1 Chris Lee 4370
2 Mary Vraney 3850
3 Michael Agresto 3660
4 Marion Hare 3460

Letters

• From page **10**

your own.

Dan Hull
SUN CITY

Why are our water bills possibly increasing?

My parents moved here in 1992 as this was the place they wanted to retire from Illinois. After my Dad passing, I moved here to help my stepmother. I always thought, too, this was the place to retire.

I have lived here for 18 years. I have done my part in conserving water supply. As plants died, I did not put new ones in, I took out bushes and installed iron decor. What I don't understand if we are supposed to have a 100-year well, then Corta Bella is built along with the family housing across the street using Sun City West water, why we are having a possible drought and increase in our water bill?

I have done my part in decreasing watering at my house by 75%; however, then pools are being built, new construction, additions on homes, plants going in all over, but yet I am going to penalized for decreasing watering in my yard.

So I am now paying for my neighbor's pool, new plants they are putting in, etc. I am quite upset about this possible increase when everyone should do their part and be held accountable for their water usage. I moved here because I thought it was the best place to retire and now it's like not sure, maybe that's why homes aren't selling as the younger incoming generation is moving to the new, updated homes where they don't want to live in SCW.

Want to save water, then no pools, no building, no new plants. I did my part. The rest of SCW, Corta Bella, family housing need to do theirs.

Patricia Farrell
SUN CITY WEST

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SPORTS

New evaporative cooler helps pickleball club stay cool

On sun-exposed pickleball courts like those in Sun City West, a 100˚F day can actually feel like 115-130˚F while playing, so finding ways to play and stay cool are the keys to having a safe and pickleball-filled summer.

Club members Tom and Lawrene Bottorf donated an industrial evaporative cooling fan for club usage at Liberty Courts. Sitting in front of the cooler can decrease the outdoor temperatures by 10-15˚F. Club members have already put it to good use and are enjoying the cooling mist while taking breaks from playing. The unit has very detailed instructions for usage and care so the guidelines must be followed.

The club also suggests players adjusting their playing times; consider playing first thing in the morning at 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m. when the sun goes down.

Players can also use cooling accessories when playing at any time; neck cooling towels, hats and ice vests are already popular on the courts. A new product with positive reviews is the cooling fan vest. Two fans blow inside the vest at varying speeds so the wearer benefits from a constant breeze. Some even include ice pockets for an additional cooling effect. Similar to the vest, there are hats with fans built into the brim that are advertised to keep the wearer's face cool.

Players should also drink extra water and use electrolytes before and during play.



Club members Linda Pitsch and Michelle Tissot model two solutions for staying cool. Pitsch is wearing a double-plated ice vest and Tissot has on the double fan vest. (Submitted photo/Michelle Tissot)

CLUB GETS CRAFTY WITH SCRAPS



The paper crafters of Sun City West's Scrapbooking, Papercrafts & More club handcraft a variety of projects in which they use beautiful designer papers. There are frequently leftover scraps that are too pretty to throw out, and members hold on to them to incorporate into other projects. Member Ann Erickson recently taught a card class that entailed using scrap strips of paper in coordinating colors and patterns. The strips were arranged on the vertical edges of the card base and a sentiment or die cut embellishment was placed in the center. SPAM meets in the Beardsley center's Agave Room on Wednesdays (4 p.m.-9 p.m.), Thursdays (9 a.m.-3 p.m.), Fridays (9 a.m.-3 p.m.), and Saturdays (9 a.m.-5 p.m.). Call Sandy Cryer, club president, at 623-640-9387, visit scrapbooking.scwclubs.com or email scwscrapbook@gmail.com for more information. Pictured, Erickson displays samples of the zig-zag strip card. (Submitted photo/Christina Hecht)

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AMERICA@250

Bicentennial Quilt on display at local museum

By Bret McKeand
SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

An historic artifact originally created to celebrate the nation's bicentennial has found its way back home to the Del Webb Sun Cities Museum and is now on display in time for the nation's 250th anniversary celebration.

The museum recently opened a new exhibit showcasing the Sun City "Bicentennial Quilt," created by Sun City residents in 1976 and rarely seen in the past 50 years.

The quilt was initially donated in the 1980s to the Sun Cities Area Historical Society but turned over to the West Valley Art Museum for safekeeping. The art museum recently closed its doors and returned the quilt.

The idea for the Bicentennial Quilt came from the owner of a deli in Sun City who read about a similar bicentennial project in New York. She wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper asking for volunteers to pursue the concept.

Seven women showed up for the initial meeting. One of those women – Vi Cody – eventually took charge of the project and became known as the "quilt coordinator."



Sun City residents created the community's Bicentennial Quilt in 1976 as a salute to the nation's 200th anniversary. The two-sided quilt features Sun City scenes on one side and a patriotic theme on the reverse side. The quilt is on full display as part of the museum's celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary.

A seamstress and weaver, Vi (also as the woman who named Sundial Recreation Center) came up with the idea of a two-sided quilt – one side featuring local landmarks and activities and the other side featuring red, white and blue national symbols.

"We used 300 square feet of Arizona cotton – white sateen and red and blue poplin," Vi was quoted as saying in the January 1976 edition of Sun City Here Magazine.

The finished size of the quilt is 112-by-94 inches. A total of 110 people worked a total of 3,684 hours in 10 weeks to stitch and embroider the 126 squares on the quilt. More than 3,000 yards of quilt thread were used in the project.

The actual cost of materials was $400, but the quilt was insured for $3,500.

After being dry-cleaned and treated with a stain retardant, the finished quilt was unveiled during a Sun City "American Heritage" program Jan. 14, 1976, at the Sun Bowl. The quilt was displayed at several locations throughout the year -- and even traveled to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. in 1976 -- but has been seldom seen since.

The display at the museum will be the quilt's first public display since the West Valley Art Museum displayed it in 2024 at Peoria City Hall.

The new exhibit showcases the "Sun City" side of the quilt. Display panels and a video explain the history of the quilt, as well as the stories of the individual squares and the names of those involved in creating the quilt.

The Del Webb Sun Cities Museum is located at 10801 W. Oakmont Drive, Sun City, in one of the first of five model homes constructed in 1960 when the community first opened. The museum's summer hours are noon-3 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Visit www.delwebbsuncitiesmuseum.org.





AMERICA@250



UKULELE CLUB TO PRESENT PATRIOTIC CONCERT

Playing a range of patriotic songs from early Americana to soulful rock 'n' roll, the Northwest Valley Ukulele Club, directed by Sun City West resident, musician and Blue Star Mom Lauren Erickson, will perform a concert for residents of Fellowship Square Independent Living 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, July 4. The residents will be presented with a reader's theater style drama concert that will include an introduction to each song, some history about the music and a sing-along with the club members. The club will be providing attendees with small American flags and a 250th celebration gift as well as a sweet treat. All attendees are encouraged to wear red, white and blue. For more information, or to join the club, contact Lauren Erickson at nwvuke@gmail.com or visit their facebook page: "Northwest Valley Ukulele Club." (Submitted photo/Lauren Erickson)





RIP 'N' SEW WINDOWS SALUTE U.S. HOLIDAY

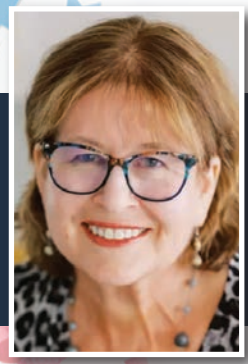
Club room windows often give members a place to show off their work to the public. At Rip 'N' Sew, volunteers select a theme for each window and choose the items to be displayed in the front and back windows. Debbie Dorn curates the items in the front window, which is closest to the club's entrance. Sally Kinzel does the same for the back window, which is in a recessed area. Kinzel and Dorn teamed up to give both windows a patriotic theme for summer. Rip 'N' Sew is located on the upper level of the R.H. Johnson Recreation Center at 19803 N. R.H. Johnson Blvd. in Sun City West. Pictured, Dorn shows off the 250th American anniversary quilt she made and Mary Pinaquy sewed and quilted this flag wall hanging. (Submitted photo/Gary Reynolds)

Celebrating America's 250th

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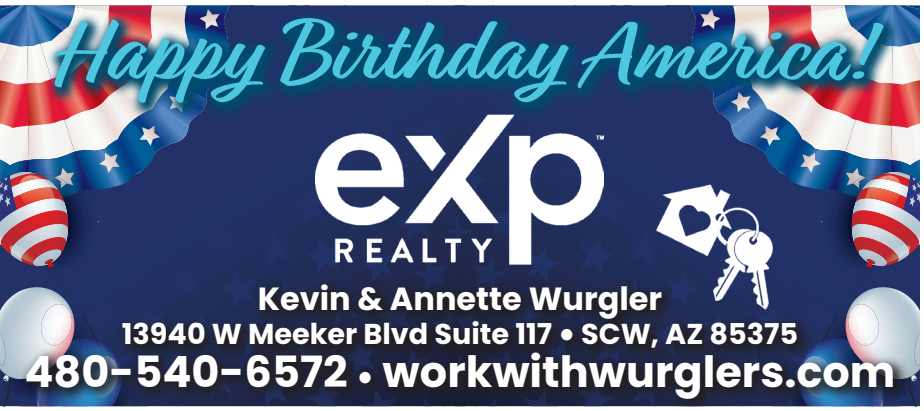


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America's Sweethearts usher in big birthday

Singing trio will celebrate community, culture, country

America's Sweethearts will celebrate community, culture and country leading up to America's big birthday Friday, July 3 at The Vista Center for the Arts, 15660 N. Parkview Place.

Using the era of The Andrews Sisters as an inspiration, the New York City-based trio performs vintage favorites like "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" with crystal-clear harmonies, colorful costumes and a style that gets audiences tapping their feet.

The show features classics from the Great American Songbook and Broadway, including "Lullaby of Broadway," "Happy Days Are Here Again" and "The Shoop Shoop Song (It's in His Kiss)," delivered through a mix of trios, duets and solo moments that appeal to audiences of all ages.

Tickets are available for between $21 and $43 at SurpriseArts.com

As part of the evening, the performance includes a special tribute honoring veterans and active-duty service members.

By selecting the military and veteran appreciation add-on during ticket checkout, veterans, active-duty service members, Gold Star family members and their guests can receive a complimentary hot dog or popcorn from concessions.





CHURCH PLANS CELEBRATORY EVENT

Church on the Green, 19051 N. R.H. Johnson Blvd., will host a united prayer service celebrating America's 250th birthday 9-10 a.m. July 4. Doors will open at 8:30 a.m. A color guard will display the flags of the United States armed forces, those attending can say the Pledge of Allegiance and sing the national anthem and the choir will lead the audience in a variety of patriotic music. Lead pastor Jay Knoles, a U.S. Air Force veteran, will share a message, "Whom the Son Sets Free Is Free Indeed." The lobby will also feature a Fourth of July tree, a military and veteran tribute and other decorations honoring America's birthday. (Submitted photo/Doris Knoles)

AMERICA@250



Maria Hermosa-Dolan, Erin Rinehart, Mal Fordham, Roger Rinehart, Karen Butler, Serry Rhinehart, Jim Dolan, Josh Hill, Gene Schlueter, Cindy Elliott, Robin Hill, Ed Elliott, Dave Kirkland and Walter and K9. Harriet Baskette, Bill Chafin, Bob Garwood and Matt Butler also took part. (Independent Newsmedia/ Jennifer Jimenez)

Flag tradition continues

Street lined with flags in Sun City West

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

A Sun City West resident began a tradition to display flags about 15 years ago.

After his passing, three old friends of William Barringer reached out to his daughter, Robin Hill, in 2019 to bring the tradition back to life.

The group goes by the name the "Franciscan Flag Team" and places American flags in the front yards of residents on Franciscan Drive between 138th Avenue and Aleppo Drive.

"This group of volunteers works tirelessly to create a patriotic environment for our neighborhood to honor veterans and military personnel and to commemorate our national holidays," said Hill.

This group of individuals hopes residents will drive down the street on the Fourth of July to enjoy patriotism and American spirit to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the country.

Hill said no matter where they lived, her dad always had boxes and boxes of flags in the garage from all over the world. She said William spent time making holes and sleeves to place the flags in.

"I am honoring my dad more than anything and I know he is looking down and really pleased with what is going on and the number of people who volunteer to help," said Hill.

There are still a few neighbors who were involved from the start and continue to put the flags out. This year the flags will be placed on Friday, July 3, and will be removed Saturday, July 4, in the evening.

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Martin Kowalkowski (Army), Bill Greene (Army), Clyde Greene (Marine Corps) and Gilbert Greene (Army). (Submitted photo/Joe Kowalkowski)

Sun City West resident honors several family members in the military

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

As residents begin to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States, one individual in the community is using this time to reflect.

One night, Sun City West resident Joe Kowalkowski was having trouble sleeping and started to think about various family members who have served in the military and realized he had never taken note of the seven who joined the military.

"I cannot believe it did not dawn on me until I was in bed and realized what we had in our family," said Kowalkowski.

This is when he began the process of working on figuring out who served and which branch. He said it is incredible to have so many members of his family in service and none were killed in action.

Kowalkowski said he joined the military after having challenging home conditions and said the military was the way to go, despite an ongoing war during at that time.

"This military gave all of us an opportunity and all of us did good in our lives," he said.

Kowalkowski said while serving in the military, he was just doing his job and while people refer to him as a hero does not agree. He and his wife often look back, he said and think it is amazing to see how far they have come in life.

Kowalkowski was a staff sergeant in the Marine Corps and enlisted in 1960. He left for Vietnam in 1956 and then left there in 1967, before he was honorably discharged in March 1968. His daughter Kim Hees has a son, Kyle Hees who is a major in the Air Force. Joseph Paul Kowalkowski II was a sergeant and crew chief in the Army National Guard and is his son. His other son is Kevin Paul Kowalkowski was in the Marine Corps and discharged in 1987.

Other family members include Martin Kowalkowski (Army), Bill Greene (Army), Clyde Greene (Marine Corps) and Gilbert Greene (Navy).

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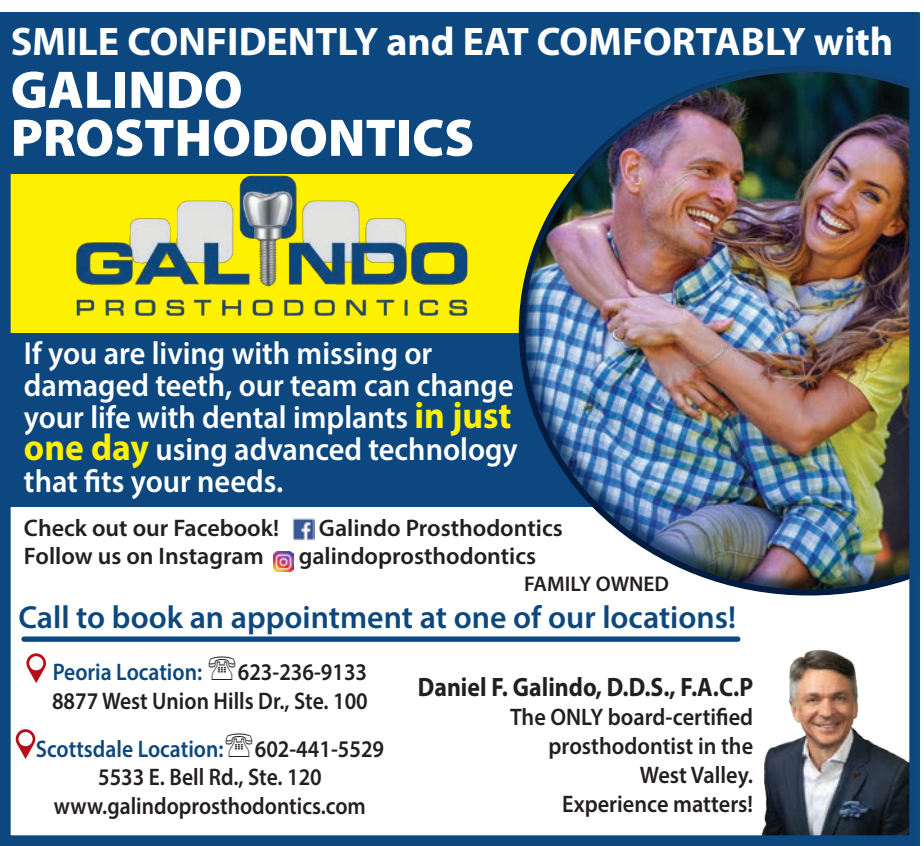
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Resident serves more than 33 years in Navy

Prepares to celebrate his 103rd birthday

By Jennifer Jimenez
INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Later this month, a 25-year Sun City West resident and veteran will celebrate his 103rd birthday and is a living testament to the values of duty, sacrifice and patriotism.

Wilfred E. Blessing is a retired captain from the United States Navy who was a pilot in both WWII and the Korean War.

His wife Suzanne Blessing said his experiences and stories are a treasure and gratitude to others.

"His life and service make him a blessing to many people," she said.

Wilfred will be featured on the Discovery Channel Healing Heroes Foundation, a program that preserves history by documenting the lives of U.S. Military heroes in January 2027.

Part of the interview he took part in includes his time serving in World War II and Korea for 33 and one-half years. Wilfred said he had two careers throughout his life, including the Navy and architecture.

Wilfred graduated from high school at age 16 and he needed a parent signature to join the Navy then.

In 1941 his father passed away and while his mother did not want him to go, she signed off and he went to San Diego.

Throughout his military career, Wilfred flew 17 different types of planes, which was pretty much everything the Navy had at that time. When he turned 19, Wilfred said he received his wings, but he became a stenographer where he was on active duty in San Diego with the fleet. Wilfred said the only choice the Navy gave him was whether he wanted to fly single or a multi-engine planes.



Wilfred and Suzanne Blessing celebrate his experiences in the military. (Independent Newsmedia/Jennifer Jimenez)

"I became an instrument flight instructor, and after that tour of duty, I went into transport flying equipment and supplies into the islands as they were taken," he said.

When Wilfred graduated from high school, he was ripe for the draft, and he wanted to make his own choice.

After joining the reserves, he had to make a choice. Either go to college, compliments of the Navy or join the airlines because he was qualified as an airline captain but decided to continue with the Naval Reserves.

Blessing said in part, the Navy was a defining element of his life and he owes the Navy for a great deal of training and experiences.

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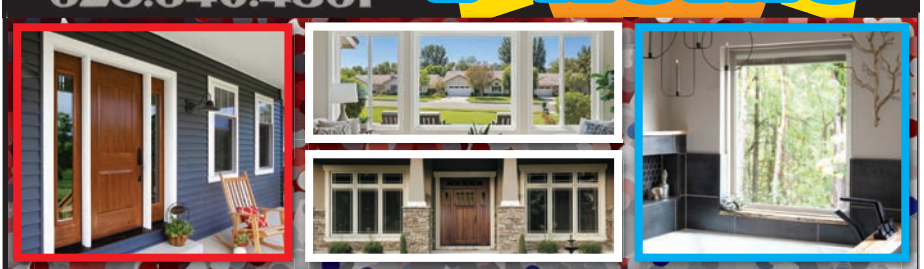


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WHAM to celebrate America throughout July

Art house honoring country by bringing community together

WHAM Art Center will host a month-long series of free public events throughout July honoring America's 250th anniversary through art, performance and community engagement.

Rather than a single-day celebration, WHAM is offering an entire month of programming designed to bring together veterans, artists, families and West Valley residents through shared creative experiences.

At the center of the initiative is Vision 250, a multimedia exhibition and public program series exploring themes of service, freedom, healing and unity through artistic expression.

The exhibition features work by photographer and U.S. veteran Tari Fields, a photographic series examining American patriotism through the lived experiences of military veterans.

The work combines portraiture with layered imagery of prescription medications to explore the long-term impact of service.

Through portraits overlaid with pharmaceutical imagery, the series reflects on the complexities of veteran care and the challenges many veterans face after their military service ends.

"This is a moment of reflection to see the cost of service," Fields said.

The exhibition also includes photographer Heather Scarlett, who documented Fields as part of the creative process, adding another perspective to the project and expanding the conversation around interpretation and lived experience.

WHAM Art Center's broader Vision 250 celebration includes six free public events throughout July:

Free Kids and Adult Make-and-Take workshops will be held July 11 and 18, offering participants the opportunity to paint patriotic clay eagles in a hands-on, family-friendly setting.

On July 11, WHAM will host the Vision 250 artist reception, followed by Heroes in Harmony, a patriotic performance featuring veteran artists and performers sharing music and storytelling centered on service and unity.

An open mic night on July 17 will provide a space for veterans and community members to share poetry, music and personal stories.

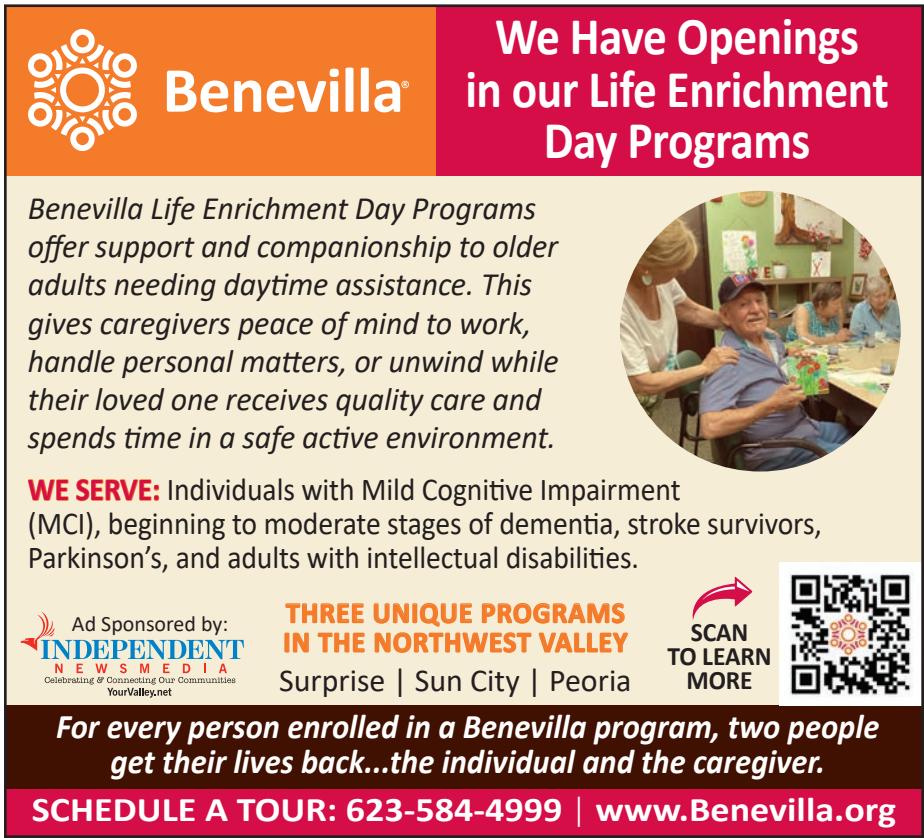
The celebration concludes July 25 with a grand celebration open house featuring live art, interactive activities and community programming.

WHAM Art Center continues to support military veterans through its free ongoing program, "Art: A Path to Healing," which provides creative expression opportunities for veterans in Surprise/Peoria and Goodyear.

Sessions are monthly, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. on the second Mondays of the month at WHAM.

Visit wham-art.org/july-events.





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Linda Kay McClurg



Linda Kay McClurg, 81, of Twin Falls, Idaho, passed away on Friday, June 19, 2026, at St Luke's Magic Valley Regional Medical Center. Memories and condolences may be shared with the family at www.wilksfuneralhomes.com.

James Dennis Moran



On Tuesday, June 16, 2026 James Dennis Moran, loving husband and father, passed away at 82.

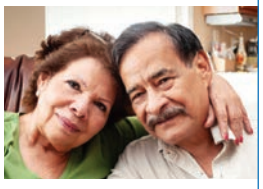
Jim was born July 3,1943 in Adams,WI to Lloyd and Ruth Moran. He was the 9th of 11 children. In 1980 he married Gloria Silvia. Jim worked over 19 years as computer room manager for the Illinois, West Virginia and Wisconsin state lotteries.

In 1998 he and his wife moved to Sun City West, where he enjoyed his love of golf and rooting for his Green Bay Packers, and making new friends.

During those 28 years in SCW he worked as a starter at Grandview Golf Course and a courier for the Rec Center of SCW. He was preceded in death by his Father and Mother and 10 siblings. He is survived by wife, Gloria and son, Steve, and numerous nieces and nephews.

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CLUB HOSTS CLAY FLOWER BUILDING CLASS

Kay Colbeck recently led a clay flower building class in the cool comfort of the Ceramics West club. The flowers can be attracted to metal or wooden dowels and placed outdoors for instant color. In back are Ro Tirelli, Charlotte Wester, Edie Freas and Rayma Carr; in front are Maylin Moore, Kay Colbeck, Kay Harris and Nancy Chard. Call 623-546-0975 for more information. (Submitted photo/Barbara Pitchett)

Singles club slates next meeting

The Sun City West Singles Club will meet 1 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month at the Beardsley Recreation Center, Sagebrush room. This is not a dating club. Activities include parties, dinners, lunches, bowling, pool parties, bocce ball and board games. Must be an RCSCW cardholder. Meetings include a list of future events, a 50/50 raffle and snacks. The July 8 meeting will feature a lunch to introduce prospective members to the club. This is a no obligation meeting. Membership is $15 per year. Email Dennis Lund at scwsg2025@gmail.com for more information.



STITCHERS KEEP BUSY

Residents who like to be creative and learn new ways to stitch projects can join Creative Stitchers. There is a teacher for each craft, including counted cross stitch, needlepoint, hardanger, embroidery, smocking, rug hooking and punch needle. Membership is $10 a year and is open to Sun City West residents. The group meets 8-11:30 a.m. Mondays at Kuentz Recreation Center Kiva room, 14401 W. R.H. Johnson Blvd. To use the club room, two or more members are required. The general meeting takes place the third Monday of the month. Residents can stop by on Monday mornings to see what the club is all about. Visit stitchers.scwclubs.com or call John Harrison at 480-363-6392 for more information. Pictured, Penny Klaprath stitched a garden of flowers and small critters using many different complicated stitches. (Submitted photo/Jeanette Hill)

CLUBS

‘Poopy Purse’ brings smiles at club’s show and tell



Jan Nastasi displays one of her “poopy purses” for dog walkers. (Submitted photo/Gary Reynolds)

June’s show and tell at the Rip ‘N’ Sew Club included numerous quilts, two wall hangings, machine-embroidered towels, a table topper and totes. There was also a plethora of purses, including a unique one.

Susan Steffan, Janet Thrush, Helen Grant, Rose Waldon, Louise Howden, Brenda McDonald and Kathy Zeman all had quilts to display.

Showing totes were Eva Weisberg, Linda Logan, Steffan, Thrush, Grant and McDonald.

Handbag makers were Robyn Reynolds, Jan Nastasi and Waldon.

Nastasi, a longtime purse maker, also brought what she called “poopy purses.”

These are small, zippered purses that each hold a roll of waste bags to clean up after a dog being walked.

The purses are made of dog-themed fabric with a bigger pup sewn atop the purse fabric.

The waste bags are pulled out through a plastic dispenser on the bigger pup’s rump, hence the title “poopy purses.”

The zipper bag that holds the roll of waste bags can also accommodate dog treats and a cell phone. Each of Nastasi’s “poopy purses” has a snap that can be attached to the dog walker’s belt loop or the dog’s harness.

Rip ‘N’ Sew’s next show and tell will begin 11 a.m. Monday, July 6, at the Sun City West club.

Senior center offers meals, pantry service

Banner Olive Branch Senior Center, 13049 N. 103rd Ave., offers in dining, to-go meals and food pantry services. The food pantry available at no cost 7-11 a.m. Tuesday–Thursday. The center staff recommends a suggested donation of $5 ($5 fee for under 60). Lunch is served at 11 a.m. at no cost for anyone over 60. Breakfast is served 6:30-8:30 a.m. Monday-Friday. Cost is $5 for breakfast and is open to all. To-go meals are now available daily for $5/meal and are open to all. To-go meal distribution is 11 a.m.-noon Monday-Friday. The center also offers benefits reviews and information and referral services as well as many activities. Call 623-465-6000.

Menu

- Wednesday, July 1 – Hot open face roast beef sandwich, mushrooms, peas, sweet potato tots, graham crackers, orange
- Thursday, July 2 – holiday meal – BBQ chicken, carrots, three bean salad, corn bread, apple pie
- Friday, July 3 – CLOSED – Independence Day observed
- Monday, July 6 – Beef lasagna, Normandy mix vegetables, brussel sprouts, brownie, peaches
- Tuesday, July 7 – Herb chicken breast, lemon couscous, asparagus, carrots, orange



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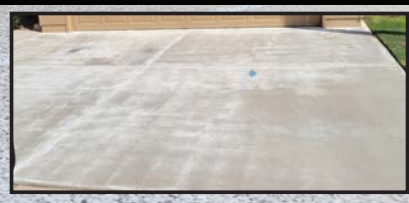
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CLUB TO CREATE FOR VETERANS

July will be another busy month for the Artistic Hand Lettering, Cards & Mixed Media Club. Members are kicking off their annual holiday card making event for the Military Order of the Purple Heart 1-4 p.m. Friday, July 24. Make a card or two for veterans in VA hospitals, nursing homes and transitional housing. The club pledges a minimum of 500 cards every year, and usually exceeds that number. Last year, they collected about 3,000 gifts and each got a handmade card hand signed by the coordinators. Regular meeting times are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday and Friday and 6-9 p.m. Wednesday through the summer. Contact Dottie Schmit (602-758-9854) or Kat McGinnis (480-806-8053), visit artistichandlettering.scwclubs.com or email ahlcandmm@gmail.com for more information. Club membership is $10 annually. Pictured is John Harrison at the club's Father's Day coffee Friday event June 19. (Submitted photo/Melanie Harrison)



STITCHERS KEEP BUSY

Residents who like to be creative and learn new ways to stitch projects can join Creative Stitchers. There is a teacher for each craft, including counted cross stitch, needlepoint, hardanger, embroidery, smocking, rug hooking and punch needle. Membership is $10 a year and is open to Sun City West residents. The group meets 8-11:30 a.m. Mondays at Kuentz Recreation Center Kiva room, 14401 W. R.H. Johnson Blvd. To use the club room, two or more members are required. The general meeting takes place the third Monday of the month. Residents can stop by on Monday mornings to see what the club is all about. Visit stitchers.scwclubs.com or call John Harrison at 480-363-6392 for more information. Pictured, Jannelle Kluch and Cindy Jayson get ready for Christmas. (Submitted photo/Jeanette Hill)

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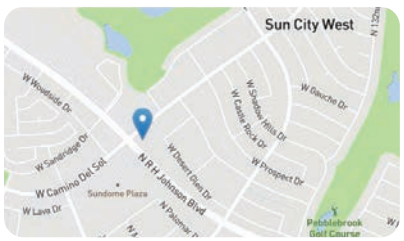
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