

PRIDES have rich community history

Group helps keep Sun City clean

By Art Huseonica

SPECIAL TO INDEPENDENT NEWSMEDIA

Proud Residents Independently Donating Essential Services, or PRIDES as the group is commonly known, has a long and valued history in Sun City.

The PRIDES was established in 1980 as a service organization whose sole purpose was to keep Sun City beautiful. It began as the result of a letter to the editor written by Joe McIntyre, a Sun City resident, complaining about the litter along 99th Avenue. He noted he was out there every Saturday morning trying to clean up the litter, but needed the help of other Sun City residents.

Within two months, several meetings were conducted with appointed officials for

the PRIDES along with representatives from Maricopa County and the Del Webb Corp. Mr. McIntyre was unanimously appointed PRIDES chairman.

The PRIDES motto is "Keeping Sun City Beautiful."

Early tasks focused on litter clean-up and picking up oranges from thousands of ornamental orange trees. This was supported by the more than 200 volunteers that stepped forward to make the PRIDES a viable and valued organization.

In 1982, Al Brown worked to have the PRIDES successfully become a nonprofit corporation with tax-exempt status.

With donations rolling in and membership peaking at 300 in 1984, the Sun City Water Company approved plans for a PRIDES' building to be built using PRIDES funds on water company land at the intersection of Greenway



Sun City residents joined the PRIDES early in the community's history to help keep trash and debris cleaned from streets and other common areas. [Submitted photo]

Road and 91st Avenue. The PRIDES pay a \$1 per year lease. The building is called the Vern and Carol Howland Building in honor of the Howlands' generous energies working with the organization.

The PRIDES Park was established at Peoria and 105th avenues in 1987. Former governor Rose Mofford awarded the PRIDES in 1990 the Governor's Pride in Arizona Award.

Following the "Great Storm of '96," the PRIDES were mobilized to clean up the Sun

City streets of vegetation and other debris in the aftermath of the storm.

Since then, the PRIDES continue to have a strong relationship with the Maricopa County Department of Transportation and elected officials, including Clint Hickman, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors representative for District 4. Work progresses on replacing orange trees with drought-tolerant bushes and trees as part of the Project Desert Canopy under the guidance of the PRIDES Beautification Committee.



Richard Anderson, left, and Steve Fribley trim some shrubs in the median of one of Sun City's roadways. [Submitted photo]

"I was humbled to be elected to such an organization where its members are so passionate about their neighborhood," said Ken Smith, PRIDES president. "We are unique in what we do."

Mr. Smith also noted over the decades there have been thousands of PRIDES members, including many who stepped forward to assume leadership positions on the PRIDES Board of Directors and participate on various PRIDES committees. Continuing a family tradition, Mr. McIntyre's great-grand-

daughter, Kenzie Willnef joined the PRIDES.

The PRIDES do not conduct a fund drive, instead depending on donations from residents, clubs and businesses to support their mission of "Keeping Sun City Beautiful."

The next PRIDES event, in addition to work performed each Saturday morning, is the Arbor Day ceremony scheduled for 10 a.m. Thursday, April 27 at West Peoria Avenue and North 109th Avenue.

Visit suncityprides.com.
Editor's Note: Mr. Huseonica is a Sun City resident and he is active in the PRIDES.