

Pops Band leaves Sun City fold

Concert Band members choose to stay for time being

By Rusty Bradshaw



Independent Newspapers/Rusty Bradshaw

The Sun City Pops Band had them dancing in the aisles during its Jan. 27 concert at Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave. More than 800 attended the concert, which featured a full bill of dance music. The Pops Band will no longer be a Recreation Centers of Sun City chartered club.

Now there is one.

Sun City lost one of its two large performance bands when Pops Band members voted to leave the community fold and change the group's name. It is now called the West Valley Pops Band.

"We could no longer afford to be associated with the Sun City recreation department," stated a press release sent to band patrons by Len Shykind, the band's publicity coordinator.

The move comes after a months-long dispute between the Sun City Concert Band Club, a chartered Recreation Centers of Sun City club, and the RCSC Board of Directors over a change in the corporation's club policy. The policy, approved in December, requires band members who live outside Sun City to pay a \$2 guest fee for each band rehearsal. The policy also requires clubs that have nonresident members to track their attendance and turn over all guest fees to RCSC.

The Pops Band had one more Sun City concert on its schedule, but it will not be conducted at Sundial Recreation Center, 14801 N. 103rd Ave., as planned. In his press release, Mr. Shykind, a Surprise resident, stated the band board is working to find a place for that show,

and possibly one or two others before the end of the performance season.

"We plan to have a lot more concerts for you to go to," the press release stated. "And they will still be free concerts."

While the Pops Band will decharter immediately, the Sun City Concert band will finish out the performance season with its final concert, 2 p.m. Wednesday, May 15 at Sundial Recreation Center, according to Ed White, Concert Band president.

"That could change," he said. "The band board will decide the best course of action and then take that to the whole band for a vote."

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The RCSC board did alter its policy prior to approval to offer performing clubs the option to decharter and still perform in rec center facilities. The alternative also retained the rent-free status quo if performing clubs offered four free concerts annually and did not solicit donations at their conclusion.

“Sun City has many other musical offerings for its residents, including the Rhythm Ramblers, Concert Band, Orchestra, Piano Club, Sun City Handbell Ringers and the Ukulele Club, to name a few,” stated Joelyn Higgins, RCSC communications director, in an e-mail Feb. 28.

She added RCSC officials have no interest in acquiring a de-chartered club’s assets. In the approved club policy, acquisition by RCSC is the last option.

Paragraph 29 of the policy states, “When a club is de-chartered, equipment and supplies may be sold to other clubs, club members or outside sources with approval of the club’s Executive Board, RCSC’s Board of Directors and RCSC’s Assistant General Manager. If the club cannot or does not wish to sell the equipment or supplies, it may donate them to similar chartered clubs with RCSC’s Assistant General Manager’s approval. The club may sponsor a final closing event for its members, after such, all assets will revert to the Recreation Centers of Sun City, Inc.”

The Pops Band will be able to perform in Sun City in the future, if members so wish, Ms. Higgins added.

“RCSC has several meeting rooms, social halls and venues available for rent to RCSC cardholders and area organizations,” she stated. “Associated rental fees and set-up costs would be assessed as applicable.”

Rec center officials maintained in the past the policy change was an issue of fairness.

“We recognize this (alternative) does not work for all clubs, but it does work for the majority of people who believe it is not fair they pay for the facilities but those from outside do not,” Larry Klein, RCSC board member, said during a Dec. 11 RCSC member/ director exchange meeting.

Vance Coleman, then-board president, claimed the clubs policy was not really changed in regards to guests, it would simply be enforced.

“We have forgotten what the policy was and we are just getting back to that,” he said at the Dec. 11 meeting.

Band members believed the alternative was not workable because the approved policy change included a clause that dechartered club assets would be sold to other groups or, in the

event they did not sell, become property of RCSC.

Mr. White remains mystified as to why the board believed the club policy needed modification in this way.

“I can’t figure out why the board is trying to ‘fix’ something that has worked so beautifully for so long,” he said.

Mr. White also believes RCSC is not spending corporate funds wisely for community entertainment. He pointed to RCSC officials’ decision to pay top dollar for acts at the Sun Bowl and for the March 2 Del Webb Days.

“Just sad, doggone it”

“We’ve got great groups here, and they will do that for nothing,” he said.

As they move forward, the Pops Band will be sponsored by Valley View Community Food Bank, 10515 W. Peoria Ave., which will provide space for the group to rehearse. According to last week’s press release, not only will the Pops Band offer more than its one scheduled concert for the current season, but plans an expanded season beginning in October.

“We will be playing at many of the churches and high schools that presently have food drives for the Valley View Community Food Bank in the Sun Cities and West Valley areas,” the press release stated.

Pops band concerts will continue to have no monetary admission charge, but patrons will be asked to bring a nonperishable food donation for Valley View.

The Pops Band includes about 70 musicians and welcomes new players. Practices are conducted 9-11 a.m. Saturdays.

Mr. White said the Concert Band members are waiting to see the results of the Pops Band decision.

“They are blazing the trail,” he said.

The group’s only other option is to go back to what he called a practice band, which provided no public performances.

“That would be a shame,” he said. “We are recognized as one of the best concert bands in the world. It’s just sad, doggone it.”

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