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The Rev. Hugh Duncan served parishes in Moses Lake, Washington, and Boise, Idaho, before his retirement. He is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served in the nuclear Navy and the civilian nuclear power industry before his ordination to the priesthood. He graduated from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest. He and his wife, Beverly, recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary and they have two sons and two grandchildren. He can be reached by email at hduncan4@cox.net.

About Vintage Voice

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VINTAGE VOICE



Finding — and Helping — Seniors in Need Even in a Retirement Paradise

By the Rev. Hugh Duncan

When I retired from All Saints' Episcopal Church in Boise, Idaho, in 1998, we sold our house, put our belongings in storage, and moved into our motorhome. We became what the RV community calls "full-timers." We roamed the country in our motorhome for almost three years before discovering Sun City, Arizona — a retirement community 20 miles west of Phoenix. Sun City has 11 golf courses, seven recreation centers, and every amenity you can imagine. We quickly bought a two-bedroom condo and settled into the "Sun City lifestyle." We continue to RV part-time.

For the past five years I have been the president of a 501(c)3 non-profit charity called "Sun City Community Assistance Network" or "Sun City CAN." We are a one-stop resource where seniors can get help with food stamps, advice on Medicare and Social Security issues, have their income taxes prepared for free, have a free half-hour consultation with an attorney, get free Dial-a-Ride tickets, get information and help on property tax issues from the County Assessor located in our office, utility bill assistance, and much more. As we like to say, "We are a small organization with a big heart!"

Many people are surprised to learn that there is a need for such services in a senior resort community. Sun City was founded in 1960 and is 56 years old. It is Del Webb's original retirement community, and is the oldest retirement community in the United States.

The 2010 census reported that Sun City has 37,499 residents and that 6.5% live below the poverty line of \$931 per month for a single person. This means that Sun City has 2,437 residents who are below the poverty line, the population of many small towns. Many more Sun City seniors are low-income and in need of help. These are mostly widows in their eighties and nineties who have either outlived their savings or lost their husband's pension when he died. Most have never had to ask for help before and are reluctant to do so.

There are many programs out there to help seniors, but nobody tells them about these programs. Many seniors are simply in the dark.

For instance, in Arizona, if a single person's income is less than \$1,333 per month, they can get Medicare for free. However, they don't know this, and so \$104 is being deducted each month from their Social Security check. Widows and widowers can get a big break on their property taxes, but again, they don't know about it. The surprise and joy we see on people's faces when we help them get such benefits makes it all worthwhile for our volunteers.

Poverty and need seem to be predictable results of senior communities "aging out." Since Sun City is the oldest senior community in the country, we just happen to be experiencing it ahead of everyone else. We predict that as other senior communities mature, eventually they will need something similar to Sun City CAN.

I feel privileged to be a part of a group of creative, retired volunteers who are constantly looking for new ways to help our elderly, low-income neighbors.



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