

SUN CITY PALM DESERT

SUN CITY SHADOW HILLS

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THE SUN CITY INSIDER



SANDIE YOUNG

A Life of Service, Dance, and Love

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Sandi Young

A life of Service, Dance, and Love



When Sandie moved to Sun City Shadow Hills eight years ago, she was searching for a fresh start. Having spent her career as a school counselor in Wisconsin, Sandie had already lived a life of service, guiding students through some of their most formative years. Retirement, however, opened the door to new beginnings, new passions, and new communities that would soon change her life—and the lives of many others—for the better.

Finding Home in the Desert

Leaving the lakes of Wisconsin behind was no easy decision, but Sandie knew she needed a new environment after the passing of her husband, Mike. Drawn to the sunshine, mountain views, and warm community spirit, she packed up her car and headed west. “When I first moved here, I felt like a kid in a candy store,” she recalls. “There was so much to do and explore. Sun City Shadow Hills truly gave me a second chance at life.”

For Sandie, the active lifestyle and camaraderie of her community have been a blessing. She threw herself into clubs, classes, and volunteer opportunities, quickly building connections. But it was her love of animals and her long history with pet therapy that soon led her to the program that would capture her heart: Paws & Hearts.

Paws That Heal Hearts

Sandie had been involved with therapy dogs in Wisconsin, so when she heard about Paws & Hearts after settling in the Coachella Valley, she reached out to founder Richard Waxman. Her West Highland Terrier, Bentley, was already certified, and together they began visiting patients at Desert Regional Medical Center and the Lucy Curci Cancer Center.

Today, Sandie carries on the work with her current therapy dog, Shelby, who has become something of a local celebrity. “When I walk into the cancer center, people’s faces light up. They don’t know my name, but they know Shelby’s,” she says with a smile.

The impact of therapy dogs in these settings is profound. Sandie recalls one moment that still brings tears to her eyes: “A frail woman in the waiting room saw Shelby, burst into tears, and whispered, ‘I need, I need.’ Shelby gently laid across her lap and licked the tears from her face. Watching her calm down in that moment, I realized the incredible power of these dogs to bring peace.”

For many patients, Shelby is more than a comfort—she’s a reason to smile. Some even schedule their appointments on Tuesdays just to be sure they’ll see her. “It’s humbling,” Sandie reflects. “I’m just the handler. Shelby knows exactly what to do. She has this patience, this presence, that helps people carry the weight of what they’re going through. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

A Lifelong Love of Dance

When she’s not volunteering with Paws & Hearts, Sandie can often be found teaching line dancing at Sun City Shadow Hills. Her love for dance began in childhood, when her parents, avid ballroom dancers, introduced her to the joy of movement. From tap and ballet lessons to captaining her college pom-pom squad, dance has been a constant thread in her life.



SHADOW HILL “LIVELY LINERS” TAUGHT BY SANDI YOUNG

In retirement, line dancing became her new passion. What began as a Saturday morning beginner’s class soon grew into something more: Sandie now teaches intermediate classes and helps keep the community’s “Lively Liners” program thriving. “Line dancing isn’t just about steps,” she explains. “It challenges the brain, strengthens the body, and brings people together. I love watching others discover that joy.”

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Living with Purpose

Whether guiding patients through difficult moments with Shelby or leading neighbors through the rhythm of a dance, Sandie's retirement years are anything but quiet. She has transformed loss into purpose, finding fulfillment in community, service, and creativity.

"I love where I live, I love what I do, and I feel grateful every day," she says. "Sun City Shadow Hills gave me the space to begin again—and the chance to keep giving back."



"Paws & Hearts" is always on the look-out for amazing volunteers, both 2-legged and 4-legged! If you are a full-time valley resident (sorry no snowbirds) and would like to give back to your community by visiting a long-term care facility or cancer center please check out our website and give us a call. We would appreciate it if you would watch the videos on our site and decide if this type of volunteer work would suit you and your pup.

They also offer a monthly **Pet Loss Bereavement Group**. If you or anyone you know has recently had to say good-bye to a beloved 4-legged family member and are needing to talk about it, all the information for our group can be found by calling (760) 836-1406 or on the opening page of www.pawsandhearts.org. Their office is located in the Berger Charitable Foundation Building at 42-600 Cook Street, Ste. 207 CA 92211.