100+ Women Who Care aids nonprofit that helps seniors

BY KIM TARNOPOLSKI
Guest Writer

For many older adults, remaining in the home they love represents independence, dignity, and a connection to the life they have built.

But as people age, everyday challenges can make that independence harder to maintain. Social isolation can quietly become one of the greatest challenges of all.

Neighbors Who Care is helping change that story for seniors in the East Valley.

The nonprofit provides an important network of services designed to help older adults remain independent, connected, and engaged in their community.

From transportation and caregiver support to wellness services, friendly visits, and social opportunities, the organization helps seniors continue living safely and with dignity while providing families with greater peace of mind.

At their recent Giving Circle, the East Valley members of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun selected Neighbors Who Care as their quarterly charity recipient, awarding the organization a collective donation of $7,350.

The members' donations will support Neighbors Who Care's socialization events, which creates opportunities for up to 100 seniors who rarely leave their homes to enjoy meaningful afternoons filled with companionship, conversation, and fun.

The program brings seniors together for lunches, live music, gifts, and engaging activities designed to encourage interaction and build friendships.

These gatherings provide more than entertainment. They offer participants something deeply human – the chance to connect, laugh, share stories, and feel part of a community.

Social isolation can easily go unnoticed, particularly among older adults who live alone or have limited mobility. A senior may have food in the refrigerator and a safe place to live yet still go days without a meaningful conversation or personal interaction.

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Celebrating the gift to Neighbors Who Care made by 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun are, from left, Sandi Hullings, Jenny Sanderson, Bonnie Kosar, Leslie Dawson, Terri O'Herron, Laura Zeiner, Crissy Haidos and Katherine Katz. *(Kim Tarnopolski/Guest Writer)*

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in Peoria that says, 'I think I found your college ring,'" Rose said. "He was an elevator repairman, and he said he found my property in an elevator shaft at 48th and University. He said it was wedged in there pretty good."

It had been 22 years since he lost the ring, and 16 since his wife died. The man, who lives in Peoria and wanted to remain anonymous, got Rose's address and mailed the ring back to him.

Rose had been working on the books for a while. His own children provided the inspiration. However, he always lacked an illustrator. He started publishing when he realized ChatGPT would provide him with illustrations.

The next book he plans to publish is a memoir, "Give or Take a Few.'

Rose is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and his work there had an impact on airmen for generations.

At the time he joined the Air Force, he had lost his job and was having trouble with his marriage.

"I had two kids at that point in time. My mother-in-law was taking care of the kids for me. I happened to walk past the Air Force recruiting office, and the guy said, 'Come on in.' I said no. But he got me in and I took the test, and I pretty much aced it. He told me I could get any job I wanted."

It was 1973, near the end of the Vietnam War.

"So, I did the one thing I swore I'd never do: I joined the Air Force."

Rose told them he wanted to be a medic because he didn't agree with the Vietnam War. He figured that would make it less likely he would have to kill anyone.

It was during his service that he was asked to help develop a medical disaster preparedness training plan. It was such a good plan, it ended up being used by the entire U.S. Air Force worldwide.

That started with a call he got from a guy at Air Force headquarters who had stumbled on his plan.

"'The odd thing is,'" he recalled the caller telling him, "'a week before we'd been talking about it at a General Staff Air Force meeting, that we need to have a coherent, cohesive training plan. The more I read, the more I liked. The more I liked, the more I read.'

"Well, you know the rest … they adopted it for the Air Force." STSN

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Neighbors Who Care recognizes that helping someone remain independent means caring for their social and emotional well-being, too. Learn more at neighborswhocare.com.

"Neighbors Who Care is deeply grateful for the generous donation from 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun. As social isolation becomes an increasingly critical issue, this support ensures our neighbors remain connected, valued and remembered. Thank you for your amazing support and for partnering with us to make a meaningful impact in our community," said Terri O'Herron, executive director of Neighbors Who Care.

The East Valley members' support will help transform moments of isolation into opportunities for belonging.

A welcoming gathering becomes a reminder to an older adult that they are seen, valued, and still very much a part of the community around them.

That is the beauty of collective giving. One $100 donation can do something good. When a group of women pools those donations together, the impact becomes something much greater.

Since their first gathering in 2015, 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun has donated over $1.7 million to local nonprofits across the Valley, supporting organizations that are addressing meaningful needs right here at home.

Those interested in experiencing collective giving firsthand are invited to attend the next East Valley giving circle on Oct. 27 at Kiln in San Tan Village. Guests are always welcome.

Together, these women are helping ensure that aging does not have to mean isolation—and that every senior can experience connection, friendship, and the simple joy of knowing they belong. Information/registration: 100wwcvalleyofthesun.org. STSN

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