

# Annual Board Report to the Community

January 30, 2017

Dear Casa del Cielo Homeowners,

As your elected Board of Directors for the Casa del Cielo (CdC) Homeowners Association (HOA), we are “fiduciaries” of your community. A fiduciary governs and manages an asset, but is not the owner. Those of us on the Board recognize it is our duty to act in the best interests of all the owners. We are the community’s trustees, charged with protecting and growing the community for both the short- and long-term. This fiduciary duty is what has driven us as a Board over the past year as we managed several significant changes and problems.

Reflecting on 2016, here are some of our major accomplishments:

- We adopted position descriptions for Board officers and Board committees.
- We engaged the HOA’s attorney, James Hazlewood of Carpenter Hazlewood, to lead an educational session on the responsibilities and best practices of HOA boards.
- We addressed serious pool maintenance issues, including a major leak over the summer and heating problems. Later in the year, it became clear that putting bandages on our aging mechanical equipment was no longer viable. The Pool Committee and the Board approved the replacement of pool heaters and other mechanical equipment. In addition, the Board approved a contract with a new pool maintenance company, McCallum’s Pool Service & Repair, and began working on plans for other pool improvements.
- The Architectural Control Committee (ACC) reviewed many applications for architectural changes and completed 20 inspections of pending home sales (that’s right, 20! -- the real estate market is back!). The ACC also renewed its efforts to clarify what is and is not permitted when owners want to make exterior modifications. In 2016, the ACC adopted new policies regarding backyard gates (they are not permitted for reasons stated in the policy) and replacement of front doors (the criteria are clearly defined). Owners can find these new ACC policies as well as previous ones on the CdC website.
- If you think the community is attractive and well maintained, thank the Landscape Advisory Committee (a subcommittee of the ACC) and Desert Villa Landscaping. In addition to weekly maintenance, our special projects this year included olive tree spraying, weed treatment to reduce “nutsedge” that crowds out real grass, and trimming or replacement of trees that were diseased or posed safety issues. Not sure if a plant you want to have in your front yard is allowed? Look for CdC’s approved list and other landscaping policies on the website.

- The CdC website was completely re-designed, making it more attractive and easier to use. If you have a question about CdC, here's the place to go first. (A special thank you to our webmaster, Sandra Palaich, for taking the initiative to redesign the website!)
- The Social Committee added a new event – Saturday morning coffees – to our roster of biweekly pool parties, the annual GAIN Party honoring local first responders, two work days, and the annual holiday party.
- After the resignation of our financial agent and treasurer in April, we made a successful transition to a new Board treasurer and outside finance agent, both CPAs. They made significant improvements to the Board's financial information and ability to make prudent decisions. The HOA ended the year with a surplus, but the excess was less than budgeted due to unplanned pool repairs and other expenses.
- The Board completed an in-depth budget planning process for 2017. There will not be an increase in landscaping costs, our largest single expenditure, but because of unexpected pool repairs in 2016, new pool equipment in 2017, having an outside CPA firm perform financial services, anticipated increased costs due to Arizona's new minimum wage, and the need to maintain our reserves, the Board approved a \$5 per month increase in dues, as well as an increase in the document fees charged to new owners. CdC's annual assessment remains among the lowest on Scottsdale Ranch.
- The community elected a new Board member, Debbie Castro, to a three-year term for 2017-2019. The Board honors and thanks our retiring Vice Chair Mike Wolfe as he completes his Board term, and also Gordon Minier, who volunteered to fill in during 2016 as ACC Chair and Board member. The Board elected Bob Bernstein to fill a one-year position on the Board and ACC Chair for 2017.

At the Board's first meeting of the New Year on January 29, we embraced several goals for 2017. Three areas top our priorities:

- **Long-term facility planning.** Our community was built 34 years ago and our primary capital asset is the pool facility and social area space. The pool is where a diverse collection of home owners becomes a real community. It's where we hold parties, gather for workdays, host card games and book club gatherings, cool off in the Arizona summer sun and bring our visiting snowbird families in the spring. Real estate agents tell us the prices of homes for sale are affected by how buyers perceive the appearance of the community pool. In the course of looking at pool maintenance and exterior improvements in 2016, the Pool Committee and the Board heard a number of ideas both big and small for improving the pool and social area. It became clear that rather than make piecemeal improvements, we needed to devote a significant effort to determining our community's facility needs for the next 10-15 years. Therefore, the Board has appointed an ad hoc Long Range Facilities Planning Committee chaired by Ed Burke to seek community input, prioritize needs, get expert advice, develop options, and bring back recommendations to the Board. You'll be hearing more about this and asked for your input in 2017.
- **Improving communications.** We endeavor to keep the community well informed through the website, email bulletins, and signs posted at the pool, and we respond to questions and problems on both our telephone "hotline" 480-767-5940 and Gmail

address, [casadelcieloscottsdale@gmail.com](mailto:casadelcieloscottsdale@gmail.com). The community newsletter, published quarterly for many years, is no longer a timely vehicle in a digital world. Therefore, we will discontinue the newsletter this year, and put increased reliance on email communications. Look for the new, CdC Bulletins in your email to keep current about your community. Be sure we have your correct, preferred email address. We have also upgraded our telephone hotline number for reporting problems, and we've added a WiFi hotspot at the community pool. Sign-in information is posted on the pool's bulletin board.

- **Increased community engagement.** It's a familiar refrain, but CdC always needs more volunteers for committees and social activities. The qualifications are simple: come to meetings, participate constructively, and volunteer to do the work needed. At the moment, we need help with communications activities, including Gmail skills, and extra hands with social events are always welcome. Debbie Castro is the Chair of the Board's Nominating Committee; please talk to her or the appropriate committee/activity chair about what you'd like to do.

On behalf of the Board and our working committees, we look forward to a New Year of friendship and growth for Casa del Cielo.

#### Casa del Cielo HOA Board of Directors

Barry Bader, President

Debbie Castro, Vice President and Chair, Nominating Committee

Hilda Banyon, Board Secretary and Chair, Communications Committee

Lisa Schabloski, Treasurer and Chair, Finance Committee

Bob Bernstein, Board Member and Chair, Architectural Control Committee

#### Committees and Activities

Gordon Minier, Chair of the Pool Committee

Ralph Balding, Chair of the Landscape Advisory Committee

Ed Burke, Chair, Ad Hoc Long Range Facilities Planning Committee

Social Activity Coordinators:

Pool Parties	Sally White
Spring Luncheon	Pat Good
Book Club	Shirley Ayer
Cards/Saturday coffees	Ann Harris
GAIN Party	To be announced
Holiday Party	To be announced

For further information, contact us at [casadelcieloscottsdale@gmail.com](mailto:casadelcieloscottsdale@gmail.com) or 480-767-5940.