

Focus on Photography West Camera Club



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This month the *PSA Journal's* occasional article, *Focus*, which features a member or member club, turns to the Photography West Camera Club of Sun City West, Arizona.

Sun City West is a retirement community located Northwest of Phoenix with a population of about 25,000 residents that was first developed in the late 1970's. Like many retirement communities, Sun City West has many activities and over 100 clubs including Photography West which was chartered in 1980. Today the club has over 400 members with diverse interest in all areas of photography including 3D. The club has the use of a club room that includes a classroom with 10 student computers. Other equipment includes mounting press, mat and print cutter and supplies. Scanners are available for converting slides, prints or movies to digital formats. Like many camera clubs, Photography West had a darkroom area that had been idle for several years. Recently it was converted into a fully functioning studio room with state of the art studio lights and modifiers that can be used for still-life and portraits.

The club room is open for member use four days a week during the winter season, September through May. Many residents are seasonal with homes, in the North Central and Northwestern states. The Club also has members from several Canadian Provinces. Our Snowbird residents generally leave by mid-May and return in September. Club Room days and hours are reduced during the Summer Months.

During the Winter Season the club meets every Friday at 10:00 AM in the Stardust Theater, a two hundred ninety-six seat state of the art performance theatre, where photo and video essays are shown by members, generally a collection of images, travel stories or images from recent trips or club contest results. Attendance for these meetings ranges from 100-170 members.

Periodically there will be professional photographers as guest speakers to present a show with an educational lecture on a topic of their choosing.

Photo instructional programs and classes are conducted in the club room all winter on most all subjects including Photoshop®, Elements® and Lightroom®, Basic Photography, composition and how to use the studio lights and other equipment. At least once a month a critique session is held to help members improve their images. While many members are available as mentors on most any subject, a major program is the Mentor/Mentee program that is held once a year and lasts 10 weeks. It is a very comprehensive program for beginning photographers who want to improve their skills. One-on-one meetings are held with a mentor allowing the student to learn his or her camera. Classroom sessions are held on specific subjects with assignments. The mentor will also go on field trips with the student to practice technique. At the end of the program, the students will show their work in a special showing. This is a popular program that allows a student to move from beginner to advanced in a short period of time.

The club provides many outlets for members to show their work with a Solo Show and reception held every other Friday. These shows highlight up to 28 prints of an individual or group that want to show their work. These are mounted and placed on the wall of the club room. After two weeks the members' work is transferred to the Sun City West Library for an additional two weeks of viewing. This is a great way for members to let others see their work. Members can sell their prints and greeting cards with images at the Recreation Center Store and at the Arts and Craft Fair.

For those interested in competitions, Photography West holds two large digital and print competitions each year, has a themed competition each month. The club also participates in the



Solo Show Reception. Photo © Ron Applebaum.

activities of the ACCC (Arizona Camera Club Council) and hosts one section of the Grand Canyon Exhibition judging each year. Recently the club has started to compete in the PSA PID Interclub.

While the club has many great photographers and works to supply their photographic needs, the club also has many social activities including dinners, pot-lucks and the receptions at the Solo Shows.

In addition to all of the social activities, the club does quite a bit of traveling. There are quick get-togethers with carpooling, more formal trips with a planned destination and trips to a variety of countries in Europe all done by volunteer club members.

This club also provides service to the community in the way of photography education, providing photography to other craft clubs in the community and exhibits at the library and recreation center. A special three week program is Happy Camp. The yearly three week event in March is held by the Sun City West Recreation Center and its clubs. This is open to all the visiting grandchildren to our community residents during spring Break. Photography West provides photographers for each event to document these activities for the families and to promote Happy Camp.

You can learn more about Photography West at their website <http://www.photographyscw.org/> ■



Arts & Crafts Fair. Photo © Ron Applebaum



Gene, APSA, PPSA, and Liz Mitofsky Stereo Photo Presentation. Photo © Ron Applebaum



Happy Camp baseball. Photo © Cliff Robinson



Happy Camp clowns. Photo © Cliff Robinson



3D Presentation. Photo © Cliff Robinson