

Special Reports

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USA WEEKEND's Annual Travel Report

The 10 Most Beautiful Places in America

It's a nation so blessed with sights -- natural and man-made -- that you could ask all 300 million residents for their favorites and expect 300 million different answers. So how do you go about picking the country's 10 most beautiful spots?

Well, for starters, you go about it very boldly. You solicit opinions from travel writers and photographers, poll your colleagues, and talk to outdoor enthusiasts, historic preservationists and relatives who, every time you see them, seem to have just returned from another fabulous trip. In putting together USA WEEKEND Magazine's annual summer travel story, our editors did all that. To help frame the unenviable -- all right, nearly impossible -- task of limiting America's most beautiful attractions to a mere 10, we also offered a few guidelines. Nominees had to be publicly accessible and reasonably well-known. Iconic stature wouldn't hurt a place's chances, and, given the want of any objective way to measure beauty, sentimental favoritism was an acceptable tiebreaker. In other words, we instructed our experts to follow their hearts. After reading the top 10 list they produced, we hope you'll do the same.



Plus, past travel reports:

[America the diverse](#) Places that celebrate our nation's many faces.

[Top 10 places to have fun](#) The classic summer prerogative -- good, old-fashioned fun.

[10 Most Beautiful Places in](#)

[America](#) A nation blessed with sights -- natural and man-made.

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[10 Must-See sites](#) Understanding of what it means to be American.



1. Red Rock Country (Sedona, Ariz.)

Ever since the early days of movies, when Hollywood has wanted to show the unique beauty of the West, it has gone to Sedona, a place that looks like nowhere else. Beginning with *The Call of the Canyon* in 1923, some hundred movies and TV shows have been filmed in and around town. We fell under Sedona's spell, too, and while debating our No. 1 spot kept returning to it for the same reasons Hollywood does: The area's telegenic canyons, wind-shaped buttes and dramatic sandstone towers embody the rugged character of the West -- and the central place that character holds in our national identity. There's a timelessness about these ancient rocks that fires the imagination of all who encounter them. Some 11,000 years before film cameras discovered Sedona, American Indians settled the area. Homesteaders, artists and, most recently, New Age spiritualists have followed. Many cultures and agendas abound, but there's really only one attraction: the sheer, exuberant beauty of the place. People come for inspiration and renewal, tawny cliffs rising from the buff desert floor, wind singing through box canyons, and sunsets that seem to cause the ancient buttes and spires to glow from within. We hear the canyon's call and cannot resist. For more, go to www.sedona.net.

KEEP SEDONA BEAUTIFUL
Recent Events



2006 Winners at the Annual Award luncheon



Mayor of Sedona at the 2006 Annual Awards luncheon



Native Plant Workshop participants 2006



A native plant goes home with a Workshop recipient

County tightens light laws

3/22/06

New rules are an effort to plug existing policy loopholes

By Chelsea DeWeese
LARSON NEWSPAPERS

Residential home builders on up to 2 acres of unincorporated land in Yavapai County will from now on have to fully shield all outdoor lighting on their property, the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors decided Monday, March 20.

Supervisors unanimously agreed to amend Yavapai County's existing lighting ordinance, established in 2002, in order to strengthen dark skies policies in the region.

The amendment comes after a number of residents in the Village of Oak Creek recently expressed concern that some residential homeowners had exploited "loopholes" in the existing policy.

"It's not about less light; it's about shielding the light and putting it where it's needed. It's time to fix this."

Bill Pumphrey — immediate past president of Keep Sedona Beautiful

One residence in particular, located on Pinto Lane in the Village of Oak Creek, garnered a number of complaints as of late.

The home has nearly 30 unshielded outdoor lights, but meets the county's former lighting requirements because homeowners installed low-wattage bulbs in the fixtures.

"We're asking for your help to plug the loopholes," said area resident Joanne Johnson during Monday's meeting.

As amended, the county's light pollution control ordinance now requires residential home builders with properties less than 2 acres in size to fully shield all outdoor lighting fixtures.

Home builders on more than 2 acres of unincorporated land in Yavapai County will be allowed to have 5,000 unshielded lumens from now on, provided shielded fixtures constitute at least half of the total lighting fixtures on the property.

Motion-sensor lighting fixtures are exempt from the new lighting restrictions.

Prior to Monday's amendment, the county's light pollution control ordinance required any outdoor lights that produced more than 2,000 lumens to be fully shielded and allowed up to 50 percent of outdoor lighting under this lumen amount to remain unshielded.

Please see LIGHT, 5A

KSP nomination 3.2.07

LAW: County says light rules will give back the stars

from Page 1A

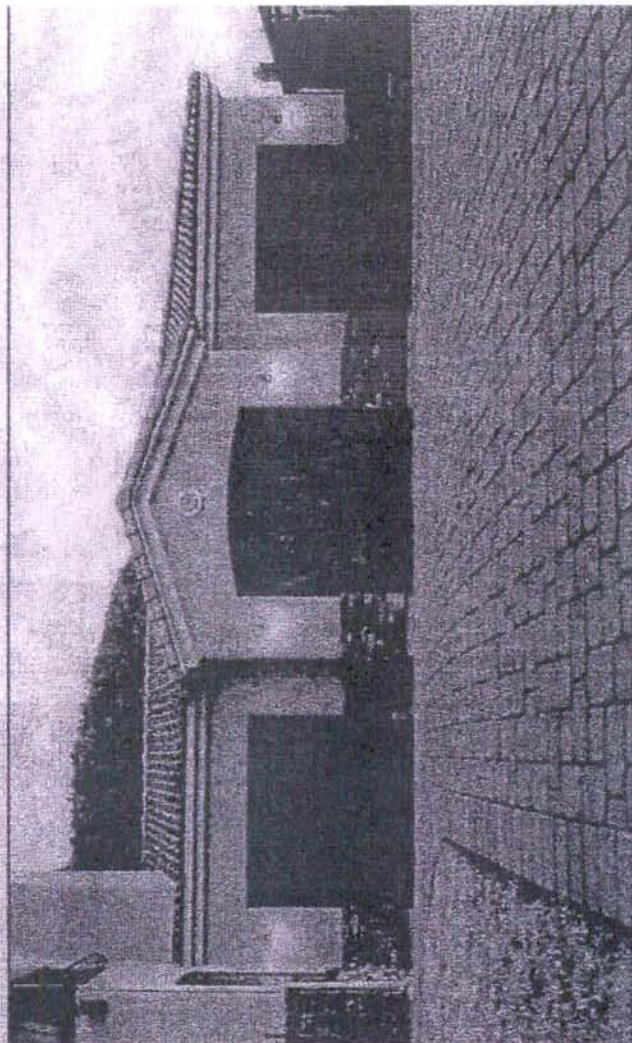
Members of local conservation group Keep Sedona Beautiful told supervisors on Monday that these restrictions weren't doing enough to control light pollution in the area.

"It's not about less light; it's about shielding the light and putting it where it's needed," said Bill Pumphrey, immediate past president of Keep Sedona Beautiful. "It's time to fix this."

Yavapai County District 3 Supervisor Chip Davis agreed, calling the county's former lighting ordinance "watered down."

Enalo Lockard, assistant director of the Yavapai County Planning and Zoning Commission, said the new amendment furthers the county's attempts to "give back the stars" in the region.

Fully shielded lighting fixtures, which encase bulbs and direct lighting downward, prevent so-called "light pollution," where lighting escapes upward into the night sky, and "light trespass," where one resident's



Mal Cooper/Larson Newspapers

MEMBERS OF KEEP Sedona Beautiful have spearheaded an ordinance to restrict exposed outdoor lights on Yavapai County residents' properties.

lighting spills onto adjacent properties. will be affected by the strengthened outdoor lighting policy. amendment.

Only newly built and newly remodeled homes in unincorporated areas of Yavapai County previously afforded to residential properties will not be affected by the new amendment. *Contact Chelsea DeWeese at 282-7795, Ext. 128, or cde weese@larsonnewspapers.com.*

K&B nomination 3.2.07

BR News July 7, 2006

Area volunteers help with forest closure

Ambassadors give alternative outdoor recreation ideas

By Chelsae DeWeese
LARSON NEWSPAPERS



Mat Cooper/Larson Newspapers
DOUG BLACKWELL, a Keep Sedona Beautiful member, mans a forest closure point on Boynton Pass Road.

Breaking News

The Red Rock Ranger District will re-open to the public starting 8 a.m. Friday, July 7.

However, U.S. Forest Service land access inside Oak Creek Canyon south of Slide Rock State Park will remain closed until further notice.

Fire restrictions remain in effect.

U.S. Forest Service enforces forest road closures on the Red Rock Ranger District.

The district, due to extreme fire conditions, was closed to all public access between June 23 and Thursday, July 6.

See FOREST, 6A

At just after 4 p.m. on Wednesday, June 5, 45-year-old Dawn Sather pulled up to a roadblock at the head of Boynton Pass Road south of Sedona.

"Is this normally open," she hollered to a man wearing an orange safety vest who was standing nearby.

Sather, of Coto de Caza, Calif., was vacationing in Sedona for a week with her husband and close family friends.

And Doug Blackwell, of West Sedona, had the somewhat unpleasant duty of informing her that the Coconino National Forest Red Rock Ranger District was closed.

Blackwell, a Keep Sedona Beautiful volunteer, was one of nearly 50 Greater Sedona residents who helped the

FOREST: Volunteer groups provide 670 hours of service

from Page 1A

All told, volunteers invested more than 670 hours of manpower in the effort, according to Mike Ward, vice president of Sedona Friends of the Forest.

The Sedona Friends of the Forest — aided by Keep Sedona Beautiful members — headed volunteer efforts, said Carol Witkus, who coordinated manpower and scheduling during the event.

That's how Blackwell, 46, ended up spending Thursday evening roadside up near Boynton Canyon.

He said he's what you might consider a "serial volunteer."

Armed with a booklet of information regarding outdoor options outside of the

Red Rock Ranger District, Blackwell prepared for yet another four-hour shift of enforcing forest road closures.

Greater Sedona volunteers worked from noon to 8 p.m. on three separate roadways on the Red Rock Ranger District: Boynton Pass Road, Fossil Creek Road and West Clear Creek Road at Hwy. 260.

Blackwell said volunteers aim to act as ambassadors toward the general public, and provide as much information as they can about alternative outdoor opportunities.

"Everyone's been nice so far and nobody's pushed the subject," he said, adding that the suggestions are so that people "don't go away feeling angered that they're not doing anything."

For Sather, who was driving her friend to a spa treatment at Enchantment Resort, the forest closure was a little bit of a vacation dampener.

However, she said, "It's been a lot of fun anyway, even though all the trails were closed."

Back home in Coto de Caza, Sather has a generator and a pump in her backyard, she said, in order to use water from the pool should a wildfire erupt.

"We understand forest closures," she said, "We have to deal with wildfires too."

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KSB Nomination 3.2.07

line at kudosnaz.com | February 7 - February 13, 2007

Songwriter shares talent, 'Keeps Sedona Beautiful'



Shondra Jepperson fine-tunes her latest piece, *We Are the Guardians*. She is gifting the song to Keep Sedona Beautiful.

By MICHELLE BORGWARDT

Staff Reporter
mborgwardt@verdesvalleynews.com

Like an artist creates on a blank canvas, so does Sedona songwriter Shondra Jepperson; she makes something out of nothing. Like a painter, she adds layers, building upon the next instead of adding blues, greens or reds, she adds drums, piano, strings, bass, and more.

In addition to being a well-known performer, Shondra's a musician, a composer and arranger, as well as a producer. Many know her as the other half of the popular musical duo, Tom & Shondra. She's also a favorite among Canyon Moon Theatre fans. But her talents don't end there. She co-anchors the local cable Red Rock TV Channel 16 and is the director and chairperson of *Good Morning, Sedona*, a quarterly business networking breakfast hosted by Sedona Chamber of Commerce.

But there's more. Her passion is songwriting. Few realize the talent she possesses as a "sequencer," laying down, or arranging, one track at a time and recording it. She has 16 years experience in this field.

Using a MIDI synthesizer, Shondra can duplicate the sound of a multi-piece band or even an orchestra, which many can't afford to hire for an event.

"It's not karaoke," she's quick to point out.

Like a TV, a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) keyboard

has 16 channels available that a musician can record and layer different instruments on. In Shondra's studio, she has about 1,600 sounds that she can manipulate.

"People don't get it. Some don't know I'm a songwriter and some don't consider me a musician," she declares. "You must be a musician to do this because one must know how musicians think."

In fact, 90 percent of all the music Tom & Shondra perform, whether it be show tunes, dance tunes or originals, she arranged, sequenced and recorded.

She starts by listening to a song, then breaks it down by instrument, and then duplicates the sound adding her own style. This in-depth time-consuming process requires much listening and auditioning instruments. One song may take eight or 15 hours while a show consisting of seven to nine songs can take a week or more.

"It takes skill," adds husband Tom Jepperson, "Not just anyone can sit down and do it."

This petite blue-eyed blonde has performed on cruise ships, in concerts with her own rock bands, and at Sea World in San Diego. She has also composed and produced commercials as well as theme songs, including *The Children's Anthem* that is sung at West Sedona School and throughout southern California.

In late October 2006, Tom & Shondra were hired as emcees for Keep Sedona Beautiful's 35th An-

niversary Awards Luncheon to take place on Feb. 11. Thoughts of writing a song for KSB had swirled in Shondra's mind for the past few years, but now the time seemed ripe. Her intention was to write an original piece, but songwriting can't be forced, so she waited for inspiration. A few weeks ago, it struck her like lightning while she was washing dishes, and eight hours later, she had created *We Are the Guardians*.

This uplifting song stimulates a driving force and feeling of emotion. One listener says it resembles *Circle of Life* from the musical *The Lion King*.

The lyrics describe how Shondra feels about living in Sedona, its majestic red rocks and surreal landscape.

"It represents how we feel about Sedona and wanting to keep it in a natural state," she explains. "I wanted to write something that hits people emotionally. It's a passionate song for me."

Shondra is gifting this original song to Keep Sedona Beautiful for its 35th anniversary, and the board is considering adopting it as its theme song.

We Are the Guardians was recorded locally at Star Tracks Studio and Tom & Shondra debut this duet during the awards luncheon Sunday where CDs will be available for purchase with all proceeds benefiting KSB.

"I found the song to be very moving because she wrote it from



VYNMichelle Borgwardt

Shondra takes a break at her home studio in Sedona.

her heart and it reflects how a lot of other people feel about Sedona," describes KSB board president Barbara Litrell who is one of a handful who has heard the piece. "... it reflects the beauty of Sedona and our role in it. We're so grateful to Shondra for her creativity."

Seventeen honorees will be recognized during the 35th Anniversary Awards Luncheon, including five "Sedona Treasures" that also celebrate 35 years. These include the United States Forest Service, Chapel of the Holy Cross, Sedona Public Library, Tlaquepaque Arts & Crafts Village, and Sedona Arts Center.

"These organizations have all been an integral part of the Sedona community and represent the five primary strengths of the character of our town: Art, Literacy, Spirituality, Nature and Commerce," Litrell states.

This year's event runs from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa. Tickets are \$35 per person. Tables of 10 are \$325.

Call Litrell at 649-0135 for tickets and information or call KSB at 282-4938 or visit www.keepsedonabeautiful.org.

Proceeds from the luncheon benefit KSB projects. Now more than 600 members strong, this nonprofit advocates orderly growth and preservation of the beauty of this area.

Accomplishments in its 35-year history include: acquiring land to add to Coconino National Forest; educating homeowners on native plant use; light pollution monitoring; advocating noise reduction; and fostering the Litter Lifters, KSB's dedicated volunteer corps who clean up litter on more than 60 miles of streets and roads in the area.

The Jeppersons say preserving the beauty of Sedona is a top priority and this song is a way for them to give back to the community they've come to love.

"This [song] enables us to make a contribution to keep Sedona beautiful," says Shondra.

Council tells Renzi NSA is its top priority

By Cyndy Hardy
LARSON NEWSPAPERS

The Sedona City Council crowned the Red Rock National Scenic Area its No. 1 choice in response to a request from U.S. Rep. Rick Renzi's office for 2006 federal legislative and appropriation priorities.

Councilman John Bradshaw was excused from the meeting.

Councilman Jerry Frey said he is against the NSA designation but that he voted for it because it was bundled with four other priorities, three of which he strongly supported.

The designation will add another layer of government that Sedona doesn't need because of Amendment 12, Frey said. No other national forest in the nation has a protective measure such as Amendment 12, he said.

"Some people want you to believe that Amendment 12 is going away in a few years, but that isn't the case," Frey said.

Sedona has current needs, such as an alternate route and sewer issues, and may have needs in the future that its leaders haven't considered yet, Frey said.

The NSA would also limit tour operations and hamper the city's economic success, he said.

Bradshaw owns a Jeep tour company, A Day in the West. An NSA is too broad, he said, and would take local control out of the community's hands.

"And when you ask [the supporters], 'Will it affect this or that?' they say, 'Oh, we'll put it in the legislation. It's inconceivable that we can think of everything that it may affect,'" Frey said.

Red Rock News FRIDAY JAN 27, 2006

NSA: Rep. Renzi reluctant to introduce legislation

from Page 1A

In a Sept. 28 article, Jonathan Stephens, the U.S. Forest Service's program manager for congressional designated areas, said, "An NSA is basically what Congress determines them to be."

Members of Keep Sedona Beautiful hugged and shook hands after the vote.

Councilman Dick Ellis and Vice Mayor Ernie Strauch were recently voted to the KSB

governing board, Frey said.

"The designation could result in increased sales tax revenues to the city through attraction of higher-quality destination-type stay-over visitors from around the world," KSB member Coleman Greenberg told the council during the public forum.

The designation is further needed to repair damage caused by forest visitors who can't "be briefed" before they enter the forest, Greenberg said.

Frey said that NSA designation does not guarantee additional funds for forest staffing or maintenance.

Renzi has reportedly been reluctant to introduce NSA legislation in the past. Renzi has reportedly received more than \$500,000 in campaign donations from the National Association of Realtors.

Locally, the Sedona Verde Valley Association of Realtors has denounced the scenic area. Mayor Susan Solomon, who

voted in favor of the priority, is a local real estate agent.

The City Council's top five priorities were rounded out with funding for Hwy. 179, point-source discharge or some appropriate title for it, a regional communication center and Community Development Block Grant funding.

Contact Cyndy Hardy at 282-7795, Ext. 129, or chardy@larsonnewspapers.com.

KSB nomination 3.2.07

Three Big Park Projects Win 2004 Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc. Awards



Tequa Plaza, winner of a KSB Award of Excellence for its exceptional architecture (Photo by Zona Fink)

We Village/Big Park folks can feel very proud of three recent honors bestowed on projects in our community by **Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc. (KSB)**, Sedona's oldest conservation-oriented organization. For more than 30 years, their Annual Awards of Excellence have been presented to individuals, organizations and businesses for exceptional achievements in architecture, signage and landscape design, as well as exemplary community services, all of which contribute to the goal of "keeping Sedona beautiful."

(1) In September, many of us attended the Grand Opening of the renovation of **Kiwanis Community Park**, located at the corner of Bell Rock Blvd. and Cathedral Rock Drive, adjacent to the VOCA Community Center. It is an outstanding example of the successful coming together of many segments of the community for a wonderful cause.

Those contributing enormous effort, funds, labor and expertise were first and foremost, Yavapai County, and most particularly, Supervisor Chip Davis, who made it all pos-

sible; the Sedona Kiwanis Club, whose recent donations and others over the years have been vital; the Village of Oakcreek Association who leased the land, approved the park and now maintains it; the Big Park Regional Coordinating Council whose Park and Recreation Committee oversaw the efforts; and a huge fund raising project on the part of local moms, Kim Kohlan and Wendie Turner. Lots of other Village people like Jake Weber, Ron Pucchi of ACE Hardware and John Sarna of JMS Construction were invaluable in their contributions, as well. The "new" park is a happy, safe place for family gatherings, birthday parties, dog walkers, tennis players and park appreciators of all ages and cultures that live in the Big Park/Village of Oak Creek.

(2) The old Oakcreek Country Club Building was notorious for many reasons, including its dark, windowless restaurant and a generally inefficient and unfriendly atmosphere, rarely welcoming as a gathering place for the wider community.

A long string of unsuccessful efforts to rebuild or remodel the structure became a Village plague for years. Finally, in the spring of 2003, a commitment was made by the VOCA Board to proceed with their revised concept of an extensive remodel, designed to be much more than a golf clubhouse. The beautifully

remodeled **VOCA Community Center** now provides an exceptional facility for the happy golfers, AND also reaches out to the broader Big Park/Village community (even greater Sedona) with diverse meeting rooms, activity centers and especially with Mulligan's, its attractive new restaurant.

(3) The exceptional architecture of **Tequa Plaza** was also presented the KSB Award



The newly renovated VOCA Community Center, recipient of a Keep Sedona Beautiful, Inc. annual award for exemplary architecture (Photo by Gail Shaw)

of Excellence. The new complex's fine Southwestern style building design provides a handsome introduction to the Big Park/Village at the southern approach from I-17, in character with the concept recently developed by the community. In addition, Tequa has a good program of original and tasteful signage and has demonstrated cooperation with the community in bringing its night lighting into compliance with local "dark skies" standards.

Congratulations and thank you to all who have worked to make these excellent projects happen, and therefore, our community a more pleasant and beautiful place to live!



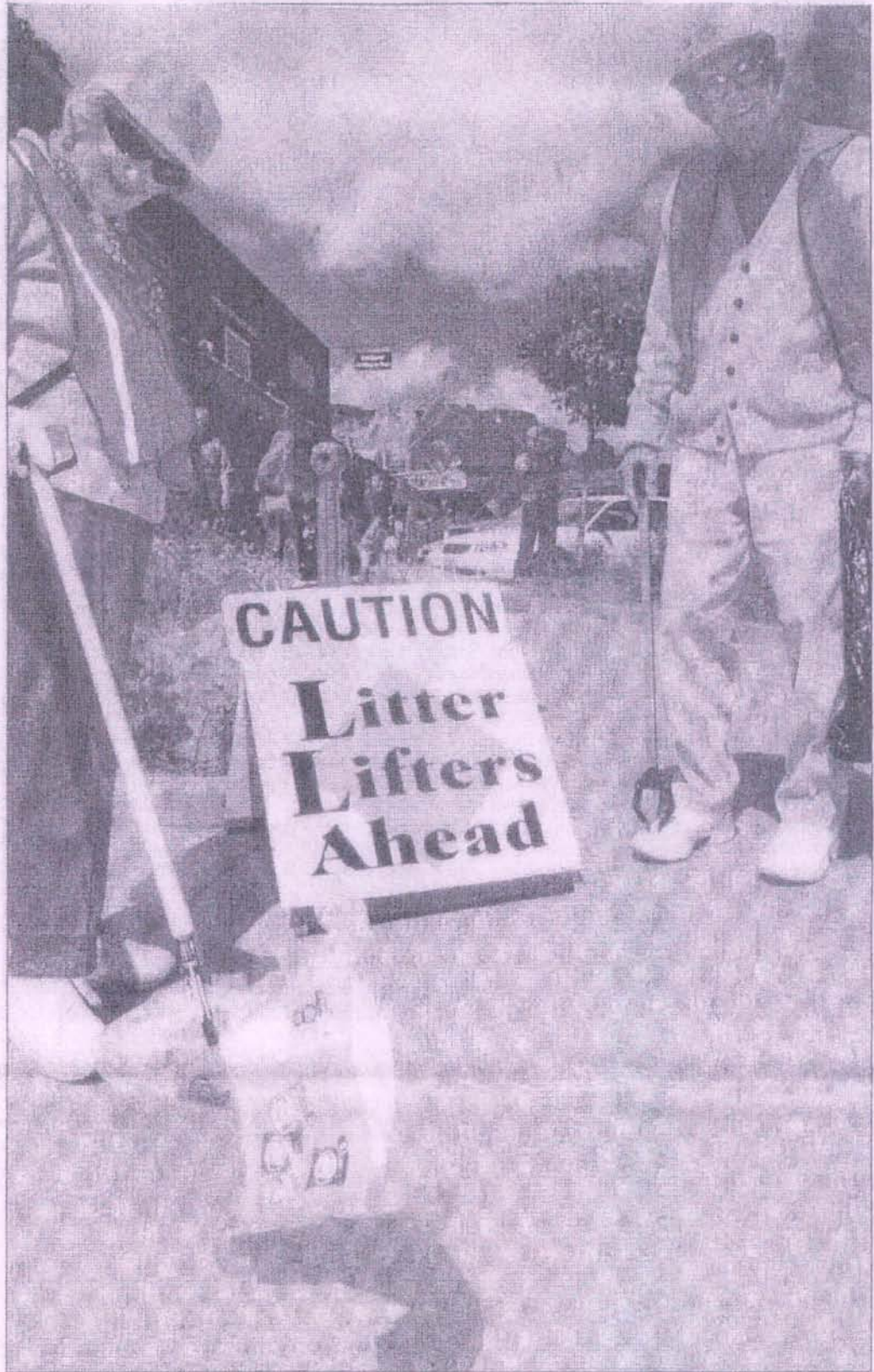
New play equipment at the KSB Award Winning Kiwanis Community Park (Photo by Gail Shaw)

KSB Nomination 3.2.07

Sedona Red Rock News Friday April 1, 2005

K&B Nomination
3.2.07

Litter Lifters Honored



Mal Cooper/Larson Newspapers

AMELIA AND Ed Jaskulski, members of Keep Sedona Beautiful's Litter Lifters, have been keeping Uptown clean for 16 years. Armed with grabbers and garbage bags, the Jaskulskis patrol their one-mile section at 8 a.m. every Sunday. "We want to have it [Uptown] looking good before the tourists come through," Amelia explains. Even when they're not volunteering, if they see garbage on the street, the Jaskulskis stop to pick it up. April is officially Litter Lifter Appreciation Month, recognizing the approximately 150 volunteers who help keep Sedona beautiful.



