

Sedona Forum presents vital community info

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THIS PAST WEEKEND, this director had the opportunity once again to participate in the Sedona Forum as a member of the report writing committee.

For those who are not aware of this annual event, it is presented by the Sedona Academy of Public Affairs, a group of local people who work to provide opportunities for other local people to discuss issues of local importance in a neutral setting and provide them with facts to make these discussions more fruitful.

The academy has produced 15 Sedona Forums and two Verde Valley Forums, each examining a specific topic. The process involves assembling up to 100 people, divided into four panels, each discussing and reaching consensus on an array of questions.

The four panels' statements are then compiled into a single document that, when approved by all in attendance, is published for the community to study and act upon.

The recommendations in those reports have spawned such local efforts as the Friends of the Forest, the Teen Center and Boys and Girls Club and other efforts to improve life in Sedona and the surrounding area.

Modeled after the Arizona Town Hall, it has proven to be a superb opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of a subject by local individuals in order to suggest solutions.

An important part of the forum process is imparting an understanding of the subject's history, facts and figures and other pertinent information so participants can discuss the topic with a strong knowledge base. The academy produces a background report for that purpose and it is an extremely valuable document for the depth of material it offers.

There are demographic data on the subject, the history of that subject, suggestions for possible solutions and much more. The result is an annual study of our community from a single subject vantage.

Anyone interested in understanding our community, the details of a topic and obtaining important facts and figures on population, community make-up and more would do well to study the background reports. If the academy only produced that background report and didn't put on a forum, they still would be performing an invaluable service to Sedona.

As mentioned, after the forum an extensive report is published and

circulated to the community in which the recommendations of the forum participants are enumerated. It is an interesting read and, as mentioned, has spawned a number of specific improvements in our community.

It is not the intention of the Sedona Academy to actually implement the recommendations in the report. Instead, interested and inspired citizens and organizations do this.

If you are interested in learning more about the academy and the forums they produce, refer to their Web site at www.sedonaacademy.org.

As the main collection point for information in our community, Sedona Public Library has a complete collection of both the background reports and the forum reports. Topics include tourism, relations with the Forest Service and Sedona, transportation, the aged, youth, growth, traffic and more.

This year's topic was "Building Future Community Leadership." Having attended and participated in writing the report, I must state that the background report was probably the best written and most interesting such document so far. The final report will also prove interesting, as well

as offer a number of specific suggestions on the topic of leadership. That final report will likely be available to the public by the end of March.

If you are interested in learning more about the history of growth in Sedona or need statistics and demographics on this community, the region and the state, be sure to look at the background reports on file here at the library.

If you want to understand what was the impetus of a number of community-based solutions to local problems, read the final reports.

If you ever feel that the challenges we face locally are insurmountable, understand the forum process and what it has created by way of solutions in our area.

You will surely come away with a different view.

Just as the forum reports are part of our collection here at Sedona Public Library, so too are many other locally pertinent documents that provide a deeper understanding of our history, make-up and challenges. Our Arizona Collection, the city of Sedona documents section and other items will provide you with an excellent starting point in understanding Sedona.

Be sure to come to your public library and learn what you can about your hometown.

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Library News

DAVID KEEBER
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