



THE FUN PLACE TO PLAY

The Story of Bingo at Silveridge

By
Dale Dauten, Syndicated Columnist

When bingo at Silveridge started back in the 1980s, it was the only place to play in the East Valley. Now, there are over a dozen others within a 20-minute drive, with four others on Wednesdays alone; yet Silveridge bingo still flourishes, occasionally getting as many as 200 players. I sat down with the two men who run the program to ask them how they keep it thriving after all these years.



Rick Winter (left) and Armand Gagnier

Armand Gagnier took over as manager five years ago. He proposed a motto:

“The fun place to play bingo.”

It stuck, and everyone involved works to make it so.

The spirit of Silveridge bingo starts with the fact that all the callers and other staff are volunteers, and all profits go to support clubs and activities at Silveridge. (There are expenses, of course, and the State of Arizona, gets 1.5% off the top, but everything else goes straight to the Renters’ Association.) It falls to Rick Winter, who’s been Finance Manager for over six years, to make sure that every dollar is accounted for, including reporting quarterly to the state’s Bingo Unit. The total provided to the park’s clubs/activities now exceeds \$200,000.



It also helps the energy of bingo nights helps that Armand and Rick greet the players, that there are door prizes and free games for those with birthdays, and that the callers work to keep the games lively. Armand polled players last year, seeking to determine what could be made better.

One thing he learned that there were too many games on any given night. By cutting the number per evening, they could shorten the night and cut the cost. The cost fell from \$19 to \$15, and Rick adds, "Our goal is to have people out by 9 o'clock."

While the bingo evenings have been shortened, Armand's and Rick's bingo days are still long. Armand arrives about 2PM to begin preparations. Rick comes in about 10AM to start his work, then leaves and returns about 4. The volunteers arrive around 5 for a buffet dinner, then start selling cards at 5:30.

I asked one of the callers, Linda Williams (more on her below) why people choose Silveridge bingo. She said, "We have the best callers in the Valley. And whether it's your first time or you've played for years, you're always welcome. Absolutely."

Armand adds, "We always thank our players for joining in. We appreciate them, and I think they can feel that."

If you've never played, or haven't played in years, Armand and Rick urge you to stop by and say hello. The volunteers who will get you started and answer all questions. Bingo goes through March 22nd, which is also the last night for one of the group's favorite callers.

MARCH 22 - FAREWELL TO LINDA WILLIAMS AS CALLER

Like so many good things, Linda William's time as bingo caller started with a fluke. It was back in 2005 that Linda and her husband, Vail, moved to Silver-ridge. Given that she was an avid bingo player, she was approached to be the manager of the bingo program. Her response, "That would mean I couldn't play, right?" Right. So she volunteered Vail for the job. Then came that fluke. It was a bingo night in 2008 when all of the callers had to beg off. Vail scrambled around, even considered canceling that night's program, before turning to Linda to fill in. Linda enjoyed herself, and thus joined the rotation of callers.



I asked if there were tough nights as a caller, and she laughed, then said, "Bingo players can get a bit antsy. When that happens, I just say, 'Remember, we're doing this for charity,' or, 'There's one rule: No throwing dabbers at the caller!'"

Linda was known for her jokes where there was time to kill between games. I asked her for one but she drew a blank. So I had to settle for this one I found on a bingo website...

What do you say to your husband if he says,

"You're going to have to choose between me and your bingo game"?

Answer: "I'm going to miss you."

Although Linda came to enjoy being a caller, she's stepping down for two reasons. Last year she developed a serious lung condition and at one point realized, "I couldn't both call and breathe." And while she had a lung transplant and has bounced back to full health, she's ready to move off the stage and just play. Her farewell night as a caller will be the last bingo of the season, March 22nd.



The Silverridge Bingo Team: (left to right) Laverne Hinzman, Russ Blanchard, Lil Blanchard, Roger Quast, Linda Hinzman, Rick Winter, Carol Tyra, Laverne Johnson, Wayne Freeman, Armand Gagnier, Sue Fouche, Roger LeBlanc, Bill Rainville

Not pictured: Mike LeBlanc, Deb LeBlanc, Jim Neill, Betty Neill, Maureen Stinson, Ken Stinson, Joanne Smith, Connie Kinport, Nancy Gording, Rita Catalano, Brona Freeman, Keith Martin



Volunteers Make the Difference

Message From Sue Arneson,
Activity Director

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that the end of the season is fast approaching. Many of you have shared that you cannot believe how fast it has gone. Thank you for another fabulous year! It is only right and proper that I give thanks to all the volunteers in my last letter of the year. Our volunteer party is on Thursday, March 16th at 4:30pm. I have a catered dinner planned with entertainment by Bernie and Red and some special door prizes.

Whether you have been the leader of a large club or have washed dishes after a food event, you are all equally important! I remember that my husband's Grandma had a sign above her sink that said "Thank God for dishes because we had food to eat!"

Every one of you is important!

Equally important are those of you are new volunteers who are replacing those who are taking on new goals or moving on to other opportunities. Thank you to those who have served for years and thank you for our new courageous leaders. The way you learn is by doing and we have so many mentors to guide the way.

A special thank you to Jerry Colling and Tracy Gagnier and all the kitchen volunteers who bring a new meaning to our food, fellowship and fun for us. I so appreciate my efficient assistant, Jill Belcher, and William Shelton, my set up person. Our GM Rhonda and our entire staff have put in countless hours to make our park run smoothly. Thank you to my Mom, my "Balcony Friends" (you know who you are) and to my best friend and husband Jeff who has been my "gopher", running for food and supplies. When asked at the Anniversary Party what 3 things I most appreciated about my husband, I said "that he is a good father, he helps my parents and he is my #1 volunteer!"

Thank you for making this the best year ever with your encouragement and support. I am busy planning for next year's activities and entertainment that you will love! Watch for my summer newsletter online with a listing of entertainment and outfits to bring. My Ticket Order List will be online by mid-summer. Once again you will be able to order by October 1st. May you all have a safe and healthy summer. Rest up and before you know it we will all be back to celebrate with our Silveridge family. You know that we are the Friendliest Park in the West!

With Appreciation,

Sue



Silverridge Pickleball - Come join us for a great time!





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