



**Green Valley Community Coordinating Council, Inc.**

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**Green Valley Community Coordinating Council  
President-to-President Letter  
January 2008**

**Border reports stir up Green Valley**

A few months ago, a CBS Evening News Investigative reporter questioned Green Valley's reputation as a safe place to retire.

In early December that CBS report led to an editorial in the *Green Valley News*. The editorial pointed out that many people are aware of the problems because the paper has been reporting on deaths and violence related to drug and human trafficking across the border. "Many in Green Valley are aware of the problems. They attend public meetings, read the newspaper and know the terrain between here and the border."

The CBS report was followed by a second derogatory-article on AOL in December. The AOL website listed Green Valley as the 11<sup>th</sup>-worst place to retire in the United States. The article, written by New York freelance writer Carol Vinzant indicated that Green Valley, "once an idyllic retirement town" is now facing "a drug violence problem."

Green Valley residents realized this was news about an old problem. Perhaps local viewers even wondered why it took a national reporter such a lengthy time to report a story that has been going on for years along the entire Southwestern U.S. border.

On December 29, the *Arizona Daily Star* picked up the AOL story on its front page and that same evening Tucson's KGUN 9 TV station featured a two-minute interview with the Green Valley/Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Jim DiGiacomo and me.

**Community Response**

The *Green Valley News* editorial concluded, "Fortunately, Green Valley residents know about the risks. They've read the reports. The incidents are isolated, if increasing. It's hardly the Wild West revisited in Arizona's best retirement community."

The December 29, 2007 article in the *Arizona Daily Star* includes quotations from a number of greater Green Valley community leaders:

Joyce Finkelstein, Executive Director of the Green Valley Community Coordinating Council (GVCCC), stated, "We have some wonderfully intelligent people here that can read these things critically and know this is just one woman's opinion. She added, "We don't have a drug violence problem. And to the best of our knowledge, we've never seen bodies around here."

Dove Haber, a spokesman for the U.S. Border Patrol's Tucson Sector, said Green Valley is no different from any other part of the sector in terms of drug violence. She agreed that there is activity in Green Valley just as there is in other parts of the Tucson sector. She said, "I think the Border Patrol and other law enforcement agencies do everything they can to make it as safe as possible. I don't know where CBS got their information...but they should speak to the residents of Green Valley who are very happy living there."

Tim Carmichael, vice president of marketing for La Posada, pointed out that when people call for information, he has to tell them there is a border issue here, but the area is vast and La Posada hasn't had problems. He added, "Ultimately, though, it can have a very adverse affect for people considering relocating to the area."

The Green Valley/Sahuarita Chamber of Commerce has taken action: On Dec. 28, DiGiacomo e-mailed an invitation to the New York writer Vinzant to come visit Green Valley. Chamber President Jim Green has offered the writer a luxury room at the Inn at San Ignacio as well as guided tours of the area. She is yet to respond to a second invitation sent from the Chamber.

### **We need to be heard**

Each one of us needs to be an ambassador for our community. As Haber, the Border Patrol spokesperson, indicated, the people of Green Valley are happy to live here.

We need to tell our story loudly and clearly. It is essential that we talk plainly to our friends and relatives who may have seen this story. We need to explain that they do not have to question our sanity because we are living here.

There is an old adage in communication research that says that when a story provides misinformation or an error, it will take more than five repetitions of the correct facts before readers and listeners will begin to believe the accurate information. We've got a lot of communicating to do. In a democracy, very little happens until everyday people get involved.

For more information on any of the sources cited, please contact the GVCCC office, 648-1936.

Russ Symes