

100+ Women Who Care help Kiwanis Club

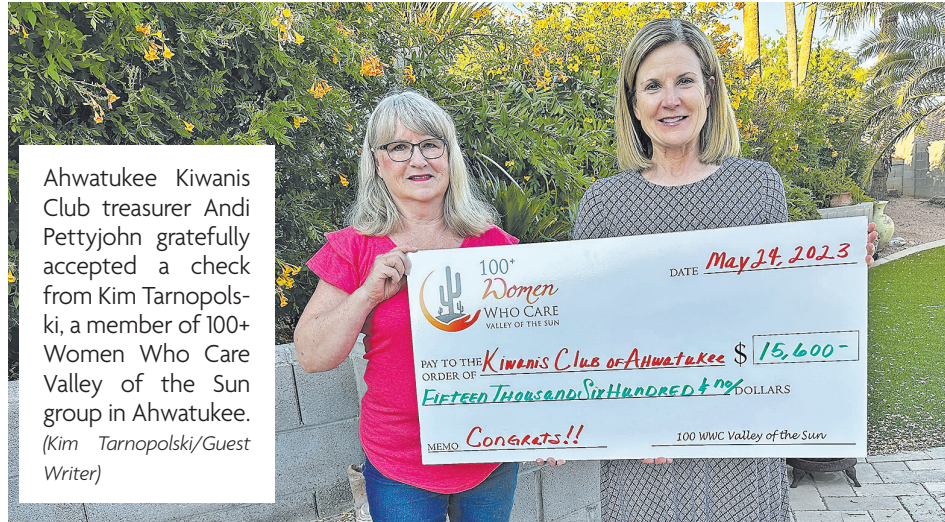
BY KIM TARNOPOLSKI
AFN Guest Writer

Service to one's community is at the heart of Kiwanis International. This global community of clubs, members, and partners is dedicated to improving the lives of children one community at a time.

Each community has different needs, and Kiwanis empowers members to pursue creative ways to serve the needs of children.

The Kiwanis Club of Ahwatukee, founded in 1982, comprises a group of friends who have a love for giving back to the community and helping our future generations.

They meet almost every Thursday morning at 7:30 at Biscuits on Elliot and 48th Street to strategize and plan their next



Ahwatukee Kiwanis Club treasurer Andi Pettyjohn gratefully accepted a check from Kim Tarnopolski, a member of 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun group in Ahwatukee. (Kim Tarnopolski/Guest Writer)

community activity.

They are passionate about making a difference. Helping kids grow and succeed is at the heart of everything they do.

But how they do it is just as important. They believe our neighborhoods and our world are best served when people of all ages and different backgrounds work to-

gether to share their time and talents.

They know that kids are curious, lovable, and hilarious. They are also wild, impatient, and vulnerable and need support.

Kiwanis clubs are encouraged to be creative with their ideas. Our Ahwatukee Club has identified several ways to support those most vulnerable in our neighborhood.

One of their main priorities is to support kids in the foster care system. They provide back-to-school shopping, school supplies, and Christmas presents to foster teens living in group homes.

They also organize a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for foster group homes. Children without a home not only don't have the support of family around them, but usually they do not get to celebrate

SEE **WOMEN** PAGE 26

holidays like the rest of us.

This is a beautiful and memorable event for all. Kids sit around a table, enjoying turkey and all the trimmings – while feeling cared for, special, and loved.

Kiwanis organizes many clothing and gift card drives throughout the year. Annually, they sponsor a baby shower for foster teen moms.

They accept new or gently used items like baby clothes, bibs, bottles, diapers, and blankets.

Kiwanis programs for youth and young adults help to create the next generation of community leaders.

For instance, Key Club, the world's oldest and largest student-led service organization for high school students, encourages leadership development through service to others. Our local high schools have these clubs.

Our local Kiwanis Club is best known for hosting the Annual Easter Parade in Ahwatukee. Next year will be its 48th year. Also held the Saturday before Easter is the Kiwanis Spring Fling, where kids participate in an Easter egg hunt, bounce houses, and other entertainment.

In April, Charissa McCarron shared the need for funds to support the back-

to-school shopping spree with her 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun group in Ahwatukee.

The members were moved by her presentation and selected the charity to receive their quarterly donations.

Kiwanis Club of Ahwatukee was awarded \$15,600 gift, which provided clothes for over 100 foster teens.

"In the past we have done back-to-school shopping for one or two group homes (8-10 kids each), but this awesome donation will make it possible to do back-to-school shopping for many more group homes," shared Andi Pettyjohn, treasurer.

"Life is hard enough for these kids without needing to wear the same two to three t-shirts every day," she continued. "Having new clothes to wear will help their self-esteem and help them fit in with their classmates.

"We so appreciate the help of the members of this organization. They are helping us help kids!"

Since 100+ Women Who Care's inception in 2015, over \$1,104,000 has been donated to local charities.

To learn more or to register for its upcoming giving circle on Aug. 15, visit 100wwcvalleyofthesun.org. To learn more about Kiwanis Club of Ahwatukee, visit ahwatukeekiwanis.org. ■