

# Transcription of Episode 357: Snowbirds Club

## SPEAKERS

Bob Firing, John McFerran, Judith Bennoch

**Note:** This transcription was computer-generated and may contain typographical errors.

### **Bob Firing 00:00**

Good. Morning Shadow Hills. Well, we have a new club that is thriving, and they're ready to bring on more members. And so, John McFerran and Judith Bennoch are here to tell us about it. Welcome to the podcast.

### **John McFerran 00:28**

Thank you very much, Bob. And thanks for having us.

### **Bob Firing 00:30**

Well, so what gave you the idea that, and the club, by the way, is called the Snowbirds Club, I should mention that right off. What gave you the idea that they started a Snowbirds Club?

### **John McFerran 00:42**

Well, actually, we used to live in a community just like this one in Florida. And that community, I was the president of the Snowbirds Club. And I saw what it can do for the community and for the residents. And so when we got here and saw that there was no Snowbirds Club, we decided to form one. And we did so about 13 months ago.

### **Bob Firing 01:02**

Okay. And so is the membership open to everybody or just snowbirds and tell us what the benefits are?

### **John McFerran 01:12**

Well, first of all, yes, the membership is open to everyone in Sun City Shadow Hills, whether you're a traditional Snowbird or not, and just to reinforce that we have quite a few permanent residents who are members of the Snowbird Club, because they say we are fun group to be with. So yes, we're open to everybody. The Snowbirds Club really has two objectives, Bob, and the first of the first one is information. Traditional snowbirds are only here for three to six months a year. So that means that their home is being closed down here for quite a long period of time. And with the heat and the pests, and so forth, a lot of damage can be done potentially

### **Bob Firing 01:53**

They don't take care of themselves.

### **John McFerran 01:54**

That's right. And so there are things that people can do. So we created a 25-page information booklet on how snowbirds can prepare their home for being empty for you know, six to nine months of the year. Now, it's not a formal how to do exactly, it's more of information on what your systems are doing in the summertime. And so it allows you to create a checklist for your own particular home. Because some people you know, have different equipment in their home such as they leave cars, or they have, you know, maybe a golf cart that has to be looked after. So each home is different. So that document allows them to tailor something for their particular home and save them from potentially any damage over the summer months when they come back their home is in good shape. We also provide information to traditional snowbirds, things like irrigation systems, a lot of people don't really understand the irrigation going on in their property. But it's even more important if you're not here for the entire summer months when that irrigation is critical. So we have actually an in person presentation next week, going through the basics of irrigation so that people understand what's happening so that they can maybe make changes or look at their irrigation system for the summer months. So those are the kinds of things we do for information purposes.

**Judith Bennoch 03:15**

John, maybe you want to mention the date and time for that for people who might be interested.

**John McFerran 03:20**

It's on January the 23rd, at 10am, inside the Montecito Clubhouse.

**Bob Firing 03:25**

Okay.

**John McFerran 03:26**

That's the in person one, the home closure document is actually on our website for anybody who's paid up member of our club. What we're probably more known for, though Bob is the social component. If you're here for three to six months of the year, you want to meet other people and then have some fun. And so we've tailored a large number of programs around people, allowing people to meet other people, and to maybe have some fun. And those are kind of grouped into two categories that the first one is kind of the mixer type events. So we have happy hours for example, a couple of those a month we have a general membership mixer, actually which Judy manages maybe you can explain that.

**Judith Bennoch 04:11**

This is a good time for me to tell you about what those are all about. And they're basically they're held once a month in the main months for the season for snowbirds, which are November, December, January, February, and March. And we meet on a Friday afternoon from three to five on the Montecito patios, both the fireplace one and the larger patio because there are a lot of people. And the whole premise of that meeting is for people to mix. So we create activities or ways for people to mix with each other. I mean, we may have a timed activity or you're sitting at a table with someone will ring a bell and it's time for you to go and find someone else. And we've found from feedback from the members that this is one of the things they look forward to the most because it's not geared, it's not a program, you're not telling them what to do for that too. hours, we have shadows come in with a full bar that day because we don't people like to have their other drinks, not just beer and wine necessarily. So it's a

little special time for anyone to get together. And every month, because our membership is growing, and it's also attrition and coming and going people that are there's always new people that are out at those events. So it's always the best opportunity for newbies in particular.

**Bob Firing 05:25**

And I know a lot of Canadians left during the shutdown, and so there's probably a whole new wave.

**Judith Bennoch 05:34**

In both in both ways, too. And as John had said, there's about 50-50. As far as US and Canadians in the club, a lot of people normally because the Snowbird Association in Canada is very widely known, they consider snowbirds being Canadians, but that's not at all the fact. And we're seeing that in our membership when it's actually very close to 50-50. now. My husband, John, and I have, a John McFerran came to us this summer, early fall, when they lost their coordinators for this event, we were helping in the past and kind of twisted our arm and said, you guys have been here a while maybe you could help us out. So that has become our event for that.

**Bob Firing 06:16**

How many members do you have now?

**John McFerran 06:18**

225. And most of that occurred over the last 13 months through word of mouth, and The View magazine. And I don't think we could have handled much more than 150. Because we weren't set up for anything else. We didn't have our programs, we didn't have our systems, our procedures, our operations, we didn't even have the volunteers to handle membership of any larger than 150. But now we're at 225, we got the proper software, our membership base, sorry, our volunteer base is growing so we can handle a larger membership now. In addition to the mixer that Judith just mentioned, we also have events like weekly coffee groups, for men and women that are very popular. We have monthly lunch groups for men and women, which are very popular. We also have a potluck once a month that is extremely popular for people who like to bring your own food and drink type events. And another program that Judith is running is one that's just growing and developing. And that is special events. So I like to do this maybe tell you about our Firebird program.

**Judith Bennoch 07:26**

And this evolved, what has happened is we now have are doing occasionally some special events when we did our first mixer. And I thought what and the I think the important thing is to hear with all of our events is they're being driven by the membership. It's what the membership wants the club to do. So there is no set, you know, set plan. So we put out a feeler and just said it was would there be any at our first mixer just had some papers on the table? Is there anything you'd like to do as a group that you don't have a large group of friends here that you go and do things with or whatever that you'd like the club to organize for you. And one of the suggestions that we made was a hockey game, we now we ended up we are organizing two hockey games, because we had so many people interested and are going to two games. The first one is just got canceled on us due to Harry Styles concert being booked, and so we've been doing a little jumping, but we are going to a game on February 3 and another game on March the first. And we have 60 to 70 people signed up to go to each of games.

**Bob Firing 08:29**

The arena is very happy that your club has formed too.

**Judith Bennoch 08:33**

But it's very exciting because people do get you get a rate and then people will go looking forward to going together as a group. So we're actually looking at from our members to get other ideas to do other activities like that. So maybe going to a theater together or whatever. So we're definitely being driven by what the membership wants the club to do for them.

**John McFerran 08:55**

The other type of mixers that we're looking at are more along the lines of physical activity, so you can do something with physical activity and also meet other people. So we and these are just still information but it is occurring. We have a weekly walking group, we have a weekly bike riding group, we even have a motorcycle riding group that meet periodically and go for drives around the valley. And there's two or three others that we're in the process of forming, but the physical activity side we're probably going to try and grow in the future years. So those are the kinds of activities that we're doing and those were our objectives basically information for traditional snowbirds, as well as activities that promote socialization and fun.

**Bob Firing 09:40**

That's a fantastic idea. And I guess your blossoming membership underscores that fact. I was thinking of that person who's here most of the time, a benefit for us was to meet people we could go visit in the summertime exactly when we want to get out of here.

**Judith Bennoch 09:56**

Exactly. And I think that what's important too, and I think it was very time Only with John starting the club is that during COVID, when everyone became so isolated onto their own, and even more so for those snowbirds who come that don't have necessarily, they don't have a basis of people here to come back to that it can be very lonely and singles as well. So it is not just couples in the club too. But anyone that just feels that they want to be around other people and other people that might have, like interests in their discussions sometimes relating I mean, our politics are different, our weather is different. Things that are important to people in the northern states in that don't have the same effective as for many who are from the south. So it just gives you a chance to get some, like people and have those discussions that others that are all year are able to do all the time. So it's just giving that giving that little opportunity for those things.

**Bob Firing 10:54**

Well, good for you. I applaud your initiatives and getting this started. And I'm sure you're gonna have a lot more members as a result of this podcast. Did I miss anything? Is there anything else you'd like to say?

**Judith Bennoch 11:07**

I'd like to just put a plug in because our next monthly mixer is a week Friday, January the 27th on the on the patios at the Montecito Clubhouse, from three to five, there is no need for any registration is just open. If you're not a member, feel free to come try us out. We encourage anyone to come to any of our events for one time, at least without having to join or pay their membership.

**Bob Firing** 11:33

By the way, there are dues?

**Judith Bennoch** 11:35

Yes, there are.

**Bob Firing** 11:36

What are the dues?

**John McFerran** 11:37

\$20 per year, per person.

**Bob Firing** 11:39

Okay, okay.

**John McFerran** 11:40

Now, if somebody wants to join our club, but all of the information is in The View magazine, on who to connect and where to connect in terms of email, or they can connect with me directly. My name is John McFerran and I can be reached and this is my cell number 778-873-3118. And I'll try and answer your questions.

**Bob Firing** 12:00

Okay. And so what months are you here?

**John McFerran** 12:04

I'm here for almost the full six months. I'm here basically early October, right through to the end of March. And we have people of course that stay later into April and May. And but my time is that those six months that I just mentioned.

**Bob Firing** 12:20

Okay.

**Judith Bennoch** 12:21

Now see I have a different set because we generally don't arrive till the beginning of November and are here till mid April.

**Bob Firing** 12:28

Okay, well, thank you for telling us about the club and all the best and for the audience. Thanks for your attention. Until next time, bye-bye.