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PRESS RELEASE

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Face shields not adequate substitute for face masks

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to rise throughout the state, and in Sun City West. Our community saw an additional 5 cases added overnight, bringing us to at least 135 documented cases in the 85375 zip code.

We are hearing several reports of positive and suspected COVID-19 cases cropping up in our chartered clubs.

Only 11 percent of ICU beds (189) are available throughout the state. The rest are occupied by COVID and non-COVID patients.

The state has activated its Crisis Standards of Care Plan, as well as an addendum to provide COVID triage guidelines that will allow triage officers to decide who gets care resources if a shortage arises.

The Recreation Centers of Sun City West provides these stark reminders as we are still seeing some ambivalence about the current state of the pandemic and the risk to those 65 and older.

Most recently, we have seen an uptick in the number of people choosing to wear face shields rather than masks. Face shields are not adequate substitutes.

The CDC has **not** recommended the use of face shields in lieu of face coverings. Transparent face shields are not a direct substitute for face coverings because they do not protect others. Droplets released when someone coughs, sneezes, or speaks can be dispersed through the sides and bottom of the shield.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention also recommended that the sides of the wearer's face be wrapped with coverage extending below the chin when wearing a face shield, but they do not recommend the use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.

The Rec Centers requires employees and members to wear face masks if 6-foot distancing cannot be achieved. Maricopa County defines "Face coverings" as a covering that fully covers a person's nose and mouth. The term "Face Covering" includes, but is not limited to, cloth face masks, surgical masks, towels, scarves, and bandanas.

Maricopa County's Regulations Requiring Face Coverings in Maricopa County can be found here: <https://www.maricopa.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1453>

We understand some members have medical conditions that make masks difficult. We highly recommend these individuals, particularly if their medical conditions involve breathing problems, stay home instead of visiting the club rooms or other Rec Centers' facilities. The CDC recommends all high-risk groups (65+ and/or chronic medical conditions) avoid going out as much as possible.

Going into group settings, especially indoor ones, even with social distancing and face coverings, poses a health risk during these difficult times. Sun City West's 135 documented COVID-19 cases will grow exponentially the more people come into contact with one another. The state is seeing record numbers of cases, which is particularly concerning for our demographic and the Crisis of Care Standards and score cards. You can read more here:

<https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/infectious-disease-epidemiology/novel-coronavirus/sdmac/covid-19-addendum.pdf>

Please share this information with your friends and neighbors. Stay home, stay well, and if you must go out, mask up!