

Per Simmons
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Introducing the Civano Speakers Series

“Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor’s noisy party than being there.”
— *Franklin P. Jones*

One of the underlying yet least quantifiable goals of building “neotraditional” communities like Civano is the opportunity for greater social interaction. Front porches, sidewalks off streets, a canopy of trees, paths that actually lead somewhere, community gathering places: these are all a means to an end. That end is getting people out of their houses, out of their backyards, out of their cars, and into the formal and informal public spaces of the neighborhood.

At Civano, we’ve been blessed with a neighborhood design that has a heart. That heart is its Neighborhood Center, and as we’re all beginning to hear about more and more, that heart is coming alive. It’s alive in its locus of sustainable architecture, like the straw bale construction of the café space (now the activity center). It’s alive in its central draw—not only in location, but in the actual design and (hopefully sooner rather than later) *calling* of the round building, as a neighborhood meeting hall. And it’s alive in the number and types of new, mixed-use buildings at its periphery: Alan Boertjens’ Johan’s Tavern, the Neuser’s Ballet Rincon dance studio, the Calhouns’ Paper Flower Bed & Breakfast, and many others.

Civano’s heart and soul

If the Neighborhood Center is Civano’s heart, then its residents are its soul. Waxing spiritual for just a moment, it’s fair to say our soul has been around much longer than our heart. Well before the first home was completed in Neighborhood 1, prospective residents gathered, often off-site, to get to know each other and celebrate their community-to-be. We met most of our neighbors, well before construction even began on our home, through the regular monthly potlucks in the Neighborhood Center courtyard.

Add in the other social and organizational events—community garden, newcomers breakfast, Civano Tykes, dinners for eight, Civano Book Club, Civano Buyer’s Club, advisory council, neighborhood association, the list goes on—and the conclusion is clear: good community design does in fact promote good community interaction. The heart feeds the soul.

So with our heart pumping and our soul swinging, let’s get the mind humming along, too. While there have been a variety of outstanding community gatherings, there has been no linkage—thematic, administrative, or otherwise—that supports a regular, intellectual meeting of the minds. To that end, I’m happy to introduce the Civano Speakers Series.

Meeting of the minds

The goal of the Civano Speakers Series is simple: To hold regular, monthly lectures—with an opportunity for discussion—in Civano. We’ll tap into our great local pool of

Civano talents and resources—experts in the field, artists, writers, philosophers, you, me—and we'll also draw from across Tucson, the state, and even nationally and internationally.

Logistically, the Civano Speakers Series will be held once a month on a regular evening at a regular time. Let's say the fourth Sunday at 7 p.m., and last an hour or two. We'll meet at the pub, or in the Neighborhood Center courtyard, or in a bed and breakfast, or at the Civano Community School, or in an artist's home. While the venue may change, the quality and uniqueness of each lecture and subsequent discussion will be a constant.

Here are some examples: Scott Calhoun reads from his new book, *Yard Full of Sun*, followed by a discussion of designing house and garden in the Sonoran Desert; Mary and Bruce Morganti give a lecture on the role of music in developing children as part of a community, then play a few songs; Mike and Monica Eng direct a slideshow of their bicycle ride through the Rockies, which leads into a chat of the best local rides, as well.

The lectures are oriented for the entire family, open to the public, and designed to get us thinking and talking, which in this day and age ain't such a bad thing. As I step down from my role as Civano Neighbors association spokesperson in November, I'll step into the role of Civano Speakers Series coordinator. My duties include organizing, scheduling, and announcing the lectures. Your role is to come, learn, and have fun.

So please join me in January 2005 for the first Civano Speakers Series lecture. Look for more information in all the regular venues soon, including the new Civano Speakers Series website at www.CivanoNeighbors.com/speakers.

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