

Southwest Lending Closet gets new parking lot



[David Madrid](#), The Republic | azcentral.com 9:51 a.m. MST April 21, 2015



The Southwest Lending Closet needs \$35,000 to resurface its parking lot, and so far it has collected about \$20,000.(Photo: David Madrid/The Republic)

When the non-profit Southwest Lending Closet moved into its new home in Avondale in 2012, it had a badly deteriorated parking lot that its board knew would have to be replaced because of safety concerns.

Now, three years later, the organization has a newly paved parking lot after the community rallied around the all-volunteer non-profit and donated enough money to replace the pavement that was falling further into disrepair every year.

"You know how they say it takes a village to raise a child? It takes a very interested community to raise the kind of money needed for that parking lot," said Sharolyn Hohman, president of the Lending Closet board of directors.

Founded in May 2000, the Southwest Lending Closet lends home medical equipment at no charge for 90 days to anyone who needs it, regardless of age, city or financial situation. Customers come from all over, including Phoenix, the West Valley and as far as Gila Bend, Camp Verde, Ajo and Lake Havasu City.

The non-profit lends such items as walking canes, crutches, shower chairs, bathtub rails, elevated toilet seats, portable bed rails, wheelchairs and walkers. It does not offer heavy or mechanized equipment such as hospital beds.

The Southwest Lending Closet raised \$34,000 for the parking lot, which will ultimately cost more than that.

Hohman said after *The Arizona Republic* wrote a story in November, the sand and gravel industry responded and offered to help.

Vulcan Materials Co. and Sunland Asphalt, which paved the parking lot, agreed to make up the difference of what the Southwest Lending Closet raised and what the parking lot costs, Hohman said.

Because there were a couple of changes that altered the scope of the project, Hohman said she isn't sure what the ultimate cost to repave the 23,635-square-foot lot will be, but she estimated that it could be about \$48,000.

The Southwest Lending Closet building was once a Tastee Freez built between 1972 and 1975, and Hohman said she believes the old parking lot was the original.

Hohman said donors stepped up to the fund-raising challenge in a big way.

"The other one that was so amazing is the Litchfield Kiwanis," Hohman said. "They kind of started us out with a \$10,000 donation. The Estrella Rotary stepped into it. (AbrazoHealth) West Valley Hospital and their employees and doctors, their volunteers, all had projects and gave donations. And our board, we only have a 12-member board, I challenged them to raise \$5,000 and they exceeded that by \$800."

She said she told Paul Smiley with Sonoran Technology and Professional Services that she was looking for five people to donate \$1,000 a piece, and he told her he would take care of it. He did.

She said there were about 150 donors from around the community who made smaller donations ranging from \$5 to \$20.

Now that the organization has met its latest challenge of making the parking lot safe for its customers, it faces a new challenge: The Southwest Lending Closet is breaking lending records every month, and is seeing about a 20 percent increase in lending every year, so the organization needs volunteers.

It is looking for people who can volunteer a minimum of three hours a month to help provide services.

In 2014, the organization lent out 5,107 pieces of equipment, and in the first quarter of this year, it has lent 1,546 pieces, Hohman said.

"In the medical industry, Medicare is not paying for durable medical equipment like they used to, and they're dragging their feet when they do," she said. "Insurance companies are not paying for durable medical like they used to, and they're dragging their feet, so that's why our 90-day policy is really helping these people."

Hohman said the organization would also like to attract younger volunteers because it is in need of their energy.

The Southwest Lending Closet

Hours: 9 a.m. to noon, Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; noon to 3 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

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