

North Mountain Visitor Center Open!

By Karen LaFrance & Susanne Rothwell

Partners including Save Our Mountains Foundation (SOMF a 501c3), Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council (PMPC), Central Arizona Mountain Rescue Association (CAMRA), and Arizona Parks and Recreation Association (APRA) reopened the North Mountain Visitor Center (NMVC) on January 1, 2011. The 10,000 square foot facility, on 7th Street south of Thunderbird, was shuttered in April of 2010 due to Phoenix City budget shortfalls.

Save Our Mountains Foundation is the managing organization for the center. It (SOMF) has signed the Operating Agreement with the City of Phoenix for a five year term with the three collaborating organizations and was the only response to the Parks Department's request for proposals for a non-profit partner to operate the visitor center.

Folks from nearby neighborhoods, far off suburbs, and even other countries have been enthusiastic since the North Mountain Visitor Center opened. About 150 people have stopped by each Saturday and over 20 on weekdays.

The NMVC is now open to the public Monday through Thursday and Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. As soon as there are enough volunteers signed up for weekends, the facility will open on Friday and Sunday also.

The Dottie Gilbert Library will be re-constituted at NMVC in the Resource Room on February 9, 2011, thanks to the efforts of Maxine Lakin, Terry Horne, SOMF President, a volunteer group of gardeners and city staff. Now a home for its mail and its meeting the PMPC office is inside the NMVC and alongside offices for SOMF and the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association. Soon all of the PMPC archives and "stuff" will be brought into the center's storage areas.

The North Mountain Visitor Center Grand Opening is scheduled for April 2, 2011 in conjunction with PMPC's Annual Spring Trek. The center's gift shop is planned to be up and running by that date.

Reopening North Mountain Visitor Center has been, and will continue to be, a seriously major, and fitting, effort by PMPC and partner groups, all of whom share the preservation and outdoor values inherent in this project. We urge all PMPC members and friends to come by the facility and take a look. The visibility this project offers PMPC is a magnificent opportunity to give back to the Preserve that we all enjoy so much and grow at the same time.

Phoenix Mountains Preservation Council and its partners are looking for volunteers and funding help, and will gladly speak to any would-be volunteers or donors. Jan Dunkelberg is helping us to coordinate and recruit volunteers. If you hear of anyone interested, however, ask them to contact Karen LaFrance of Save Our Mountains Foundation at klaf@cox.net or telephone 602-809-3360.

