Hundreds of homeowners gathered for this month's grand opening ceremony of the $3.1 million multipurpose country club at Apache Wells.

New Apache Wells country club delights and unites

Once controversial, residents now say it's bargain at $3.1 million

Folks at Apache Wells say they got a bargain for $3.1 million.

Just days after its opening, the sprawling multipurpose country club has become part social center, part town hall, and part hot new nightclub.

It's also equipped with lots of versatile space, from a ballroom to expandable conference accommodations that generate rental revenue.

Yet, one of its biggest contributions, say members, is that it has become a source of emotional healing in the east Mesa golf course community, results that money can't buy.

Many homeowners who opposed its construction in a dispute that divided the 1,400-home community are among its customers, a sign that the bitter struggle is finally being put to rest, said Jim Nosbush, a member of the country club's board.

Some of them now say that they wish that had supported it.

"This facility is not only good for Apache Wells, it's good for Mesa. I'm so proud of our community."

Jim Nosbush
Apache Wells country club board member

See APACHE WELLS Page 11
APACHE WELLS

Continued from Page 10

owns the 18-hole golf course and clubhouse, had wanted the much larger Apache Wells Homeowners Association to help foot the bill for a new $8.5 million facility, but a group of homeowners protested and went to court.

In a February 2008 election, in which most homeowners cast ballots, it appeared that the proposal had been approved, allowing the HOA to purchase the clubhouse for $760,000 and raze it for a new facility.

But members of the protest group appealed the vote, and a Superior Court judge ruled that the 644-694 tally in favor of the proposal fell short of representing the required majority of homeowners in Apache Wells.

Later, the country club decided to build a scaled-down version of the country club on its own, a decision that means each of its members a one-time assessment of $6,200.

The homeowners association is not liable for any costs, even though the doors of the clubhouse are open to everyone.

"It's amazing," said Donna Richardson, owner of a Seattle direct mail marketing firm, as she waited on breakfast in the clubhouse restaurant and bar with her husband, Gary. "I don't mean this selfishly, but I felt that when the economy went down it might work in our favor."

More construction firms looking for work produced streams of competitive bids for every phase of the project, Noshish said.

"We had a good general contractor and good subcontractors," he said. "Many times the owners of the firms would show up on the job with the employees."

Its curb appeal got rave reviews by many of the 750 homeowners who gathered for the Nov. 1 grand opening, a ceremony that included Mesa Mayor Scott Smith's praise of the community's persistence.

Mack McKibben, a retired newspaper advertising and marketing executive, sat at a clubhouse table and said the 22,400-square-foot meeting place will enhance property values in Apache Wells.

It is the latest site-built structure to rise as Mesa's oldest and largest mobile-home community is gradually recast into a subdivision of fashionable, single-family homes.

The transition began in the late 1990s when a few mobile-home owners in Apache Wells, which is between Higley and Recker and McDowell and McKel lips roads, moved deprecating trailers off their lots for conventional housing and a return on their investment.

Today, about a third of the community is site-built, custom homes, said Jack Gordon, an Apache Wells contractor, who has built dozens of them.

The conversion has attracted some younger homebuyers to the predominantly retirement community, but McKibben said more work is needed, such as recreational facilities that appeal to the pre-retirement age market.

"If we don't have an up-to-date fitness center they won't come," he said.

McKibben's ideas are consistent with the country club's long-range plan, developed by an Arizona State University associate professor, to reach out to Baby Boomers.

McKibben is among members who would like to see expansion of the community's recreational facilities, including a state-of-the-art fitness center to attract young people to the community.

"They won't come unless you have something like that," he said.