

The prehistoric inhabitants of the Valley known today as the Hohokam Indians constructed over 500 miles of canals using only primitive hand-tools. These canal systems have been recognized with the Award for Excellence in Engineering by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the first such award to be given to a prehistoric engineering project. In fact, much of the Salt River Project's modern water delivery system follows the course of these ancient Hohokam canals.

Mesa's Park of the Canals preserves over 4000 feet of the Hohokam canals, some of which were improved and used by the modern pioneer settlers of the Valley. Other historic and prehistoric structures can also be explored at the 34 acre Park. The Park of the Canals also features the Brinton Desert Botanical Garden, a compass course, nature trails, ramadas, fixed grills and plenty of picnic tables and park benches.

The Park was established well over 20 years ago largely due to the efforts and resources of local Rotarians and Rotary Clubs. The names of these Charter Donors are memorialized at the Park on a bronzed plaque.

Several years ago, the playground equipment was removed from the Park due to safety concerns. Unfortunately, the City of Mesa did not have the resources to replace the playground and families stopped visiting the Park. This led to an increase of criminal activity at the Park and the decline of the Park as a place for wholesome recreational activity.

The Mesa West Rotary Club decided to take on the project of revitalizing the Park. With the assistance of the Mesa Sunrise Club and the Mesa Club, Rotarians joined forces with the SRP and the Foundation for Mesa Parks and Recreation to raise over \$10,000.00 to qualify for a grant through KaBoom, a national nonprofit organization that helps communities build playgrounds.

Children from the surrounding neighborhood helped develop an exciting new playground design for the Park. The Home Depot Foundation contributed more than \$120,000.00 and around 400 Home Depot employee volunteers to help prep the site and participate in "Build Day" on May 28th. Over 500 volunteers, including many Rotarians, participated in the effort assembling playground equipment, spreading many tons of woodchip safety surfacing, painting walls and structures, installing pavers, planting vegetation, providing children's activities, creating a tile mosaic featuring the handprints of local children and refurbishing a small storage space to be used as a police field office.

With the community mentality you might expect to see at an old-fashioned barn-raising and the resources and manpower you might expect to see on Extreme Home Makeover, the Park of the Canals was completely transformed in a single day. Even with the warmer weather, the Park is now bustling with families and children enjoying the new playground and much-improved Park. A Park founded by local Rotarians and Rotary Clubs has been revived and perpetuated by a new generation of Rotarians carrying on their Clubs' legacy.