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Women Today: Diane Joens

By **ANGELA DE WELLES**

Staff Reporter

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VVN/Angela De Welles: **DIANE JOENS** is a member of the Cottonwood City Council as well as many community organizations.

The complete number of ways that Joens gives back to the community is too many to list and even she is sometimes taken aback by all that she does.

"I even look at it Š how do I do this?" she said.

But in talking with Joens for even a short amount of time, most people realize that she loves her community and believes in the future of the city. That's why she does what she does.

"I came to a point in my life where it's like, what are you here for," she said.

The mother of three deceased children sees her volunteer work as the legacy she can leave.

"I believe strongly in the responsibility each of us has to public service," Joens said.

It was her father who inspired her early in life. Joens said he was continually serving the community and she used him as an example. Joens got married young and through the years has worked in a number of different fields.

Then most recently she attended the Project CENTRL leadership program and realized the project she took on needed her full attention. She decided, with the support of her husband, to take time off to complete the project and volunteer her time to the community.

That project was the now-complete Verde River Almanac.

The Verde River is something that is very close to Joens' heart. She said that sometimes people don't see how connected they are to the environment.

Not many people would quit their job and leave the paycheck behind in order to volunteer for the community full time.

But that is exactly what Diane Joens chose to do about three years ago. Today, the Cottonwood councilwoman still loves her decision and is continually adding more organizations and projects to her workload. There is so much that she does, she actually needs a list to help remember all the committees and clubs she belongs to.

Just a few of those groups include the Stewards of Public Lands, the Yavapai County Water Advisory Committee, Cocopai and the Verde Family Network Council.

She is also a co-chair for Youth Count and a board member for the Verde Valley Academy of Public Affairs. Another group Joens is very involved with is the Verde River Citizens Alliance. She was the group's public relations chair and now works on its Web site.

"To realize that we have this river that runs right through our town," Joens said. "How many Arizona communities can say that?"

With that project completed and many more under her belt since then, Joens has many plans and goals for the future of the community.

She wants to continue to work with the council toward a healthy city economy. She's concerned over traffic in Cottonwood and says her goal is to find resources to update local street infrastructure.

She's working on a Cocopai action team looking for grant money to establish an on-line database for the Cottonwood Library that would give small nonprofit organizations a place to go when they are looking for grants.

Many of the projects that Joens takes on combine her love for the Verde Valley and her care for the environment. Now she is working on a committee that hopes to come up with a master trail plan for the entire Verde Valley.

Joens says she is proud of her community and enjoys making it a better place. She's always been grateful to live within the city limits but views the entire Verde Valley as a community.

"I have always loved Cottonwood," Joens said. "It has always done for others. I've admired it."

Many could make the exact same statement about her.

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