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Palm Springs neighborhoods, residents honored at inaugural Distinction Awards

Four individuals and four neighborhoods were recognized for their efforts during the past year at what organizers hope will become an annual ceremony.

BY MARK TALKINGTON • EVENTS • DECEMBER 9, 2025

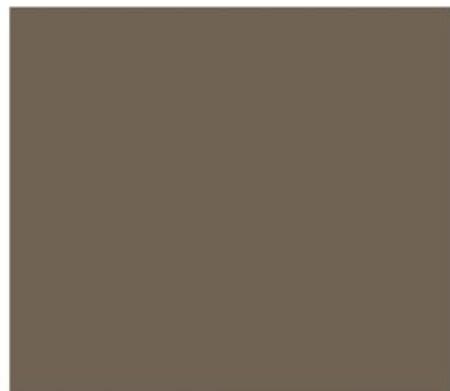


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Among the honorees Tuesday evening were Ken Alexander (far left) of the Upper West Side neighborhood and members of the Tahquitz Creek Golf neighborhood (at right).

Organized Neighborhoods of Palm Springs (ONE-PS) held its first Neighborhoods of Distinction Awards on Tuesday, recognizing exceptional accomplishments across the city's 52 official neighborhoods.

The ceremony, hosted by NBC Palm Springs' Fred Roggin at the city's Police Training Center, was held during the ONE-PS December monthly membership meeting. Board Chair Chris Ruetz presented Distinction and Honor trophies and certificates to the award recipients.

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The Baristo neighborhood received the Neighborhood of Distinction award for pedestrian safety improvements and reviving National Night Out celebrations. The neighborhood, with 2,000 households across 14 HOA developments and seven apartment complexes, was one of the city's first official neighborhood organizations, founded in 2006 and rebooted after COVID-19 in 2022.

The Baristo board worked with the city on pedestrian safety along the El Segundo corridor between Ramon and Tahquitz Canyon Way, securing two speed limit signs, a lower speed limit from 35 to 30 mph, a lighted crosswalk at El Segundo and Cerritos, and two additional crosswalks.

The board also hosted its second National Night Out at Baristo Park in November, joining Movie Colony East as the only neighborhoods to celebrate both Palm Springs police and firefighters since the city canceled its event.

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Vista Las Palmas, Old Las Palmas, and Tahquitz Creek Golf neighborhoods also received honors at the ceremony.

Brian Ramos from the Little Beverly Hills neighborhood received the Individual Award of Distinction for community transformation over the past three years. The neighborhood, renamed after Beverly Hills in the 1990s because its streets had all been named after Beverly Hills streets, has developed a clear community identity under Ramos' leadership.

Ramos obtained resident contact details to increase neighborhood involvement, enhanced and maintained the Little Beverly

Hills website, and publishes “The Enchanted,” a newsletter highlighting community activities. He partnered with another resident historian to research the development of Little Beverly Hills and co-organizes the Little Beverly Hills Modernism tour, which has become a significant fundraiser for the community.

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Peter Sipkins of the Melody Ranch neighborhood received individual recognition for decades of civic engagement and leadership across multiple organizations. Sipkins has served in three HOAs and on the Parker resort board, managing over 900 households and serving as board of directors chair.

He joined the ONE-PS board of directors and served as board chair during the COVID period, fostering unity among diverse communities and promoting civic participation across Palm Springs. Sipkins currently chairs the Measure J commission, ensuring transparency and accountability in public infrastructure funding. In the last fiscal year, the commission awarded approximately \$6 million to community-initiated projects.



Awards sit ready to be handed out Tuesday evening at the Palm Springs Police Training Center.

Ken Alexander from the Upper West Side neighborhood also received individual recognition for gang prevention efforts targeting youth. After experiencing gunshots and cars being shot at in his neighborhood, Alexander recognized the gang activity problem and developed a prevention approach focused on middle school-aged youth.

He worked with Desert Valley Builders Association to present opportunities in skilled trades as alternatives to gang recruitment, partnering with city staff and giving presentations at the James O. Jessie Desert Highland Unity Center summer camp and the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs.

Robert Silberstein from the Andreas Hills neighborhood also received individual honors.

Silberstein led Andreas Hills in comprehensive safety and security improvements following a home invasion several years ago. The neighborhood established working relationships with Palm Springs police and fire departments and collaborated with the Bureau of Land Management on safety and security at the Frank Bogart trailhead parking lot.

The neighborhood removes trash from the area, monitors for illicit activities, works to prevent graffiti, and notifies proper agencies about sign repair and damage. Andreas Hills also partnered with the Desert Riders to establish hitching areas for horses and works with Palm Springs Mounted Police Search and Rescue, a volunteer organization that may need to use horses in emergencies.

ONE-PS plans to make the ceremony an annual tradition.

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