

## Anthem marks first year

Staff reports, Florence Reminder

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**Pulte Homes began closing on its first houses in Anthem at Merrill Ranch a year ago this month. At that time, the business climate had changed since the time Pulte first had its eye on Florence.**

The price of gasoline had almost doubled in a year's time to \$3 a gallon, surely making the commuting lifestyle less attractive to some people. The once white-hot Valley housing market had also largely run its course, and buyers were suddenly a lot pickier.

But a year later, Pulte and its subsidiary Del Webb are still delighted with their decision to come to Florence.

If anything, they have an even better appreciation for the reasons that first drew them here, according to Brandon Jones, Pulte's director of general operations.

"Our relationships with Florence residents, Florence town staff, the Town Council and mayor - we couldn't ask for better partners. If we could turn back time and do it all again, we'd come exactly where we came."

Homes in the over-55 Sun City community went on sale first, and a couple of months later in the family-oriented Parkside community. Pulte wouldn't say exactly how many homes have sold in each section, except that roughly 400 families now reside in Anthem at Merrill Ranch.

At first, the typical Anthem home was "aggressively-priced," with the least expensive model going for \$195,000. But in view of the new forces affecting the market, Pulte worked with its architects, engineers and contractors in Parkside to come up with "First Choice" models - less expensive but still beautiful on the outside, Jones said. Various features that come standard in Sun City remain available as upgrades on First Choice models, should the owners later wish to make those investments.

The First Choice models have had the desired effect of drawing more customers, who often end up buying more luxurious homes, Jones said.

"They're buying across the spectrum. ... We've seen an increase across the board in sales. It's helped the community as a whole."

After a year of selling houses in Florence, Jones said he's especially proud of how the new residents are already taking part in their new community.

"I've been really happy with resident participation. We have great residents that care about the community and care about Florence."



Ron Martin enjoys the indoor pool at the Sun City community center last week. There's also an outdoor pool. The center includes a gym, indoor walking track, fitness classes and a full-time fitness person for advice on exercise and diet.