

## The Thunderbirds: The Guys Behind The W.M. Phoenix Open

Written by Nadine Toren

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[Television personality](#) and AZfoothills.com columnist [Nadine Toren](#) is scouring the area, finding savvy Valley features, bringing readers "on the scene." Every day she'll introduce you to [celebrities](#), [athletes](#), and give you an inside look into local events and hot spots. She'll touch on topical issues, and keep AZ fans posted on all the big talkers [around town](#).



**No girls allowed. This frat-like Valley group helps make The Waste Management Phoenix Open the go-to event of the year.**

They're the guys that walk around in T-bird sport-coats; The Thunderbirds, the Valley's elite all-male special events committee. In order to become an active Thunderbird, you must be nominated by at least two current T-birds. And then, it works like a big boy's fraternity; all 55 active members must vote you in.

This year marks The Thunderbirds' 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary with The Waste Management Phoenix Open. The guys put a lot of TLC into promoting probably the finest sporting event in AZ, drawing crowds topping 500,000 people. Their partnership with The Open ensures golf-lovers a fabulous time at the beautiful TPC Scottsdale.

I did some digging, only to find The Thunderbirds began in 1937, when the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce decided it needed a group to handle hot happenings around town. So the Chamber selected 5 young execs to head the committee, and each of the five then selected ten additional members. (Hence the committee of 55 men.) They chose the Thunderbird title fittingly, considering it's the Chamber's emblem to this day.



One of the group's earliest inductees was Bob Goldwater. (I'm assuming you've heard of this avid golfer.) Anyway, Goldwater decided it would be fun for The Thunderbirds to sponsor a golf tournament at the Phoenix County Club. Their sponsorship was such a success, that The Phoenix Open jumped on the T-bird bandwagon. (And so began their marriage with the PGA's popular tournament.) Goldwater later became known as the "Father of The Phoenix Open."

The Thunderbirds keep their active membership to a limited 55 people. Anyone who makes the cut has shown immense leadership skills, a passion for sports, and a sincere love for the community. When a T-bird reaches 45 years old, they become a Life Member, rather than active. To date, The Thunderbirds organization has over 300 men.

The Thunderbirds' pride themselves in using Phoenix Open proceeds to benefit an array of area non-profits. Their do-good spirit is also put into annual play, as they're the premier sponsor of the Special Olympics Summer Games.

But if you're a gal wanting to volunteer—no worries, there *are* opportunities to get involved with The Open. However, with that being said, The Thunderbirds will forever remain solely men; I suppose that puts a whole new meaning to the word "golf:" **guys only**, ladies forbidden.

For more information, visit <http://wmphoenixopen.com>



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