

Brossart fights movement toward 'sea of concrete'

BY KERRY DUFF

Contributing Writer

When Diane Brossart moved from Michigan to Arizona in 1982, she fell in love with the weather and desert landscape and decided to stay.

Twenty-seven years later, she is president of Valley Forward, a nonprofit organization that promotes quality of life and sustainability.

"I didn't plan to be a green pioneer. It just sort of happened when I moved out here and fell in love with Arizona," Brossart said. "I wanted to make the Valley a better place to live and help make it sustainable so future generations can make it their home."

Valley Forward started in 1969 and has more than 300 members, including large and small businesses, municipalities and government agencies, educators, nonprofit organizations and individuals.

As president, Brossart manages a host of committees that focus on issues ranging from land planning, desert preservation, transportation and air quality to water concerns and environmental education.

"Our forefathers had the foresight to bring water here and grow a city. Now we need to take care of it and use our resources wisely," she said. "We need to incorporate sustainability into our everyday lives. It's the right thing to do, and it makes economic sense."

Under her leadership, Valley Forward has received an outstanding achievement award from the U.S. Environmen-



Diane Brossart and Valley Forward worked with the city of Phoenix to rehab this riparian habitat along the Salt River into a recreational area.

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tal Protection Agency, an award of distinction from the American Institute of Architects- Western Mountain Region, and first-place honors in the Phoenix Mayor's Environmental Awards.

Chris Schmalz, chairman of Valley Forward, said the organization has been talking about the importance of being green throughout its 40-year history, but it has taken citizens and businesses a long time to recognize it is not a negative choice.

"Being green can be profitable for businesses and beneficial for the environment at the same time," said Schmalz, an attorney with the Phoenix law office of Gust Rosenfeld PLC. "I don't want the Valley to become a complete sea of concrete or a place that discourages human interaction with the environment."

green
pioneers

DIANE BROSSART

WORK: Valley Forward

TITLE: President

INDUSTRY: Sustainable planning

WEB: www.valleyforward.org

Brossart also has aided numerous other efforts at changing the way the region looks at the environment. She served on Arizona Gov. Jane Dee Hull's Growing SmarterInfillTaskForceandwithFriends of the West Valley Recreation Corridor, which focuses on development of the Agua Fria River as a multiuse recreation corridor.