

Federation Facts & Interesting Info

GFWC Mission Statement:

The *General Federation of Women's Clubs* is an international organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service.

Brief Federation History:

Founded in 1890, the *General Federation of Women's Clubs* (GFWC) – one of the world's oldest nonpartisan, nondenominational volunteer service organizations – is well into its second century of volunteer service in communities throughout the United States and the world.



GFWC traces its roots back to Jane Cunningham Croly (left), an accomplished New York journalist who wrote under the pen name Jennie June. Indignant that she and other women were denied admittance to a banquet honoring Charles Dickens in 1868 at the all-male New York Press Club simply because they were women, she determined to organize a club for women only. The name chosen for this new women's club was Sorosis (Greek; meaning "sweet flavor of many fruits"). Although club founders originally supposed they were starting a new movement, they soon learned of the existence of other women's clubs in the U.S. that had formed to meet the needs of women.

In 1889, Mrs. Croly proposed a conference in New York to bring together delegates from 61 women's clubs. On the last day of the conference, the women voted to form a permanent organization. A formal constitution of the organization was adopted in April 1890 and the *General Federation of Women's Clubs* was chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1901.



(Left: GFWC headquarters, Washington DC)

Today, the *General Federation of Women's Clubs* ("GFWC") encourages member clubs to support projects in several community service programs: Arts & Culture, Civic Engagement & Outreach, Education & Libraries, Environment, and Health & Wellness. Since 1890, GFWC's impact has been felt throughout communities across the United States and internationally. Below is a timeline of notable GFWC accomplishments:

1898: GFWC unanimously passed a resolution against child labor. With the help of clubwoman Jane Addams (1860-1935), child labor became a major area of concern for the Federation. In 1901, Addams headed the Federation's Child Labor Committee to work for the maintenance and improvement of child labor laws.

1899: GFWC's Chicago Woman's Club supported the juvenile court law, the first ever to be passed in the United States. This law became the model for all subsequent juvenile court laws, many of which were passed at the insistence of GFWC clubwomen. Julia Lathrop (1858-1932) led this club effort and was appointed by President William Howard Taft to head the Children's Bureau in 1912.

1901: The 56th Congress of the United States chartered GFWC and designated that the Federation be headquartered in Washington, DC.

1906: GFWC member Alice Lakey (1857-1935) spearheaded a letter and telegram writing campaign, which was essential to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Dr. Harvey Wiley, the first chief of the Pure Food Bureau, attributed the bill's passing to GFWC and stated, "Trust them [GFWC] to put the ball over the goal line every time."

1910s: GFWC supported legislation for the eight-hour workday, workplace safety and inspection, and workmen's compensation. Members also supported prison reform legislation.

1916: GFWC worked with the Children's Bureau to promote National Baby Week. Over 2,000 clubs participated by focusing on infant and maternal mortality, birth registration, and public health facilities. The Federation's efforts resulted in the passage of the Sheppard-Towner Act (1921), which advanced maternal education.

1919: Under the direction of the YMCA, GFWC created the Overseas Service Unit and sent 100 young women to Europe to assist wounded soldiers in the aftermath of World War I.

1921: GFWC created the Indian Welfare Committee, which worked improving both education and health facilities on reservations, as well as preserving Native American culture.

1922: GFWC Clubwomen purchased 1734 N Street, NW in Washington, DC to serve as the Federation's International Headquarters. In addition to staff offices and rooms for meetings and receptions, one floor was designated to serve as an apartment for the International President.

1925: GFWC initiated a nationwide Federation survey of the American home, which placed a spotlight on the status of technology in the home. The survey led to the inclusion of homemaker as an occupation on the 1930 United States Census

1930s: Having founded over 474 free public libraries and 4,655 traveling libraries, women's clubs were credited by the American Library Association with establishing 75 percent of America's public libraries. Supporting local libraries continues to be a Federation priority today.

1932: GFWC established the Junior Department in response to an increasing number of younger women participating in volunteer community service.

1934: GFWC began a 10-year study to review the question of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In

1940: GFWC celebrated its Golden Jubilee commemorating 50 years of Federation work.

1944: GFWC adopted a resolution in support of the ERA, which the Federation continues to support today.

1944: Through the GFWC Buy a Bomber campaign during World War II, state federations sold war bonds worth, \$154,459,132 – enough money to purchase 431 planes.

1945: GFWC was one of the five women's organizations chosen to participate in the conference to form the United Nations. At the conference, GFWC representatives supported the ratification of the United Nations Charter.

1950: GFWC began its relationship with the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE). The organizations jointly distributed relief shipments to Korea.

1955: GFWC first established the Community Achievement Program, which recognized clubs that best improved the quality of life in their communities. Now called the Community Impact Award, it remains one of GFWC's longest running and most important efforts.

1960: Brighten the Night was a nationwide Federation campaign for street lighting to prevent crime and accidents.

1961: GFWC's Women's Crusade for Seat Belts program resulted in the installation of more than one million seat belts over the course of one year.

1965: GFWC was awarded a stamp by the United States Post Office in honor of its 75th anniversary.

1970s: GFWC responded to the startling rise in crime with a citizen-based grassroots program, Hands Up, which was applauded as a "valuable public service" by President Gerald R. Ford.

1984: GFWC founded the Women's History and Resource Center (WHRC) to collect, preserve, interpret, and promote primary and secondary source materials and information on GFWC and women in volunteerism.

1986: In keeping with GFWC's commitment to conservation, the Federation instituted programs to protect and preserve endangered species.

1990s: GFWC actively supported the passage of the Violence Against Women Act; the Americans With Disabilities Act; the Family and Medical Leave Act; and legislation supporting handgun control.

1990: GFWC celebrated its centennial anniversary in New York City.

1994: GFWC founder Jane Cunningham Croly was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York.

1997: GFWC renewed its commitment to libraries with the Libraries 2000 project. Over a five year period, GFWC clubwomen raised and donated \$13.5 million to public libraries and public school libraries across the nation.

2000s: GFWC members contributed \$180,000 for a fully-equipped ambulance for use by the New York Fire Department in response to the loss of equipment suffered during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

2011: GFWC introduces the *Success for Survivors Scholarship*, created to highlight the importance of rebuilding one's life after experiencing intimate partner violence. Each year, GFWC awards \$2,500 scholarships to assist intimate partner survivors obtain a post-secondary education that will offer them the chance to reshape their future by securing employment and gaining personal independence.

2016: GFWC International President Sheila Shea (2016-2018) attended the 22nd Federation of Asia-Pacific Women's Association Convention in Singapore.

2019: GFWC International President Mary Ellen Brock (2018-2020) attended and delivered a speech during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial in Lorton, Virginia. The memorial honors the millions of suffragists who fought to win the vote for women for more than seven decades.

2022: On April 1, GFWC celebrated the 100th anniversary of GFWC Headquarters at 1734 N St. NW, Washington, DC. To celebrate this occasion, GFWC International President Marian St. Clair (2020-2022) hosted a virtual tour for clubwomen to commemorate the purchase of the building in 1922.

AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

GFWC is proud to work alongside a number of dynamic and impactful entities, known as GFWC Affiliate Organizations. These organizations offer customized services to GFWC clubs, such as: speakers, resource kits, project information, and more, all specifically designed for GFWC clubs.



GFWC COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS

GFWC has identified seven (7) Community Service Program areas. Each club determines, organizes and carries out its own projects to meet the needs of their communities. Currently, these program areas are:

- Domestic & Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention (GFWC Signature Program)
- Advocates for Children
- Arts and Culture
- Civic Engagement and Outreach
- Education and Libraries
- Environment
- Health and Wellness

FEDERATION MEMBER BENEFITS

Current benefits offered by GFWC (for addl details, visit gfwc.org)

- Office Depot Discount Program
- Discount on hearing products
- Travel Savings Center
- Auto, Home & Pet Insurance
- GFWC Visa Card
- Club insurance offered through AHT Insurance (Liability, D&O, Event)

2022-2024 FEDERATION LEADERSHIP

2022-2024 GFWC INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT, DEB STRAHANOSKI

GFWC is a community service organization with many levels of leadership and membership. The GFWC Executive Board of Directors includes the current Region Presidents, State Federation Presidents, and State Directors of Junior Clubs, Program Chairmen, and Committee members. GFWC website: www.gfwc.org

GENERAL FEDERATION
of WOMEN'S CLUBS



2022-2024 GFWC WESTERN STATES REGION PRESIDENT, SANDI CONRADY

GFWC Western States Region includes 11 states: Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. There are eight (8) GFWC geographical regions in the U.S.



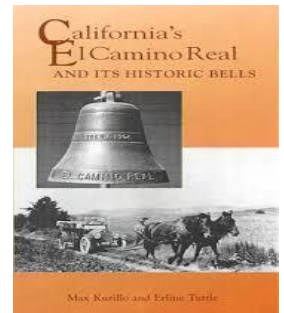
2022-2024 CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS PRESIDENT, BARBARA BRILEY- BEARD

State federations make up the GFWC. The *California Federation of Women's Clubs* (CFWC) was the 37th state to join the General Federation proudly presides over 244 Federated clubs located throughout the state. To better connect with its clubs and 10,000 members, four state officers are elected every two years to serve as liaisons to clubs and districts in the 4 CFWC geographic areas known as Areas A, B, C and D. These officers are known as Area Vice-Presidents and are part of CFWC Membership Committee.



Some highlights of CFWC accomplishments since its inception in 1900 are:

- Endorsed the first Child Labor Law enacted in California.
- California clubs helped to establish the majority of public libraries in California communities
- Initiated a campaign leading to designated traffic direction lanes – that white line down the center of roadways has saved countless lives.
- Assisted with the funding and installation of California's mission bells along the El Camino Real.
- Proposed legislation to establish California's Juvenile Court and CFWC clubs helped pay the salaries of probation officers until funds could be budgeted by the state government.
- Helped design and promote use of home window stickers to assist first responders in identifying disabled persons living in homes.



Members are encouraged to stay current with Federation news through club, district, state and national websites; monthly club newsletters; CFWC's *California Clubwomen* magazine and weekly *Quick Bytes* e-newsletter; GFWC's *Clubwomen* magazine and the weekly *News & Notes* e-newsletter. CFWC Website: www.cfwc.org





History of the *Collect for Clubwomen*

The Collect (pronounced "CALL-ect" and defined as a short prayer) was written in 1904 by Mary Stewart (left) in Longmont, Colorado. She is reported to have been a member of the *GFWC Longmont Fortnightly Club*, which later became the *Longmont Colorado Business & Professional Women's Club*. In 1904, Ms. Stewart was beginning her first job as principal of the local high school. Various accounts offered by Ms. Stewart indicate the Collect was written as a personal prayer and without any specific organization in mind. She felt that "women working together with wide interest for large ends was a new

thing under the sun and that, perhaps they had need for a special petition and meditation of their own."

The first printing of the Collect was as an obscure paragraph in a popular woman's magazine titled "The Delineator" (published by Butterick, the same company that also printed sewing patterns). Over the next two decades, the Paul Elder and Co. of San Francisco and the Armstrong Stationary Co. of Cincinnati printed the Collect on wall cards.

The *General Federation of Women's Clubs* was the first organization to officially adopt the Collect. Serving as a type of mantra, Federation members traditionally recite the collect at the end of general meetings. It was later adopted by the *Federation of Business & Professional Women* and became widely used by numerous other U.S. and international organizations.

During her career, Mary Stewart held a number of teaching positions in Colorado and Montana. In 1927, her alma mater, the University of Colorado, presented her with an honorary degree to recognize her distinguished work in education, social and civic service. From 1921 to 1942, she worked with the U.S. Dept of Labor and as Assistant Director of Education in the Office of Indian Affairs. She continued writing for newspapers and magazines and remained active in women's organizations and the fight for women's suffrage until her death in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1943.

"A Collect for Clubwomen"

Keep us, oh God, from pettiness;
Let us be large in thought, in word, in deed.
Let us be done with fault-finding
And leave off self-seeking.
May we put away all pretense
And meet each other face to face,
Without self-pity and without prejudice.

May we never be hasty in judgment
And always generous.
Let us take time for all things;
Make us to grow calm, serene, gentle.
Teach us to put into action our better impulses,
Straightforward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is
The little things that create differences,
That in the big things of life we are at one.
And may we strive to touch and to know
The great, common human heart of us all.

And, oh Lord God, let us forget not
To be kind!