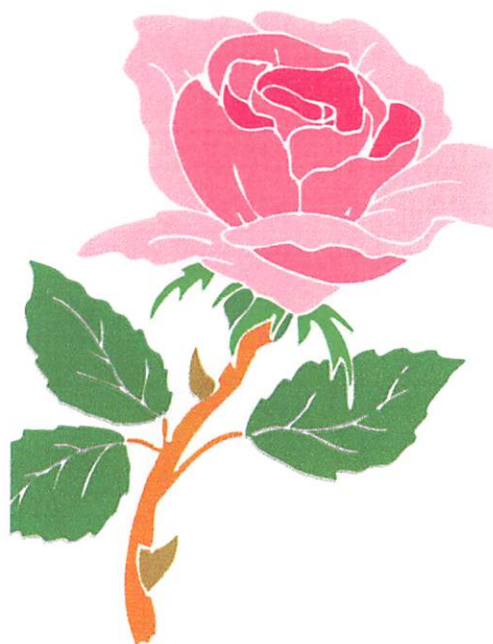


**HISTORY OF  
THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF SPRINGFIELD, INC.  
1954 - 2004**



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In February of 1954, a group of neighbors met at the home of Mrs. Glen Weston to hear Mrs. J. York Welborn tell them about the General Federation of Women's Clubs and to discuss the possibility of forming a federated club. In March, 1954, the Crestwood Women's Club was federated with 27 charter members. Today there is still one active charter member, with membership staying between 50 and 60.

The name Crestwood was chosen because it was the name of the only development in the Springfield area at that time, and there was a small literary group called the Springfield Woman's Club. Pink and green were chosen to be the Club colors, and the pink rose was selected as the club flower. The Club was incorporated in 1964 and the name was changed to the Woman's Club of Springfield, Inc., in 1969. Most members live in the greater Springfield area but there are no boundaries for admission to the Club. Anyone who shares the common goals and interests of the Club is welcome.

The objectives of the club are threefold: to study topics of general interest to the members; to carry out charitable projects of civic-social improvement; and to promote good fellowship among the members.

To carry out the first objective, there have been many and varied programs at each meeting over the years. There have been panel discussions with members and prominent leaders in the community; speakers on many different subjects have informed; films and videos have entertained and enlightened; and there have been fashion shows, musical programs of all kinds, some involving local high school musicians, other club members or groups from churches, the community and other women's clubs. Over the years, speakers have informed us concerning the environment, various health problems such as Alzheimer's, Cancer, Heart Disease, etc., as well as estate planning and financial responsibilities for today's woman. Students from local high schools have told of attending Girl's State, and of participation in HOBY and the Model General Assembly. One program each year is dedicated to Federation and emphasizes one phase of its work. Some programs are just for fun, such as silent auctions and pot-luck dinners. Each program has resulted in improving members' knowledge of various subjects or getting to know fellow members better.

Our second objective, to carry out charitable projects of civic-social improvement, has been the main thrust of the Club throughout the years. In the early years, members canvassed their streets for the Bloodmobile, for Cancer, Heart Fund, Mothers' March, etc. They manned the Bloodmobile when it came to Springfield and collected the envelopes that the Cancer Drive volunteers brought to the local bank. They joined with other organizations in helping with the 4th of July celebrations; have sent a girl to Girls' State (and more recently, a boy to Boys' State) through the American Legion; contributed funds to Lee High School for "Lights for Lee" to illuminate the athletic field; stuffed and addressed envelopes for the Fairfax Hospital Christmas Appeal; sponsored a Little League Team (1991 AA Champions); and held bicycle safety rodeos. Until 1986, we

maintained a Hospital Loan Closet which provided crutches, wheelchairs, walkers, etc., to area residents on a free loan basis.

In other areas of community service we have recognized local teachers with teas, letters of commendation and thanks, and sponsored the "Adopt-A-Teacher" program for several years. We have donated appropriate books to the Richard Byrd Library, including the GFWC Centennial Volume. In 1967 we worked with the Jaycees on a Springfield Fair, running a beauty pageant to choose "Miss Springfield". At Christmas and Thanksgiving we have either chosen a particular family to help or have given money for gifts and clothing to local groups set up for that purpose such as ECHO, Koinonia, and Bethany House. For many years, members played BINGO with the residents of Leewood Nursing Home. Small prizes were collected from our members. Members "adopted" some of the residents with no nearby family and remembered them on birthdays and special occasions with cards, visits and small gifts.

At Christmas, gifts of robes and gowns have been collected for Hospice of Northern Virginia, and clothing for mothers and toys and clothing for children have been donated to Bethany House. Monetary contributions are also made to Hospice and Bethany House each year and several members volunteer at both places. Members have driven Cancer patients for treatments for more than 40 years. A great many of our members are involved in their churches and politics and give time to ECHO, Alzheimer's Associations Office, Heart Fund, etc. Conservation projects include planting shrubs in a traffic median in the community; urging the recycling of plastics, paper, and aluminum; and the collection of aluminum for recycling, the proceeds of which go toward the State project.

Perhaps the most outstanding achievement of our early years was participation with "Friends of the Library" in bringing the Richard Byrd Library to Springfield. In 1955, we were asked to join them. They needed \$6,000 in order for the County to provide books and librarians. The funds were needed to pay rent and erect shelves in a suitable facility. The Crestwood Woman's Club was credited with raising \$2,000 of the needed amount. The money was raised in a variety of ways. First, each member was responsible for earning \$10; she was not allowed to just contribute it, she had to earn it. We did so by baby-sitting for the neighbors and each other, by ironing, sewing, baking, running errands and shopping, to name a few. Then the local merchants set aside a day when they "hired" members to work bagging groceries, pumping gas (this was in the days before self-serve), clean windshields, stock shelves, act as manicurist in the barber shop, and generally "help". They paid generously and all earnings were turned over to the library project. We also went door-to-door and sold memberships in the Friends of the Library for \$2.00. In 1958 the Club received second prize in the VFWC Community Achievement Contest. The \$100 prize was used to purchase chairs for the library. In 1965, when the permanent building was dedicated, our president was a featured speaker and members served refreshments, as they did again 1990 for the library's 25th anniversary celebration.

We have always supported the programs and concerns of the GFWC and VFWC to the best of our ability. Since 1977 we have contributed well over \$19,000 to the VFWC project, Camp Easter Seal East. In 1984, we received \$50 for the GFWC "Partners for Progress Through Community Improvement in Public Affairs". Another \$150 was won for the best overall project in the state for our work with Woodburn Center for Community Mental Health. As a result of our long-time association with Junior Achievement, GFWC adopted JA as the "Free Enterprise" project. Several of our members acted as consultants in setting up and carrying out the program. Over the years our club has received many awards for outstanding participation in various VFWC and GFWC projects.

In 1964, a local minister came to our club and other service clubs in the area seeking a way to better serve the community in the area of mental health. He felt that there was a need beyond that which he and other pastors were qualified. While the various men's organizations talked about the problem, our club and the Springfield Estates Woman's Club joined forces to do something about it. It was immediately apparent that money was going to be needed and we made it our top priority to earn it. Thus, The Pink Elephant Thrift Shop was born. We rented the space where we are still located today for \$150 per month and wondered if we would be able to pay for it. Today, 40 years later, our rent is roughly \$2,000 per month plus assessments for various things and we pay utilities and insurance.

Each club took turns manning the shop and it was run by a Board of Directors consisting of members from both clubs. The Woman's Club of Springfield became sole owner/operator in 1974. We had incorporated in 1965 because of the business. With our Shop earnings, we were able to pay a psychiatric social worker to be available one day a week and eventually two days for counseling. Housed first at the bowling alley and then at the Springfield Methodist Church, the "Sounding Board" was there for free help on a walk-in basis. Later the county took over the operation and branched out into a full-time mental health facility with a County-paid staff.

The Pink Elephant was such a success that after our funds were no longer needed for the mental health clinic, we continued to operate the shop to fund our other charitable projects. For instance, in fiscal year July 1, 1990 to June 30, 1991, our charitable contributions totaled \$24,525. By the end of December 2003, our club had made charitable grants of \$372,000. Some of the donations we have made include \$3500 scholarships to local high school students; Junior Achievement; Canine Companions; Fairfax County Police, VFWC Projects; Virginia Special Olympics; Springfield Volunteer Fire Department, Ronald McDonald House; Send-a-Kid-to-Camp; Make A Wish Foundation; Alzheimer's Association, Literary Council of Northern Virginia; and Northern Virginia Hotline. The list goes on! Juvenile Diabetes; Operation Smile; American Battle Monuments; No Greater Love; Northern Virginia Training Center; Woodlawn Elementary; Boys and Girls State; Hospice of Northern Virginia; Bethany House; National D-Day Memorial Foundation; Burke Fire Department; and Personal Support Network.

Lesser contributions include money to two local high schools for their all-night graduation parties; Springfield Community Theater, Adopt-A-Teacher; Madrigal Singers, Crew Teams, Cheerleaders, and Bands; Model General Assembly; Fairfax County Symphony; Women in Military Service; and many, many more.

At the Pink Elephant Thrift Shop, members are required to work one six-hour shift each month. The Shop is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There are no paid employees. The extensive bookkeeping is done by a volunteer and her helpers take in consignments and do the posting. Consignments are taken each morning from 10 a.m. to 12 noon; no appointments necessary! The Shop sets the price and the consignor receives 50%. Items are kept on consignment for 30 days and at the end of that time they become Shop property or may be reclaimed by the owner. Donations are accepted and they are tax deductible. We accept clothing in season, knick-knacks, luggage, draperies, jewelry, linens, and small household items. As the shop is small, we are unable to accept furniture of any size. Items that we deem unsaleable are given to the VFW, Echo, Salvation Army, Goodwill and Appalachia. We feel that the Pink Elephant serves several purposes. People can make a few dollars from unneeded items, others can find bargains, and the profits are all used to benefit the community in some way. Many of Springfield's new Latino citizens are good customers and find us a great way to stretch their monies as they become acclimated to their new home. We've helped the Community Theater and high school drama groups by providing costumes, and have even outfitted an entire wedding party!!! We have regular customers who enjoy "visiting" and we consider them friends. We have gained several members through the Shop.

In the fall of 1992, the Club adopted Cameron Elementary School. This was the start of a long-time partnership with both that school and later Crestwood Elementary School. We have set aside funds for their needs, with money being spent on clothing, Head Start programs and the remaining monies sent to the principal for use at his discretion for things which the children could not afford otherwise. Each year members made bookbags for the children of Head Start to be given out along with books and a small bag of goodies. Each week several members go to each of the schools to read with the children. In return, children from both schools have come to our meetings to entertain us with their choral groups, puppet shows, and yo-yo demonstrations. We have been able to help in other ways, too! We collect and save grocery tapes, donate new underwear and socks, and in the fall collect school supplies for the schools as well as collect gloves and mittens in the cold weather. Because of our help, the Head Start program at Crestwood was begun and we were able to help the school with its new Crestwood Family Center. Because of our extensive aid, the Club Education Chairman serves as a member of both Crestwood's and Cameron's Principal's Advisory Council (PAC). Our members have attended and received many awards at ceremonies ranging from the school level to the County level.

As a result of a program on Health Issues for Mature Women, our Club initiated an exercise program. This program has expanded to include the Well Woman Project. Participants keep a list of routine physicals, tests, exams (mammogram, bone density,

cholesterol, etc.), as well as healthy life style changes, and for your brain, classes or educational trips that have been taken. Each month, the Well Woman Project targets a special area of wellness.

To carry out our third objective. to promote good fellowship among the members, there are special interest groups—bridge groups, sewing groups, book clubs, dining groups (both luncheon and dinner), etc. We have built doll houses and had miniature home tours. We have made dolls for the pediatric ward at Fairfax. We are currently getting ready to make baby afghans for homeless mothers-to-be. Our Arts Department continues to host an annual Arts and Crafts Show; the blue ribbon winners go on to the District Level and then to the State Level. We are proud to note that there have been many winners from our Club at both of the higher levels. In addition to the show, each year the Arts Department holds several workshops and has a standing job serving as hostesses at the Woodlawn Needlework Show; it also sponsors the annual exchange of gifts at Christmas. One year, one of our members who is an artist was having a one-woman art show in her hometown in Ohio; before she went she gave our members a preview showing. We have had another member elected to the International Poetry Hall of Fame.

Dining is another favorite activity of our group. We have had picnics, progressive dinners, group attendance at dinner theaters, and a dinner dance. The Lunch Bunch does lunch in a different restaurant each month, and the Springles (single ladies) meets for dinner one Sunday evening each month. We have enjoyed high tea at the National Cathedral. Our Installation Dinner is always an event not to be missed and the real favorite of everyone is our annual Christmas luncheon at Mt. Vernon Inn.

Tours and outings happen just about every month. There does not have to be a large group to participate—those who do are really interested and have good times. For many years, members have participated in both the McLean Homes Tour and the Clifton Homes Tour. We have visited Decorator's Showcase Houses, the George Washington Memorial Mason Temple, the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Hillwood, the Smithsonian, GFWC Headquarters, the White House, and met Vice President Humphrey in his office. Other trips include the Faberge Egg Exhibit; the VanGogh exhibit, the Torpedo Factory Arts Complex, the Grandma Moses Exhibit, the Oasis Winery, Fords Theater, the Jackie Kennedy Exhibit, the Meadowlark Botanical Gardens. We have visited Chinatown and toured the new MCI Center; we have visited the Women In Military Memorial in Arlington Cemetery, dined at the China Garden Restaurant in Rosslyn, and visited the Newseum there. Recently we enjoyed a day of racing and slots at Charlestown; we have also enjoyed shopping in Williamsburg and Martinsburg.

We reach out for new members by visibility through members volunteering in community, church groups, and other organizations as well as at the Pink Elephant. Each year we sponsor one-month displays in each of three local libraries. We provide descriptive brochures on the GFWC, VFWC, the Northern District and a Club Profile to prospective members. Membership teas and orientations are held periodically. We have also

inaugurated a program of emergency information for each member to be on file in strategic places.

This is a very brief resume of the activities and accomplishments of the Woman's Club of Springfield, Inc., during its first half century. The GFWC motto is "Unity in Diversity", and we feel that our club exemplifies that motto, as there is something for everyone. In our 50 years of existence we have been a positive force for good in our community and have earned a place of real respect. Even though our area is very transient we have been able to maintain stability with old members and new sharing our traditions. We currently have co-presidents, a mother/daughter team--the mother is our remaining charter member and her daughter was just a baby when all this began!

We are proud of our accomplishments.

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