

GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS



GFWC CALIFORNIA STATE CONVENTION

MAY 13-15, 2021
ZOOM

15-20 minutes

Madame President, Federation Friends,

Look at us!

Here we are continuing to do all that we need to do and caring so much about each other's health and safety.

I am so glad we can all be together, even though we are not in person and face to face, we still share so many experiences during these Covid times.

Rather than focus on what we cannot do right now, let's focus on things that are within our control. What a GREAT convention this has been!

I don't know about you, but I was so comfortable, the room was not too cold or too warm. The meals were perfectly cooked and no matter what time it was, there was never a line in the restroom!

While I have missed the warm hugs and smiles, we all know this is temporary and I hope to see each of you in Atlanta in August at the Annual GFWC Convention.

On behalf of our International President, Marian St.Clair, and my fellow Executive Committee members, I bring you warm greetings from your home, 1734 N. Street in Washington D.C.

I am not sure if I can express my feelings properly when I share what an honor it is for me to be YOUR Second Vice President, to serve on the Executive Committee with a group of committed, dedicated, and professional officers. We are also fortunate to have a talented and valuable staff. It is always a huge thrill to be able to walk the halls, stairways, and rooms of our home in Washington, D.C. I have to pinch myself (and allow extra time between meetings and meals) so I can soak in all of the history and artifacts that furnish, decorate, and hang on the walls of our historic home. I especially have missed not being there since March of 2020.

I had the greatest pleasure of serving as the GFWC North Carolina Director of Juniors 2000-2002 with your state president at that time, Carol Lopez Lucey, and director of Juniors Mary Lapka, then as State President 2012-2014 with your GFWC California President, Valerie Barnes.

As you know, GFWC California has long been recognized for providing strength and vision in leadership. Thank you for your commitment to and willingness to SHARE so many knowledgeable leaders with GFWC. Thank you to these visionary leaders currently serving on the 2020-2022 GFWC Board of Directors:

2020-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS FROM STATE

- o Pam Ament, GFWC California State President
- o Dori Kelsey, Communications and Public Relations Committee Member
- o Valerie Barnes, Capital Campaign Committee Member
- o Carol Lopez-Lucey, Legislation/Public Policy Committee Member

Did I miss anyone?

California is rich in leaders with a Past GFWC President and a Past GFWC Director of Junior Club, in fact the first!!

(GFWC INTERNATIONAL PAST PRESIDENTS

- o Ione V.H. Cowles, GFWC International Past President 1916-1920 (*Deceased*)

PAST DIRECTORS OF JUNIOR CLUBS

- o Millie Crom, GFWC Past Director of Junior Clubs 1952-1954 (*Deceased*) GFWC's First Director of Juniors)

Questions...

What is your Story?

I joined the Mount Airy Junior Women's Club after my husband was offered a promotion with his job, but it meant moving from Burlington, NC to Mount Airy, NC (about 70 miles away). We moved with a four-year-old, and after a few months, he was promoted and began traveling, leaving on Monday coming home on Friday.

There I was, in a new town, with a preschooler, and alone.

We visited the local library for preschool story time, and I quickly met other moms with preschoolers, and I was invited to "visit" the Mount Airy Junior Women's Club. I couldn't join the club for two reasons. The club had a limit of 40 members, so when someone resigned, I would then be **voted on** at a board meeting and only asked to join if the votes were all positive.

I grew up in Michigan (a suburb of Detroit), moved to Burlington, NC as a high school student, now here I was in Mayberry, Andy Griffith's

hometown, and felt like I was in an episode of The Andy Griffith Show (which I know most of them by heart because the reruns are still televised daily in our area).

Obviously, someone resigned, I was voted on and invited to join. Fast forward five years, and I am now president of the club (that 4 years old is now nine and I have a four-month-old), our club budget allowed the club president to attend the entire state convention. So, off I went. My first weekend away, in a hotel, alone, not knowing but a few people from my district. Our meal seating at the convention was all assigned seats, and I am seated at a table towards the front of the room for most of the meals.

It was my first full convention, so I had no idea who I was sitting with. All of the ladies introduced themselves, and we chatted nonstop. Fast Federation Friends. The lady to my right was so very kind, and actually had a farm near Mount Airy, so we chatted about that, what we did for work, fun, family, the typical getting to know you questions.

I worried I wouldn't be able to remember the woman's name, but it was Juanita, the same as my mother-in-law, so I was relieved that I wouldn't embarrass myself by forgetting.

What I did not know, her last name was Bryant. I was sitting with International Past President, Juanita Bryant, and everyone else at the table was a Past State President. I guess because I was the only one from my club, and the Club President, someone decided I needed to sit with Juanita.

That was thirty-one years ago. I have never forgotten her kindness or her name. She has been a mentor and a friend ever since. When people are asked what the most valuable part of being a member of GFWC is, the top response is friendship. Seeing friends from across the state, and nation and know they are there for you.

“A friend is one of the nicest things you can have, and one of the best things you can be.”

Juanita shared herself with me during that first lunch. She was kind, she was considerate, and could have ignored that new club president. I would not have thought much about it, but I probably wouldn’t have attended another convention.

Because of the kindness and compassion, she showed, I went back to my club and told them with great excitement about what a great time I had, and the women I met. The next year, a few more members went

to the State Convention, not just the president attending alone, because it was in the budget. What you say about your experiences? What is your story? What made you go back to another club meeting, and another state meeting? Are you doing that for someone else? Are you passing it on, sharing the good things that being a member of GFWC.

While we may have joined our clubs for similar reasons, or different reasons, most would agree that GFWC offers something for all members. GFWC needs each of us to be vital active members, but the fact is there are times in our lives that we need GFWC. We need those friendships and connections.

If this past year has taught us anything, it is that Clubwomen Can Do Anything!

Your GFWC Officers had dreamt of holding webinars and virtual workshops, little did we know that we would be pushed into it by a worldwide pandemic.

The 2020-2022 Administration began with the Summer Webinar Series took the place of convention workshops. Webinars on Leadership, Membership, Legislation and Public Policy, Communications, Junior Special Program, Membership, Juniores, and the Signature Program:

Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention.

In February and March 2020, webinars were offered by the Affiliate Organizations. Additional instructional and programmatic webinars are planned.

Do you remember your first Zoom? Ours was with our family and 2-year-old grandson. Those first months, we Zoomed twice a week, just to check in on each other, and make sure everyone was physically and more importantly mentally okay.

We learned to love the technology geeks in our families as they helped us navigate Zoom, Big Marker, Facebook Live and all of the other communication tools used to allow us to meet while staying socially distanced.

The 2020-2022 GFWC Club Manual, launched on July 1, 2020, was revamped and strengthened with a six-month revision that standardized the manual's format and incorporated new material. Additions to the manual include a Challenge Project for each Special and Community Service Program and illustrated highlights from the previous year's Top Ten Projects. Throughout all program sections, the

manual has been enhanced with more comprehensive program-ideas and resources. In addition to a complete “refresh” of the Community Service Programs, significant updates were made to the Advancement Plans, the Community Impact Project (CIP), and the Photography Contest.

The Club Manual has been revised and information has been moved from the GFWC website to the password protected log in section called the Member Portal.

The purpose of the Member Portal is to provide private access to important information and publications, such as the Club Manual, that have been created for the private use of GFWC members. The Member Portal also provides access to registration for meetings, webinars, and special events, plus entry to the GFWC Marketplace. Every active GFWC member should establish a profile so they can utilize this vital tool for clubs. Information on how to create a profile can be obtained by emailing GFWC@GFWC.org. For additional assistance, call GFWC Headquarters at 202-467-6834.

The Leadership Toolkit and Membership information found in the Member Portal are extremely valuable to all of our members.

It is YOUR responsibility to use the information in the Member Portal to the benefit of your club and ultimately in your projects, programs and to grow the club in membership and knowledge.

Again, if you need help, please call or email GFWC Headquarters. The staff is more than willing to help you set up a profile or reset a password.

What is your Passion?

Oprah Winfrey said

“Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.”

What is something you want for the betterment of your community?

How can GFWC help you achieve your goal?

One of my passions is putting an end to Childhood Hunger. Making sure that every child has healthy food to sustain them and help them become productive citizens. As State President, it was our President and Junior Director's Special Project. Ending food insecurity. The first thing we did was make sure there was a GFWC and State Resolution

that allowed us the opportunity to speak to our community leaders, and state legislators on the importance of making sure our children were well fed and nourished.

As the pandemic closed down my state last year, my club became concerned with how the children who depend on school meals would be fed. Luckily our school system did not stop serving meals. Meals were made and transported to neighborhoods across the city. Any child under 18 could get two meals a day. Bags were prepared for weekend meals. To help offset the cost of these meals, and to help us stay busy and active, my club, like so many others, made facemasks. As a sewer, and hoarder of fabric, luckily, I had two huge rolls of elastic (from a project of years gone by) and scraps of every outfit made for my daughters growing up. People donated fabric, elastic, and money for us to make and provide facemasks. The first 4,600 facemasks were not sold. Instead, we asked for donations to the school feeding program. Either money or food could be donated. Over \$10,000 was donated. Then I thought, we should really monetize this, so I embroidered the GFWC logo on facemasks, and we sold them on our Facebook Page. (Our Pandemic Project, raising money for our scholarship fund).

But here is the thing,

it wasn't just a fund raiser,
or a way to get donations for the School Feeding Program,
or a way make money for our club scholarship,
it was also a way for us to check in on each other.

It was a way for us to support each other, while supporting our community. It was a way to stay connected, while we were apart.

We are still not meeting face to face yet, but I know this fall we will have a huge party to celebrate what we accomplished, during that year (plus) that we could not get together. Without GFWC, I wouldn't have known the women in my club, and I'm not sure I would have been provided the opportunities that I have been able to experience.

What is your passion?

Find a way to include GFWC in your vision and you will help others while helping yourself.

"Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

- Harriet Tubman

Madame President, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be with you this weekend.

GFWC CALIFORNIA MEMBERSHIP DATA

Total number of clubs: 232

Total number of members: 11,157

General Members: 11,113

Juniors: 0

Juniorettes: 44