Soroptimist International of Chico

2020: Ninety Years of Service – Highlights from 1930 to 2000

1930's

Soroptimist International of Chico Founded on January 17, 1930. There were 27 Charter members. To honor the Charter year, the Exchange Club hosted a joint dinner to recognize SI Chico as the first woman's service organization in Chico. SI Chico was invited to join with them, the Lion's, Rotary and Achaean Club to form an inter-club forum to cooperate on projects too large for any one group.

Economic hard times (on the heels of the stock market crash) fit right into the service goals of the club, including:

- Christmas baskets for the needy,
- adopting families at Christmas,
- emergency assistance to provide dental care and eyeglasses,
- a loan fund for students at the Chico Normal School,
- sewing dresses for needy girls (what goes around comes around!),
- milk fund subsidy for Rosedale School,
- founding sponsor of the Cedars playground, monthly contributions to the Chico Health Center

Chartered Red Bluff Club

1940's

Wartime! Programs about first aid, rationing, health and preservation of garden produce, and.

- participated in Air Watch,
- 7 war bond drives,
- helped establish Blood Bank,
- assisted USO social activities at the airfield that grew to a population of 10,000,
- expanded Christmas programs to host a party and dinner for needy children,.
- "sometimes even having to bathe the children before buying them clothes and taking them to the dinner,"
- helped to find homes for displaced European Children,
- raised money for relief of Russian children,
- overseas Christmas packages for troops.
- collapsible wheelchairs,
- an iron lung, the TB ward at the hospital and a military ambulance.

First Normal School Scholarship awarded.

Chartered SI Willows and SI Paradise.

1950's

We focused on Chico's children and young women.

- sponsored 2 Brownie and 2 Campfire girls troops.
- helped fund a scholarship at the Berkeley School for the Blind,
- purchased 2 amplifiers for hearing challenged children.
- contributed $1000 for Yuba City/Marysville flood relief.
- supplied uniforms for nursing students,
- continued to support troops overseas,
- flood relief in Holland,
- earthquake victims in Peru and Guatemala.
- volunteered at the Blood Bank Canteen.

1960's

1965 – 50 members

Selected projected:

- supported the American Field Service program to welcome foreign students including sponsoring an annual dinner for the students and their Chico families
- increased interest in aiding disabled, the Club began a long partnership with the work Training Center. More on this in the 70's
- furnished a room in the Enloe Hospital expansion.
- chartered an "S" Club for PV high school girls
- continued support for the blood bank
- began hosting weekly Bingo at Beverly Manor – this program continued well into the 1990's.
- sponsored a "Teen Talk" local radio show on KHSL to give young people an opportunity to air their views.
- 1966 – began partnership with Work Training Center for the Physically Handicapped

Fundraising efforts included:

- rummage sales,
- fashion shows,
- selling 50-star American flags,
- bake sales to contribute to the S.S. Hope (an international hospital ship Hope),
- December Gift Bazaar,

- Club Cookbook sales,
- a bazaar at the Fiesta Rancho Chico Square Dance Jamboree

1970's

- In early 1970, the Club provided 25% of the down payment to purchase the property it had been renting. The club donated $1000 for the $3900 down payment.
- Also in 1970, the Club supported a bill in the California legislature, which advocated that the word "sex" (read gender) be added to existing state law to eliminate unfair practices in hiring and pay for women.
- SI Chico continued to have a tri-club dinner with the Pilot Club and the Quota clubs. An annual gathering of public officials, clergy and the public to hear each club offer ideas for civic improvement and development. Then, all parties would plan together on a high priority.
- Local history and preservation was a priority. The club donated funds for preservation projects at Bidwell Mansion, the Stansbury House and updating Laxson Auditorium.
- The 50th anniversary project was a feasibility study to create a Chico Museum in the Carnegie building when the library moved to its new location.

Other activities included:

- Contributions to Solway House for women with alcohol dependency
- A donation to the Soroptimist float in the 1971 Pasadena Rose Bowl Parade
- Assisted "City of Concern" that served women prisoners
- Established the TAP award (training award program) to assist women training to improve the lives of the women and their families.
- Supported S clubs at both high schools
- Partnered with other organizations to create the Emergency Loan Fund at Butte College

1980's

- 50th anniversary dinner at Elks Club January 11, 1980, highlighting the Club's role in establishing the Chico Museum
- 1981 – Valene Smith endowed Chico State scholarship for a graduate student pursuing an MBA. The 1982 recipient was Billie Somerfeld.
- 1984 – Sigma Club (Chico State student's) founded. Valene Smith and Julie Clarke were advisors. Projects included: Weekly Bingo at Beverly Manor – called games, provided fruit and small prizes; volunteered for the Work Training Center Thanksgiving Dinner and Cancer Society Halloween Dance fundraisers. There were only 28 Sigma Clubs in the country, Chico's club the only one in Northern California

- 1984 - Lois Binns served at District President. Billie Sommerfeld organized public relations workshops for all clubs in the district.
- 1985/86 Budget
    - General Fund income $5987, $5647 expenditures
    - Service Fund (income from H&G Show) $5065 income and expenditures. Included $500 for "Get Away Special" no explanation.
- 1988-- Retreat held at Greehorn Creek Guest Ranch. For two nights, the packing list included 2 pairs of jeans, 1 pair shorts, horseback riding clothes and boots AND a costume for the Hoe Down on Saturday Night.
- chartered clubs in Colusa and Orland.

1990's

- 1990 -60th birthday, $5000 to Salvation Army to equip the Salvation Army Mobile Emergency Canteen to assist in natural disasters
- 1993 – Dottie Locke Bequest of $25,000
- 1994 – Much drama. President Phyllis Bond recommends folding the 6 committees (1 for each area of service) into a single Service Committee. Areas of Service were Economic and Social Development, Education, Environment, Health and International Goodwill and Understanding
- 1996/97 – President Carol Braziel's President's Project was Steps without Fear to support the SIA President's Project to eliminate land mines in Cambodia. The notebook for the program was adopted by SNR to help other clubs support the SIA president's program. Included T-shirts (stick figure with one foot only), pins with footsteps and public service announcements

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