



Know Your Organization

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.

GFWC FOUNDING

GFWC's roots can be traced back to 1868, when professional journalist Jane Cunningham Croly of New York City, attempted to attend a lecture by novelist Charles Dickens at an all-male press club. Denied entrance on account of her gender, "Jennie June" formed a woman's club, naming it *Sorosis*, a Greek word meaning "an aggregation; a sweet flavor of many fruits."

In celebration of its 21st anniversary in 1889, *Sorosis* members proposed a conference of women's clubs to pursue the cause of federation. That conference was held in New York City on March 20, 1889, with the goal of preparing a constitution for ratification the following year. Clubs that had already applied for membership in the new General Federation of Women's Clubs were invited to the ratification convention, which was held at the Scottish Rite Hall in New York City, April 23-25, 1890. Sixty-three delegates from 17 states attended. After some discussion and amendments, the constitution was ratified on April 24, which GFWC members continue to celebrate as Federation Day.

"UNITY IN DIVERSITY" MOTTO

Ella Dietz Clymer gained a particular place of honor in Federation history as the author of the GFWC motto, "Unity in Diversity." Speaking to the delegates at the first Federation conference in 1889, she said, "We look for unity, but unity in diversity. We hope that you will enrich us by your varied experiences..." The aptness of the motto is evident in the diverse interests and talents of GFWC members, who have implemented a broad range of programs and projects tailored to meet the needs of their communities. Adopted as the official motto in 1957, "Unity in Diversity" set the tone for the flexibility that has enabled GFWC to grow and adapt to the changing lifestyles and concerns of women throughout more than a century of volunteer work.

HISTORY OF THE EMBLEM

At the first GFWC Convention in 1892, Dr. Leila G. Bedell of the Chicago Woman's Club (Illinois) recommended that the Federation design a "simple little badge pin" for GFWC members to purchase and wear for identification. In May 1893, GFWC President Charlotte Emerson Brown and Jane Cunningham Croly reported that a light blue, signifying constancy, was chosen as the official Federation color. The pin design featured a Federation blue background behind a rising sun, with the motto "Unity in Diversity" inscribed on a terra cotta banner beneath.

In 1920, GFWC President Alice Ames Winter felt the rising sun symbol was no longer appropriate, that after 30 years of progress, GFWC could acknowledge that "the sun had risen." She recommended that the Federation create a new design that more accurately represented a mature organization. Within the year, GFWC approved Douglas Donaldson's new design, whose central feature is a crusader's shield, signifying enlightenment, emerging from a black center, representing a darkened world. The white band encircling the shield signifies eternity, and is inscribed with the letters "GFWC" and the motto "Unity in Diversity."

Comprehensive GFWC Trademark Use policies and artwork for the GFWC emblem are available in the GFWC Stylebook, on the website at www.GFWC.org, and from the GFWC Communications Department at PR@GFWC.org.

FLAG

The official GFWC flag consists of an embroidered GFWC emblem on a Federation blue background, which was unfurled for the first time at the Golden Jubilee celebration in Atlantic City, N.J., on May 19, 1941.

GFWC flags and banners are available for members from the GFWC Marketplace, www.GFWC.org/Marketplace.

FEDERATION FLOWER

The red rose was officially adopted at the Council Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in May 1940. It was selected from suggestions sent in by various clubs.

SONG

In 1922, Katherine Lee Bates' *America, The Beautiful* was chosen as the official Federation song because it "is a song of dignity and beauty, easily sung, and reflecting the true spirit of America and the ideals of this Federation."

GFWC INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

In 1901, GFWC was granted a federal charter, stipulating that the Federation maintain its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Following its successful service in the nation's capital during World War I, GFWC officially resolved to find a permanent residence in the city that was "commensurate with the dignity, size, and influence of the organization." With that mandate, GFWC President Alice Ames Winter (1920-1924) located the elegant five-story Victorian mansion at 1734 N Street NW in the city's fashionable Dupont Circle neighborhood.

Rear Admiral William Radford built the grand home on N Street NW in 1875, and in one of Washington society's most notable events, Admiral Radford's daughter, Sophia, married Russian diplomat Vladimir de Meissner in the home's elegant drawing room in 1878. By the early 1880s, the elegant residences of the city's elite blended with more modest row houses such as 1738 (built 1879) and 1728 (built 1884) N Street, which GFWC acquired in the 1950s and are now part of GFWC Headquarters.

A unique feature of 1734 N Street is the long, narrow room above the former carriageway that leads to the Iron Gate Inn, once operated by GFWC as a tea room and home demonstration center. Originally constructed in 1884 by owners Thaddeus and Augusta Markley to spitefully block the windows of 1728 N Street NW, the unusual gallery-style space attracted later owners. The *Washington Post* described it as "probably the largest and best-fitted room for a library of any private dwelling in the city" when newly-appointed U.S. Supreme Court Justice Edward Douglass White rented the home in 1894. General Nelson A. Miles, who purchased the property a few years later, used the space to display the many artifacts he acquired during his service in the Indian Wars. New Yorker John Jay White, a big game hunter and American Indian artifact collector, purchased the home from General Miles in 1908, and made extensive exterior and interior renovations. His wife, Grace Hoffman White, was a prominent suffragist and peace activist. The Whites leased the home to Uruguay for its legation during World War I and to the new nation of Czechoslovakia after the war.

Today GFWC Headquarters provides office space for a professional staff that administers programs and services for the Federation and its members, and also serves as the residence of the GFWC International President during her two-year term of office. In addition, it houses the GFWC

Women's History and Resource Center, founded in 1984, which manages the preservation of and access to GFWC's historic archives and collections.

Over the years, GFWC clubwomen have donated fine art, furnishings, handcrafted decorative objects, silverware, and historic artifacts to create a beautiful and hospitable home. A National Historic Landmark (1991), 1734 N Street NW is a Washington must-see for GFWC clubwomen and their guests. Group tours and research appointments should be scheduled in advance by contacting WHRC@GFWC.org or 202-347-3168 ext. 137. Tour and research hours are between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please check www.GFWC.org for GFWC holidays and other closures.

GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As it unites member clubs, the Federation's goal is to encourage women to improve their skills, expand their rights, and apply their abilities and special sensitivities to the challenges of their communities and nations. GFWC areas of activity and service include the arts, conservation, education, home life, international outreach, and public issues, as well as special projects in domestic violence awareness and prevention and advocacy for children. The Federation has a distinguished record of achievement on issues of historical importance and this legacy continues today.

A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

- In 1899, GFWC clubwomen established the national model for juvenile court law.
- In 1901, Chicago clubwoman and social reformer Jane Addams heads GFWC's Child Labor Committee.
- GFWC's effective letter-writing campaign helps secure passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906.
- In 1912, Chicago clubwoman Julia Lathrop is appointed chief of the Children's Bureau. GFWC works with the bureau to promote public health care for mothers and infants.
- During World War I, GFWC establishes the War Service Fund, which is used to train and send 100 young women overseas to operate canteens for American soldiers.
- In 1921, GFWC creates the Indian Welfare Committee, reflecting a long history of advocacy for Native American rights.
- During World War II, GFWC Headquarters is transformed into a war service office, distributing literature to keep women alert about war activities. Clubwoman raised more than \$150 million in the "Buy the Bomber" campaign and collected wedding gowns for British service women.

- At the forefront of the conservation movement, GFWC helps establish the Forest Reserve in 1899, and the National Park Service in 1916. In 1922, GFWC creates a Junior Membership Committee to develop clubs that meet the needs of younger women.
- In 1925, GFWC members lead a nationwide survey on household technology in American homes and produce a five-part series of educational manuals, which leads to the official recognition of the occupation of “homemaker” in the 1930 federal census.
- By the 1930s, the American Library Association credited women's clubs for establishing 75 percent of the nation’s public libraries.
- In 1934, GFWC’s Committee on Public Health helps create the Women’s Field Army to promote cancer awareness and raise funds for prevention.
- In 1944, GFWC completes a 10-year review of Equal Rights Amendment issues and endorses a resolution supporting equal rights and responsibilities for women.
- In 1945, GFWC participates as a consultant to the U.S. delegation at the United Nations Conference on International organization, one of only five women’s organizations so honored.
- Long an advocate of traffic safety, GFWC promotes its Women’s Crusade for Seatbelts program in 1960, which results in the installation of more than one million car seat belts in one year.
- In 1966, GFWC creates the “Juniorettes,” a special membership category for young women in high school, as part of its “Build with Youth for a Better World” program.
- In 1975, GFWC receives a major federal grant to help develop the “Hands Up” program to promote citizen awareness and prevention of crime.
- In 1994, GFWC founder Jane Cunningham Croly is inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, N.Y.
- Between 1997 and 2002, GFWC raises and donates more than \$13.5 million in books and materials to public libraries and public school libraries through its Libraries 2000 & Beyond project.
- In response to the loss of equipment suffered during the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, GFWC members raised \$180,000 for a fully-equipped ambulance for the New York City Fire Department, which displayed the GFWC emblem.
- In 2006, GFWC members were recognized on the floor of the United States Senate as “a gem in our midst” by then-Senator Joseph Biden (Del.) for efforts in raising awareness of domestic violence and providing assistance to domestic violence survivors.
- Between 2010 and 2011, the GFWC Haiti Disaster Relief Fund raised more than \$55,000 toward the rebuilding efforts following the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

- On September 15, 2011, GFWC held a gravesite rededication ceremony for the recently refurbished Jane Cunningham Croly Gravesite in Lakewood, N.J.
- Established in 2011, the GFWC Disaster Relief—Library Replenishment Fund assists in restocking the collections of public and public school libraries that have been affected by natural and manmade disasters.

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 be generous.
Let us take time for all things;
Make us 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!

— *Mary Stewart, April 1904*

JUNIOR PLEDGE

I pledge my loyalty
To the Junior Clubwomen
By doing better than ever before
What work I have to do,
By being prompt, honest, courteous,
By living each day,
Trying to accomplish something,
Not merely to exist.

— *Helen Cheney Kimberly*