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VOLUME XVII - MARCH, 2024

GFWC Blue Umbrella Club Inc.
General Federation of Women's Clubs



From Dianne's Desk:

Happy Spring, my dear Blue Umbrella sisters!

Spring has definitely sprung in Florida, and maybe everywhere. Actually, a few days ago I was a little afraid that summer had arrived a couple of months early, with temperatures in the upper eighties. But now it is back to the normal seventies, and I think we better enjoy it for however long it lasts! The trees have dropped their pollen and are now that beautiful baby green, our azaleas are blooming, and we have purchased a few new milkweed plants in hopes of attracting those butterflies that are flitting around the backyard. The Foerster Butterfly Garden is ready to begin. I know Patty Fisher is already miles ahead of me, but I accept that as normal for a novice to a master.

Spring comes with so many exciting beginnings and fun things to do! The GFWC Florida Women of Courage webinar was such a great opportunity to celebrate Women's History Month and join the many clubs who had "watch parties", many with costumes and all with yummy food! I love seeing us highlighting strong women and especially the personal impact that our GFWC clubs have made in our communities! Congratulations! Thank you to the GFWC Florida Membership Committee and to Elayne Bassinger, GFWC Florida Women's History Chairman, and all the clubs that participated!

Speaking of "Celebration", that is the theme for the upcoming GFWC Florida Annual Convention in Orlando at the Rosen from April 12-15. I hope you have already made your reservations, but you do have until March 29 for registration and

meals. Convention has always been about “celebrating” with the announcements of all the winners of both club reports as well as special awards for outstanding individuals. We also recognize the top Arts and Crafts entries from around the entire state and the many donations given through headquarters to our special philanthropies, including the President’s Project. Linda’s project, **Boggy Creek**, will come to an incredibly successful conclusion, with bears, afghans and monetary donations. What a great project! Director Christa’s Special Project, **Breathe**, has heightened the awareness of Cystic Fibrosis for all of us and that awareness most definitely will not fade. There is also a lot of federation business for us to take care of, including bylaws amendments and the very important voting for the 2024-2026 officers. This Convention marks the transition to a new administration, a new President’s Project, and a new Director’s Project. I urge you all to attend, to listen, to vote and to cheer! Your presence and participation is very important, and it can and will make a difference.

In addition, I am very pleased and proud to invite you to visit the Blue Umbrella Hospitality Suite, which will be open during vendor hours in a second floor room! Further along in the newsletter, you will find a more detailed description from Project Manager Kathryn Gallagher of what will be featured in the suite. We are providing this to add to the opportunities available to all members to share ideas with each other and go home with new and exciting possible projects! You will be seeing more specifics on Facebook in the coming weeks about who and what will be featured!

Also, further along in this newsletter is our first Member Highlight, written by member Karen Griggsby. This first one features one of the Charter Members of the GFWC Blue Umbrella Club and someone very important and special to me, Phyllis Elsberry. Not only are we featuring Phyllis, but we have the opportunity to wish her a very happy 91st birthday as of March 16! Many of you will remember Phyllis from her years as a Page at our state meetings. I delight in telling you that I spoke to her today and she was busy getting ready for a meeting tonight! Such an inspiration!

I hope all of you are doing well. You are constantly in my thoughts!

LOVE, RESPECT, AND KINDNESS...always and forever!

Hugs,

Dianne

Dianne Foerster
President
GFWC Blue Umbrella Inc.
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**PHYLLIS ELSBERRY
GFWC RUSKIN WOMAN'S CLUB**

Phyllis is an energetic, caring 90 years young, but she was quick to remind me she will be 91 in a couple of months! Born in Kentucky, at the age of six she was adopted, and her new family moved to Huntington, West Virginia. In 1950 she was married to her first husband whose family lived in Florida, and in 1958 she and her husband relocated to Florida.

Phyllis is the matriarch of a large, loving family which includes a brother, three children, eight grandchildren, seventeen great grandchildren, and a host of nieces and nephews. To celebrate her

90th birthday, her daughter took her on the road trip of a lifetime to North Carolina where she had the opportunity to visit family members and friends.

Phyllis lives alone in Apollo Beach, Florida, but is never lonely, for she always enjoys the company of family and friends who visit her daily. She has been a proud and dedicated member of the GFWC Ruskin Woman's Club for 54 years, and has held numerous leadership roles, her all-time favorite role being District 8 Director. In the 60's she was president of the GFWC Junior Woman's Club of Ruskin. Their major project was Pennies for Pines, where they literally raised pennies to plant pine trees along Interstate 10 and all over the state.

Another role that brings Phyllis joy and a sense of accomplishment is serving as a Page at GFWC Florida meetings, which she has done for 10 years. She loves the fellowship with members and meeting all different types of people. Her motto is, "Always treat others as you wish to be treated." We have all experienced her infectious smile, warm personality, and ability to make everyone feel welcome.

Phyllis has been a member of the GFWC Blue Umbrella Club since its inception. She joined to support her friend Dianne Foerster, and she enjoys being part of another club where her talents can be utilized. She hopes to see the Blue Umbrella Club become involved education, legislation, human trafficking, and mentoring. Mentoring is a top priority for Phyllis, and she has mentored a number of clubwomen throughout the years. She takes pride when clubwomen she has mentored reach out to her with stories about their successes, thanking her for the role she played. She wouldn't trade any of these experiences for a million dollars! In order to ensure continued growth and attract younger, more diverse women, Phyllis encourages all clubs to become more visible, look beyond what they have typically done in the past, and become creative in how they recruit new members. She recommends attending community events, festivals, social events, and partnering with other non-profit organizations.

Phyllis's advice to any woman who wants to make an impact in her community? Join a GFWC Florida club!

Phyllis, thank you for your lifetime of federated service, and we wish you a very happy early 91st birthday!



We hope you will join us for the 2024 GFWC Florida Annual Convention. Deadline for early registration is March 29. Details including costs of registration, meals, hotel registration and tentative schedule can be found [here](#):

Call to GFWC Florida Annual Convention



GFWC BLUE UMBRELLA CLUB HAS MORE ROOM FOR CELEBRATING AND SHARING AT CONVENTION!

In our very own Blue Umbrella Hospitality Suite, there will be more space available to share Love, Respect and Kindness! The invitation to display in the Suite went to all GFWC Florida Districts and to some specific project chairmen to share with pride their favorite programs and unique work within their communities and for GFWC.

Response has been great! It's already a full house for everyone to visit and enjoy. The doors (to our Suite on the Second Floor) will be open to every GFWC member attending Convention to meet sisters from around the state and review unique and rewarding projects that will be on view for interest and inspiration!

Although the Suite # has not yet been assigned, we know that it will be located just down a 2nd floor hallway adjacent to the meeting rooms. We will publish the Suite # on Facebook as soon as it is assigned. We will also have roving members on the first floor distributing a little Blue Umbrella handout reflecting the Suite # and a reminder that everyone who visits will receive a free opportunity ticket to win a Blue Umbrella chock full of gifts and surprises!

The Umbrella Hospitality Suite will be open during Vendor Hours: 2 to 5 pm on Friday, 8 am to 6 pm on Saturday and at 8:00 am on Sunday morning so that the displays may be taken down and moved out of the Suite. We need to be cleaned up and out by 11:00 am on Sunday.

For all participants, as soon as the Suite becomes available to us on Friday, we will begin to set up our displays. I will text and email the Suite # so that you are able to deliver your displays as soon as possible after arrival at the Rosen. The door to the Suite will be decorated and very recognizable!

Join the Celebration! Contact Project Director Kathryn Gallagher with questions or concerns.

kathryngal@yahoo.com





GFWC BLUE UMBRELLA CLUB NEWS AND UPDATES!



For those of you who paid or renewed your Blue Umbrella dues in 2023, according to our bylaws, your dues renewal date is April 2024.

If you have paid since the beginning of this year, your dues are fully paid for 2024. .

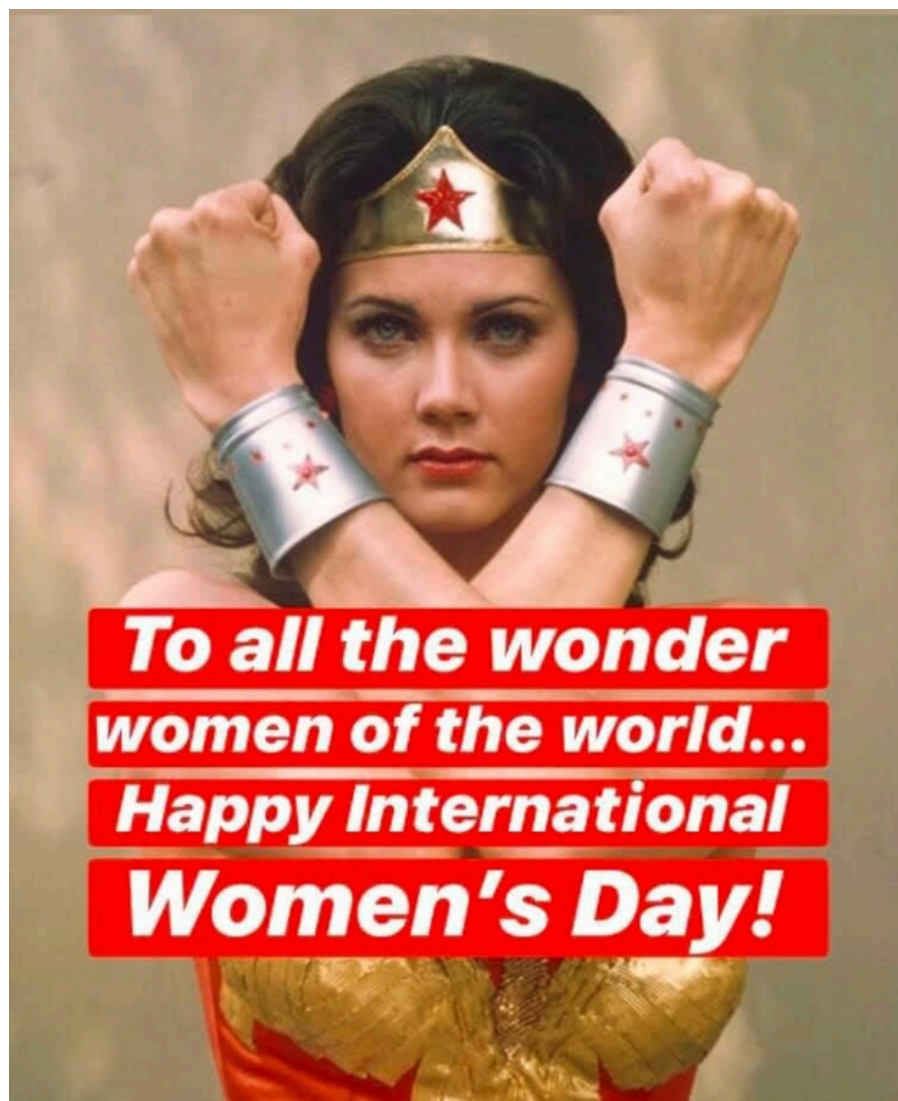
Dues may either be paid using the QR code of by check made payable to the GFWC Blue Umbrella Club. Yearly dues are \$35. We would also like to update your information forms to

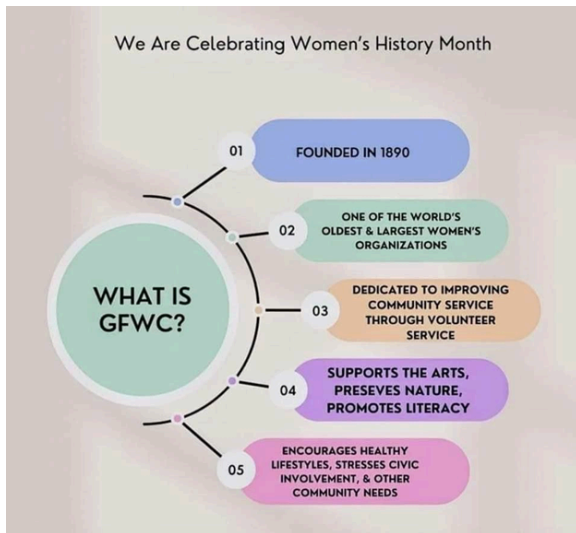
reflect any change in address, phone number or email and we would also appreciate if you would include your birthdate (day and month). There will be someone available with new forms and to take new or renewal dues at the Blue Umbrella Hospitality Suite at GFWC Florida Convention in April.

Thank you so much for continuing to support and live the philosophy of LOVE, RESPECT, and KINDNESS! You are appreciated!



Thank you for spreading the LOVE!





On Sunday, March 10, GFWC Florida clubwomen gathered in clubhouses and homes around the state to celebrate Women's History Month and the General Federation of Women's Clubs! A webinar entitled "Women of Courage" was hosted by the Membership and Women's History committees, and featured many GFWC Florida clubs and their stories. Statewide watch parties featured tea parties, hats, and club celebrations.

The opening video was set to the music, "Standing on the Shoulders", and featured an emotional tribute to the spirit and courage of the GFWC club women who have gone before us. Club members shared the history of their club and participated in a costume contest, with webinar attendees serving as the judges. We watched powerful videos from five individuals whose lives were impacted by their local GFWC club. They ranged from the coach of a soccer team for homeless girls to a town mayor who was the recipient of a club scholarship.

We are standing on the shoulders of some incredible clubwomen, but each of us is also an incredible clubwoman, making our mark and weaving our story into the tapestry of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. What a joy it is to be Living the Volunteer Spirit with each of you!

--Laura Connelly
proud GFWC Blue Umbrella Club member





GFWC Blue Umbrella Club members who live in Tampa Bay Golf and Country Club, held their second annual clothing "Swap 'n Shop". We had a great turn out, even with all the rain. This is a good environment project as we recycle our good used clothing, shoes, purses and jewelry. We even had a

nice selection of men's items. All the leftovers were donated to a local thrift store that supports our county's domestic violence shelter.

(Club member Thelma Slawson is pictured)



Love, Respect and Kindness plus the beauty of volunteerism and the amazing friendships we form that extend way beyond ourselves.

Lately I have heard the word "Glimmer" used to describe something that pleasantly resounds in your mind and just makes you feel the warmth of unexpected magic. That happened on this just past Leap Year Day (2/29/24) at 11:03 am.

Marg Moeller's daughter, Janet Rathke from Sault Ste Marie, Michigan, called me to say Hello and ask if I would like to have some of her Mother's mementos from her much enjoyed time as a member of the Rotonda West Woman's Club. Having joined the GFWC Rotonda West Woman's Club in 2014, I did not know Marg Moeller but it was exciting to receive this call from her daughter!

Leap Year Magic? Glimmer? 50 Year Club Anniversary Celebration set for May 1, 2024?!

On Saturday, March 2, I met Janet Rathke in person at the Port Charlotte Mall where we sat and talked like age-old friends, sitting on a bench just outside of Dillard's. Dale and Marge Moeller were one of the first four or five couples to contract property and a house to be built in the brand new community of Rotonda West, at 14 Oakland Hills Road. They vacationed there every February for 7 or 8 years until Mr. Moeller retired in 1982 and then they moved permanently to Rotonda West from Jackson, MI. They spent 13 very happy years in Rotonda, then moved in 1995 to Southport Square in Port Charlotte where they loved that community too. Mr. Moeller passed to life eternal in 2012 and Marge joined him in 2017.

Janet gave me newspaper clippings that her Mom saved about Woman's Club activities in the 1980's and 1990's. The most unique thing that she shared is a plywood "Paper Doll" that Marge created and members made to sell at the Annual Christmas Bazaar. One clipping shows Marge holding the "Paper Doll" and describes the successful sales of the doll at the 1988 Bazaar, so members were making custom dolls along with four outfits to go with each doll for the 1989 Bazaar. On the bottom of the wooden stand that holds the hand-painted doll, there is the notation: Rotonda West Woman's Club 1989.

Doll Janet was custom painted for Marge's daughter Janet, who brought her to us for our GFWC Rotonda West Woman's Club Archive. I can't wait for you to meet "Paper Doll Janet." I am sure that she will be wearing her Red Party Dress at our 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Photo above is Janet Rathke holding her doll when we met at the Port Charlotte Mall.

Photos below are a collage of Paper Doll Janet and her four outfits!





The GFWC International Liaison Committee is thrilled to welcome the newest International member, the GFWC Suga City Juniores in Orange Walk, Belize. Congratulations to Blue Umbrella member Laura Connelly and the two groups who visited Belize in February.

While on their trip, both groups visited with all of the Belize clubs and encouraged as many as possible to consider attending the GFWC Convention in

Chicago in June of 2024. There is considerable paperwork as well as significant cost involved. Several members of the GFWC Girls on Fire, a cyber club made up members from many states, but federated from District 5 in Florida, participated in the trip. They have adopted a project to sell t-shirts to raise money to help fund the Belize members to attend the GFWC Convention.

I am very excited to share that Girls on Fire have just started selling those t-shirts! You can order one today - just click on the button below, and pick it up at the Blue Umbrella Hospitality Suite at Florida Convention. You are all invited to help support their effort!

[Order a GFWC t-shirt!](#)



**Order your
GFWC t-shirt!
\$20**

Proceeds will help bring our
GFWC Belize sisters to
GFWC Convention

*Sponsored by
GFWC Girls on Fire*



Advocacy and GFWC

According to the GFWC Standing Rules, "Member clubs shall be responsible for carrying out the intent of the resolutions." Clubs and clubwomen are the local advocates for GFWC's legislative agenda.

It is through the national network of grassroots advocates that the Federation gains its political influence.

When advocating on behalf of the Federation, it is critical to remember:

When speaking on behalf of the Federation, members may not oppose the GFWC resolutions.

GFWC is a nonpartisan, nondenominational organization. Clubwomen are allowed to advocate for policies or legislation, but NOT allowed by law to endorse candidates or engage in partisan politics. GFWC members must separate personal political activities from official club or state federation work.

Minority opinions may be expressed as follows: A member organization (club or state federation) holding a minority opinion and wishing to support its stand further may do so provided it states that its action represents the minority vote of GFWC.

[Sign up for the GFWC Legislative Action Center](#)



If you would like to order Blue Umbrella T-shirts and/or jewelry

please contact Paula Juvinall

pjuvinall@gmail.com

727-401-1328

You can also **Link to our online payment page:**

<https://secure.affinipay.com/pages/gfwcblueumbrella/payments>

OR

QR Code for our online payment page:

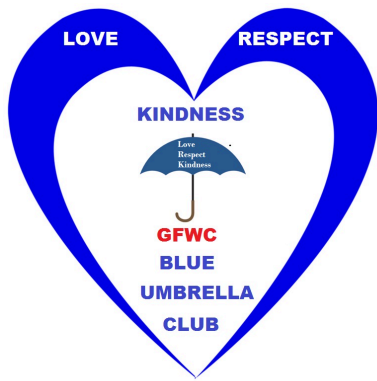


Thank you, Kathy Mammenga,
Blue Umbrella Club Treasurer,
for making this process easy for everyone!

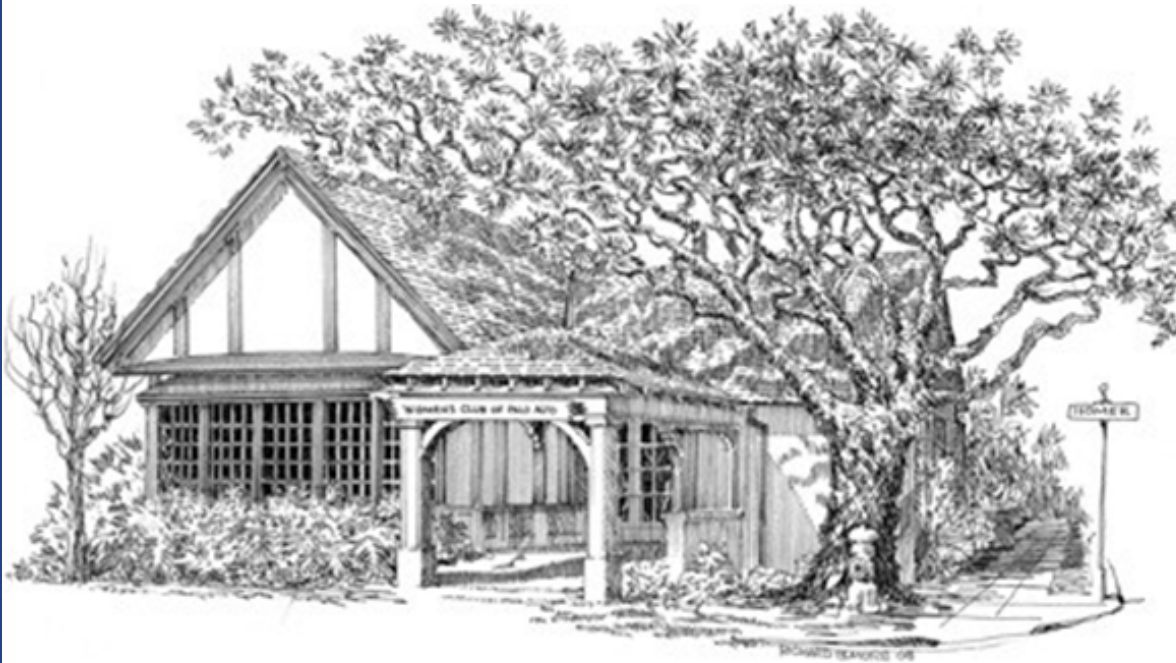


Our Mission Statement

This Club is organized to encourage an ongoing, positive opportunity for volunteerism based on incorporating the attributes of love, of respect and of



kindness through all aspects of life. The mission will also encompass support for existing clubs and projects at local levels.



A Collect for Club Women
Mary Stewart

Keep us oh God from pettiness;
Let us be large in thought, in word, and 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 not forget to be kind!

In 1904, Mary Stewart (1876 – 1943), wrote a “Collect for Club Women” which our club recites at meetings, as do club women throughout the world. Stewart stated that the Collect was written “...as a prayer for the day. I called it a Collect for Club Women because I felt that women working together with wide interests 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.”



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