

GFWC History and Structure- Federation Footprint

GFWC Virginia LEADS 2019

Lori Rocker, GFWC Virginia Second Vice President

Presenter Note: This presentation included use of a visual aid. A display board with the outline of a foot and 5 toes was used. Toes were added to the foot as each level of the organization was discussed. You can change the theme of the talk to use a tree, a hand, a blueprint/house plan, as you desire.

Good morning! As we continue to Step through your Leadership Training, it is time to discuss our amazing organization, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, its structure, and history. Before we get started, I would like to understand a bit about your Federation history. When I say the number of years that indicate your years of service, please raise your hand:

- 0 – 2 years
- 3 – 5 years
- 6 – 7 years
- 8 – 10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- 16 - 19 years
- 20 – 24 years
- 25 years +

For our more seasoned members, some portions of this talk may be a refresher. I do hope that you will walk away with at least one new piece of information to share. I have learned in my own 20 plus year history that I am always learning new things about our amazing organization.

GFWC's various levels can be characterized in multiple ways. Over the years, we have used blueprints, trees, and family trees to help demonstrate the relationship of GFWC's component parts. You will find a sample family tree in your handouts, check Tab 4.

In keeping with today's theme, we will use the foot and toes to illustrate our organization. Each of our toes provides balance and support and bears weight to sustain our bodies. Much like a foot, each part of GFWC is vital and important to the functioning of the organization.

GFWC - The General Federation of Women's Clubs – Our big toe

- Started by Jennie June (Jane Cunningham Croly) – a professional journalist, attempted to attend a dinner at an all-male press club honoring British novelist Charles Dickens. Croly was denied admittance based upon her gender, and in response, formed a woman's club—Sorosis. In celebration of Sorosis' 21st anniversary in 1889, Jane Croly invited women's clubs throughout the United States to pursue the cause of federation by attending a convention in New York City.
- On April 24, 1890, 63 clubs officially formed the General Federation of Women's Club by ratifying the GFWC constitution.

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- Little did these ladies know that they were creating what is now known as the world's largest and oldest non-partisan, non-denominational volunteer group for women
- Chartered by Congress – 1901
- GOALS: Encourage women to improve their skills, expand their rights & apply their abilities and special sensitivity to the problems of their communities & nations
- MOTTO: Unity in Diversity
 - Diverse backgrounds, Lifestyles, Skills, One common goal – community service
- Membership
 - Our membership is divided among three club types:
 - Juniette – members are middle or high school age,
 - Junior Clubs – typically 'younger' women. There used to be an age limit, but many states have removed those limits and have defined Juniors in different ways. In some states, Junior Clubs meet at night and Woman's Clubs meet during the day. In others, age limits apply. Most, like Virginia have removed the age limit, but value the diversity in the works of Junior Clubs and Woman's Clubs and the additional leadership opportunities afforded through a Junior structure.
 - Woman's Clubs – women aged 18 through as long as they want to participate in our clubs (aka 18 to grave)
 - In 2017, GFWC consisted of:
 - 3,200 Clubs, 80,000 members in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, we have International Clubs in 15 countries.
- GFWC is unique in the fact that we are a multi-faceted, broad based interest organization. GFWC provides opportunities for clubs to engage in the programs defined by GFWC and the flexibility to engage in programs and projects that meet the needs of their members and communities which may align into the overarching Community Service Program goals. Clubs can engage in as many or as few program areas as fit their needs.
 - Volunteer Programs include works in:
 - Community Service Programs – Arts, Conservation, Education, Home Life, International Outreach and Public Issues
 - Signature Project – Domestic Violence Awareness & Prevention and the Junior Special Project – Advocates for Children
 - GFWC also outlines Advancement Areas which are aligned with the more administrative side of our volunteer work: Communications and Public Relations Fundraising, Membership, Leadership, Legislation, Women's History and Resource Center

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- In 2017, the latest published numbers, GFWC Clubs
 - Number of Projects: 206,431
 - Volunteer Hours: 7,370,038.15
 - Dollars Donated: \$ 56,451,713.35
 - In-Kind Donations: \$11,022,507.49

Key Accomplishments during our 129 year history:

- 75% of Local Libraries in the 1930s were attributed to GFWC Clubs
 - Continue support of local libraries & literacy efforts
- Legislation for: Child Labor, Pure Food, Women's Suffrage, Equal Rights Amendment, Street lights, Seatbelts, Drinking & Driving, Violence Against Women Act, and Equal Pay for Women
 - GFWC advocacy efforts are based on Resolutions that are adopted by the membership at GFWC Convention. Resolutions outline the decisions, intentions, and expressions of action for the organization. One of the key accomplishments of GFWC over the years, is her ability to activate her membership behind a goal or piece of legislation.
 - This area is a focus of the current administration, as members are being asked to contact Congress and Senators related to Miranda's Law and the 3D Printed Gun Safety Act.
 - An easy way to stay up to date on legislation related to GFWC is to sign up for the Legislative Action Center, if you have not done so already. This site will quickly identify your representatives, contains email templates for you to update regarding key legislation, and will notify you when new activity is occurring on bills GFWC is supporting. If you are not already a member of the Center, sign up at gfwc.org
- 1984 – Established the Women's History and Resource Center which houses collections of history of GFWC and women volunteers
 - One of my favorite WHRC items is the GFWC History Timeline which provides an overview of GFWC and her accomplishments, including pictures, throughout history. It is available through the GFWC Marketplace.
- 2001 – Established the Leadership Education and Development Seminar to identify and train grassroots leaders across GFWC.

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- You are participating in our version of this program today. GFWC Virginia's own Shelby Hamlett initiated the program when she was GFWC International President.
- GFWC's program is held annually in conjunction with GFWC Annual Convention.
- If you enjoy all that you learn today, consider applying for GFWC LEADS to be Virginia's representative in 2020 in Atlanta.
- In 2002 – Dedicated a fire truck to NYFD to replace those lost during Sept 11
- Established the Success for Survivors Scholarship program in 2011. Scholarships support victims of domestic violence who are pursuing college degrees.

GFWC Membership meets annually at International Convention under the leadership of our Executive Committee and Board of Directors. The next Convention will be held in Atlanta in June 2020. GFWC maintains its historic Headquarters at 1734 N St NW in Washington, DC, as required by the Congressional Charter. Currently a capital campaign to raise funds to continue the care and maintenance of the headquarters building.

Stay connected to GFWC by subscribing to *GFWC Clubwoman* magazine and the weekly e-newsletter, *News & Notes*. See the GFWC website for more information.

REGION – The second toe in our line up

GFWC has established Regions. There are 8 Regions and Virginia is a part of the Southeastern Region. The purpose of the Region is to serve as a liaison between the State Federations and GFWC. Region Conferences allow members to attend a GFWC meeting closer to home. The Southeastern Region is comprised of: Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and District of Columbia.

GFWC Virginia is honored to host SER in Richmond September 26 - 28. I encourage you to consider attending as we host this meeting only every six years. It is a great opportunity to see GFWC operating at a grander scale, meet some of our GFWC officers and amazing women from our nearby states, and participate in educational sessions.

Regions meet two times annually. A Conference is held each Fall with special guests GFWC President and President-Elect who travel the country to visit each Region Conference. The second Region meeting is held in conjunction with GFWC Convention.

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GFWC Southeastern Region is a special one – it goes without saying that we are the Best Region, after all, we are all a part of this Region. In addition, we are the only Region with Junior leadership structures in all of the states!

STATE – Our middle toe

The next stop in our journey through the GFWC footprint is State Federations. State Federations serve as a liaison between GFWC and member clubs. State Federation structures vary, but most meet for an Annual Convention each spring and many have other meetings throughout the administration. GFWC Virginia's next Annual Convention will be held April 23 – 26 in Fair Lakes, Virginia.

GFWC Virginia was established in 1907 and became a member of GFWC in 1910. State federations establish their own Bylaws and procedures. GFWC Virginia is led by an Executive Committee and Executive Board with representatives from each District. Junior Clubs became eligible for membership in 1924.

As of yesterday, GFWC Virginia is nearly 3,800 members strong in 141 clubs. 110 Woman's Clubs, 27 Junior Clubs, and 4 Juniorette Clubs. In 2018, clubs reported 345,160 volunteer hours on 6,262 projects resulting in \$741,732 monetary donations and \$946,864 in-kind donations across all programs of GFWC. This was all accomplished thanks to you and the work you are doing in your local club.

GFWC Virginia's motto "Service, the Debt of Education" has been exemplified during her 112-year history as many programs have focused on education of our members, expansion of education programs including kindergartens and technical schools, libraries, and support of scholarships. Health has also been a main focus with support of multiple cancer centers around the state. For over 60 years, GFWC Virginia has partnered with Easter Seals (Easter Seals UCP) in supporting their camping programs in the state.

Each administration, the State President has the privilege of selecting a state project. In 2010, clubwomen across the Commonwealth worked together to purchase a fully equipped ambulance for the Virginia Tech Student Rescue Squad in memory of the 32 lives lost during the shootings on April 16, 2007. The next administration, members focused on the health and welfare of children and the prevention of child abuse by raising over \$65,000 for the cause. The most recent administration chose food insecurity for children as its focus. During 2018 – 2020, members are encouraged to Step Up to Stop Human Trafficking. Virginia is one of the top 10 trafficking states in the United States. Clubs are partnering with their local Human Trafficking

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organizations to raise awareness and funds for support of programs to stop this ever-growing crime.

GFWC Virginia maintains a Headquarters office in Richmond. Stay connected to GFWC Virginia through the *Virginia Clubwoman* magazine and our website, gfwcvirginia.org.

DISTRICT – Toe number four

The next step in the Federation Footprint is the District. Districts serve as a liaison between the State Federation and local clubs. Clubs are divided based on geographic boundaries and meet together at various times during the administration.

In Virginia, there are eight districts, governed by the GFWC Virginia Bylaws whose purpose is to further the work of GFWC and GFWC Virginia through promoting their efforts in local clubs. Similar to the GFWC Regions, the Districts bring opportunities to see a higher level of GFWC in operation closer to home. Districts meet at least two times per year. You can stay connected to you District through its newsletter. Contact your District President for more information.

CLUB – The pinky toe

Next come the foundation of our organization, the local clubs. In our analogy today, the pinky toe of the federation footprint. Without our local clubs, the Federation and all of its structure are not needed. Local clubs are our boots on the ground and accomplish the work of GFWC. Each club varies in their level of structure and the work they perform.

Clubs determine what needs exist in their communities, the interests of their members, and get to work in making a difference in the lives of others.

- You join one organization & can assist multiple groups
- By joining a local club, you are not only impacting your local community, but the world.
- Our impact as a local club is evident, not only in the numbers and awards that you have received, but more importantly in the lives that you impacted

What are a few of the footprints your clubs have left in your community?

YOU –

The foot will not function without someone directing it where to go. You are the connection from the toe to the body. The heart of our organization beats in YOU – each and every individual member of our organization. Without you, your desire to make a difference, and your commitment to our organization, GFWC clubs nor any level of the organization would exist. You are leaders in your communities – you are not satisfied sitting back and watching the

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world go by, you have stepped up to participate in an organization that is making a positive impact on our world. Thank you for being a member of our organization. Be proud of your membership and let people know about the great works we do and that we are always looking for a few (or many) great women to join us in our efforts!

GFWC has provided a wonderful history and start for your journey. We hope, that in the words of one of our most notable clubwomen, Eleanor Roosevelt, that you find 'Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart'. GFWC provides both friends and an organization that can leave footprints on your heart, if you are open to all that she has to offer.

I encourage you to think about your skills, abilities and talents and how you can share those to form and leave your own Federation Footprint. Olympic star, Jackie Joyner-Kersey reminds us - "Don't follow in any footprints, make your own prints. Because, you are the future of tomorrow."