

GFWC Jennie Award

The GFWC Jennie Award honors one clubwoman from each GFWC Region for outstanding commitment to club, community, and family. They are chosen by their clubs to compete at state, region, and national levels for their outstanding personal commitment to club, community, and family.

The GFWC Jennie Award is named in honor of GFWC's founder, Jane Cunningham Croly, who wrote for national newspapers under the pseudonym, "Jennie June." The award highlights those extraordinary clubwomen who epitomize her spirit of independence, courage, and persistence in purpose through their roles as volunteers within their clubs, elsewhere in the community, and as members of a family or extended family. Although GFWC has many awards for states and clubs, the GFWC Jennie Award is the only national honor that recognizes individual members for personal excellence. In fact, it is the highest honor bestowed by GFWC.

All GFWC Virginia clubs are invited to nominate one member who demonstrates exceptional commitment to club, community and family. Complete contest rules are found in the Jennie Award section of the 2024-2026 GFWC Club Manual on page 213. The 2024-2026 GFWC Club Manual can be found in the member portal on the GFWC Website. The Jennie Award pages detail guidelines, judging criteria, nomination form and deadlines. Nominations have been evaluated on the following criteria:

Commitment to GFWC

The nominee should have an outstanding record of success and achievement, not only in terms of her club's volunteer programs and projects, but also her role in a leadership position, her effort to build membership and promote the club to others, and her overall spirit of volunteerism. She should be kind, loyal, and positive in her relationships with other clubwomen, and her commitment should be continuous, rather than a one-time occurrence.

Commitment to Community

Community service must address real community needs and concerns. This service should go beyond club activities and be carried out through other community organizations (e.g. schools, hospitals, an elected/appointed position, scouts, etc.) as well as through the workplace. Activities should reflect an innovative or unique approach to volunteer work.

Commitment to Family

Recognizing that families come in many different forms, the nominee might be a single parent, a grandparent raising her grandchildren, an adult caring for an elderly relative, or an adult without children. The definition of a family member may include persons who are older or younger than the nominee. It may include immediate as well as extended family members. The nominee should exemplify outstanding concern for the wellbeing, health, and welfare of one or more persons by providing aid and comfort on an on-going basis, separate and apart, from club and community work.

Please note that all club nominations are due to the GFWC Virginia President by June 1, 2025, for state level judging. If you have questions, please contact Cynthia Baroody GFWC Virginia First Vice President/President-elect.

GFWC Virginia, GFWC Jennie Award Nominee:

2006-2008 Shirley Jones, GFWC Kempsville Woman's Club, Tidewater District

2008-2010 Lucy Woodall Harris, GFWC Lynchburg Suburban Woman's Club, Alice Kyle District

2010-2012 Virginia Darnell, Pamunkey Woman's Club, Lee District

2012-2014 Ginger Robertson, Grundy Woman's Club, Southwestern District

2014-2016 Linda Beatty, GFWC Tarrara Woman's Club, Southside District

2016-2018 no nominee

2018-2020 no nominee

2020-2022 Kathryn Sowers, GFWC Vinton Woman's Club, Blue Ridge District

2022-2024 Pat Reidinger, Clifton Community Woman's Club, Northern District

Just who was Jennie June?



Jane Cunningham Croly (December 19, 1829 – December 23, 1901) was an American author and journalist, better known by her pseudonym, **Jennie June**. She was a pioneer author and editor of women's columns in leading newspapers and magazines in New York. She founded the Sorosis club for women in New York in 1868 and in 1889 expanded it nationwide to the General Federation of Women's Clubs. She also founded the Woman's Press Club of New York City.

Croly was a pioneer feminist, dedicated to the betterment of her sex. She called for more efficiency in women's dress, and ridiculed bloomers as bizarre. She insisted that women's finest work was to be "the caretakers, the homemakers, the educators of children". Croly sympathized with the women's suffrage movement but was not active in it. She strongly supported equality and equal rights, giving special emphasis to new careers for middle-class women such as secretary, bookkeeper, nursing and department store clerk, in addition to traditional roles of teaching. Schlesinger argues that "Croly's lasting contribution to the progress of American women was her insistence that sex be submerged in competent performance". She told American women that financial independence and economic equality was as or more important than the right to vote.

She called the first congresses of women in 1856 and 1869, organized Sorosis in 1869; it was an organization that advocated for greater acceptance and more professional opportunities for women. It did not concern itself with politics or women's suffrage. Jennie June told the press that she envisioned the club, (whose name is a Greek botanical term for a kind of tree that yields various kinds of fruits and flowers) as a salon where women could gather and exchange ideas, enjoy literature, and discuss the arts. She later organized its successor, the General Federation of Women's Clubs in 1890; she also founded the New York Woman's Press Club in 1889, and became its first president. Early meetings were held in her home.

In her later years, Jennie June Croly was often referred to in the press as the "Mother of Women's Clubs", a term that was also mentioned when newspapers reported on how she became ill in the summer of 1898. She suffered a serious fall and broke her hip; her close friend Ellen Demorest, for whose fashion magazine she once worked, also became ill around that same time, suffering a stroke. It seems that she never entirely recovered and, in 1900 announced that she was retiring from newspaper and club work. She made a trip back to England, to see the country of her birth after so many years away and, after returning to New York, she died of heart failure, on December 23, 1901, at the age of 72.

In 1994, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Cunningham_Croly