

Members of the first Woman's Club of Carlsbad at their first clubhouse in 1927 (photo courtesy of the Woman's Club of Carlsbad).



A Century of Commitment and Caring

The Woman's Club of Carlsbad turns 100.

Written by Wendy Hinman

The Woman's Club of Carlsbad has entered the Blue Zone as an organization. At 100 years old in April, it has stories to tell and much to teach other nonprofits about staying power. So much of Carlsbad's general history is intertwined with the Woman's Club's history, from real estate to civic undertakings to memorable social events.

When the Woman's Club first began, Carlsbad was a small circle of farms and businesses in unincorporated San Diego, about 600 people. In communities like this the Chamber of Commerce and service organizations, such as the Rotary Club, become sort of stand-ins for city government. Carlsbad became an incorporated city in 1952. Before then, however, those organizations were male-only, so the Woman's Club was a way to sort of run parallel to the patriarchy. "Their husbands were in the chamber," Tricia Ganelin, publicity chair, says. The club was a way to "come alongside the men for the good of the community."

Some of the women who founded the Woman's Club of Carlsbad in 1925 had been vocal advocates in the suffrage movement. The club took up "mostly family and children's issues," Ganelin says, but all along the years, "the efforts met the times." She looks back on the women who have gone before her as, "feisty, get-it-done women, like Rosie the Riveter."

It wasn't until the 1970s that women had the legal status to even write their own checks. As a club, women could do things together they couldn't do on their own and the Woman's Club has always been savvy with money. The club has a general scholarship program available to seniors from Carlsbad and Sage Creek high schools. And when a \$50,000 member legacy was left specifically for nursing scholarships, it first went to Palomar College nursing students. But the club grew that money and now nursing scholarships go out to Palomar, Cal State San Marcos and others.

Every club needs a clubhouse. Soon after being federated in 1927 the club bought two lots on Pine Avenue for \$425, but when the need arose they sold the lots and clubhouse to the Carlsbad School District for \$4,522. A new clubhouse on Roosevelt Street was obtained. In 1939, member Julia Shipley donated a piece of land so that the Carlsbad Volunteer Fire Department could have its first

firehouse. The current clubhouse on Monroe Street/Lancer Way was built in 1962. The clubhouses were gathering places, a room of one's own.

"The Woman's Club was an offshoot of the Union Church [now Carlsbad Community Church]," Helen Mahoney, the club historian, says. "It was really for intellectual stimulation, camaraderie and esprit de corps." She described those founding women's philosophies as "What's good for Carlsbad we need to make happen."

And happen it did. The Woman's Club supported a bill to aid disabled WWI vets. It opened a food co-op during the Great Depression and during WWII it helped the Red Cross and many members housed the wives of military men stationed nearby. The list of helping others in the community is long. The club does things outright, like Comfort Pillows for breast cancer patients. Or it helps other organizations including food banks, the Salvation Army or Meals on Wheels. That last one now serves more homebound people than the population of Carlsbad when the Woman's Club started.

Mari Erickson, membership chair, said the club's two main goals have always been "Philanthropy and Friendship." There is an old recipe for making friends. Don't go out trying to make them, but rather meet real needs by serving shoulder to shoulder with others. That is where true friendships form. "It's really fun helping others," Ganelin says. She mentions book clubs and game nights that are the byproducts of the friendships made in the trenches of serving. Erickson says their membership comes from all over North County, not just Carlsbad. And the club is always welcoming new members. "They bring new energy, new ideas," Erickson says.

Mahoney says, "You could do a sociological study of women through the history of the Woman's Club." They are the living example of what cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead observed: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." Now in its 100th year of changing our world, the Woman's Club is a coalition of cooperation whose efforts will meet our times.

To learn more about the Woman's Club of Carlsbad, visit womensclubofcarlsbad.org.



a) Today's club members carry on the 100-year legacy of service. b) Friendship is the fruit of service to others. c) The first clubhouse was a symbol of strength and possibility. d) Living out the maxim, "Teamwork makes the dream work" (photos courtesy of the Woman's Club of Carlsbad).

TIMELINE



WOMAN'S CLUB OF CARLSBAD 1925-2025

1925

The Woman's Club of Carlsbad is formed April 10, 1925, by community women for social and intellectual fulfillment. Interests are expanded to support WWI veterans and their families and purchasing their first clubhouse at 4th and Pine Street. The focus includes bringing domestic water to Carlsbad, the woman's vote, and circulating petitions to save the trees on Elm, Oak and Pine streets. They endorse the Chamber of Commerce actions to establish the sanitation district of Carlsbad, which is not yet incorporated as a city.



1930s



A Woman's Club member donates a piece of land for the purpose of building Carlsbad's first fire station. No longer do residents have to depend on the Oceanside Fire Department to put out fires. Due to The Depression and decline in membership, they sell their clubhouse to the Carlsbad School District for use as their auditorium.

1940s

Club members help the war effort by offering the new clubhouse for use by the American Red Cross. Members support this effort by sponsoring first-aid classes, civil defense meetings for the community, and sewing for soldiers and their families.



1950s



Club members sponsor the Girl Scout and Horizon Girl troops and contribute to the City's street decorations, the Carlsbad Library, and the international aid CARE program. Social and educational activities continue and grow.

1960s

Fundraising efforts allow for the purchase of playground equipment for Holiday Park, contributions to the Carlsbad Paramedic Program, the Carlsbad Christmas Bureau, and the Carlsbad Girls Club. WCC also begins providing college scholarships to Carlsbad High School students. The Club purchases a piece of property on Monroe Street across from what is now the Carlsbad High School football stadium. This remains the location of the Woman's Club of Carlsbad Clubhouse.



1970s



WCC spearheads a program to establish a park at Laguna Drive and State Street alongside the Buena Vista Lagoon. The entire community comes together to create a peaceful park, named the Maxton Brown Park in honor of the first soldier from Carlsbad killed in WWII.

1980s-1990s

WCC continues enhancing education opportunities through scholarship and community involvement. Their passion for education and the Carlsbad High School scholarships remain their focus. First prayer breakfast is initiated. The Spotlighters, a WCC entertainment group of 40 club members, is formed and are a notable cultural presence in the community.



2000s



The junior Woman's Club of Carlsbad merges with WCC, bringing new vitality to the Club. WCC membership grows to over 119 members in 2025, working on over 62 projects with over 50 organizations, giving their time, efforts and donations to organizations such as One Safe Place, Got Your Back, Meals on Wheels, Solutions for Change, and the Foundation for Women Warriors. In 2024 the Woman's Club donates \$28,183 in charitable contributions and performs over 6,550 hours of volunteer service to the community.