

The History of Lee District, GFWC Virginia, GFWC

The first meeting of the Fifth District of the Federation of Women's Clubs of Virginia was held March 20, 1925, at the Lewis Ginter Community Building with 37 delegates present. Mrs. Boyd K. Ayers served as the first District President. The District was originally comprised of 22 counties, and the name "Fifth District" remained through the 1950's, when it was changed to "Lee District."

At the third annual meeting on March 17, 1927, the Educational Loan Fund, a district student loan fund, was established. Ten clubs pledged donations and additional money followed. It was also at this meeting that the District moved to petition the state organization to establish a state education fund.

By 1939, Lee District was fortunate to have two gavels, one from Mt. Mitchell, NC and another made of walnut and cherry from the property of George Washington's home. It was decided to donate the Mt. Mitchell gavel for use by the state organization at their headquarters located at the Jefferson Hotel.

In 1942, the District goal was "Every club a bond holder and every club member a regular buyer of stamps and bonds." By 1943, the Richmond-area clubs had completely furnished a recreation room at Fort Lee. Three outstanding projects for the District that year were Nursing Scholarships, a Camp and Hospital Service to be worked coordinately with the Red Cross, and the "Bomber Drive." During 1947, Dot Wood was elected to serve as the first District Junior Director.

In December of 1957, the National Tobacco Festival (NFT) asked the Lee District Juniors to sponsor a dance to open a week of Tobacco Festival activities (a Richmond tradition founded as a fundraiser for the Richmond Optimist Club.) This proposal was presented to the Junior Clubs at the 1958 Spring District Meeting and it was adopted as a Lee District Junior Project. The first LEE DISTRICT GRAND BALL was held on October 21, 1958, at the Richmond Arena.

By April 7, 1960, there were 3,972 General clubwomen and 1,238 Junior clubwomen in the Lee District. Club projects in 1961 included the Crippled Children's Hospital, Woodrow Wilson Center in Fishersville, textbooks for the Blind and Camp Easter Seal. During 1967, Lee District clubwomen donated more than \$30,000 to various projects and a motion that District clubwomen give their time and effort in promotion of ETV (Educational Television) was approved. By 1968, Lee District membership had grown to 5,020 members.

During 1970, Mrs. Linwood Holton, wife of Governor Linwood Holton, opened the Executive Mansion for tours. This became a Lee District Project and members have served as docents since that time. At the 1972 Spring District Meeting, the Lee District Juniors voted to support Camp Easter Seal, located in Caroline County, as their philanthropic project. The first Eloise Engledove Membership Memorial Award was presented to the Woman's Club of Chester for recruiting 31 new members, with special recognition to the Powhatan Junior Woman's Club for forming the Woman's Club of Powhatan County. The 50th Anniversary of Lee District was celebrated in 1975, with President Anne Whitaker presiding. The current Lee District Seal, of clasped hands on a Carolina Blue shield, was adopted at the 1976 Spring District Meeting.

The 22nd annual Lee District Grand Ball was held in 1980. The Governor and his wife were in attendance and the Grand Ball raised \$3,600 for Camp Easter Seal. In

1983, Lee Juniors marked a new beginning with their decision to discontinue their longstanding association with the NTF. Beginning with the 1984 Grand Ball, Lee Juniors were on their own with 100% of their proceeds to be donated to the charity of their choice. A new name was adopted – the LEE DISTRICT CHARITY BALL. In 1984, Governor Charles Robb presented Lee District with a certificate in appreciation for 14 years of service as Executive Mansion Docents.

During 1992, the Reynolds Metals Company presented a special award to King William Junior Woman's Club and the Essex County Junior Woman's Club for educating the public and club members that aluminum foil is recyclable. At the 1995 Annual District Meeting, The Virginia Treatment Center for Children, a state treatment center for seriously disturbed children, was adopted as a special project by Lee District. In recognition of the longstanding service of Vicki Marks, as the Executive Secretary of the Virginia Federation of Woman's Clubs, the Victoria Marks Fund was established in 1998, with funds to be donated to The Nellie Watts Fleming Endowment.

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Lee District's 75th Anniversary was celebrated at the 2000 Annual District Meeting, with President Hope Royer presiding. The occasion was marked by the presentation of an inscribed sounding block.

In an effort to recognize outstanding leadership and service, Lee District established a special hall of fame, entitled Lee's Legends, in 2000. This lifetime distinction was awarded for the first time at the 2001 Annual District Annual Meeting. Also established in 2000, was the Circle of Hearts Award, an honor roll distinction presented annually in recognition of a club's exemplary participation in Federation activities. This program ended in.

Lee District moved into the electronic age with the establishment of the Lee District Website in 2001. The availability of the electronic version of Lee's Traveller was offered for the first time in 2004. During 2006, the Lee District Handbook was first offered electronically and on CD ROM, and the electronic version of Lee's Traveller was made available to all members at no cost.

In 2004, the Patriot's Calendar was selected as the Lee District President's Special Project, with proceeds from sales benefiting the Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation. At the 2006, Fall District Meeting, \$7,175.00 was presented to the Foundation.

Lee Juniors marked another new beginning in 2005 with their decision to discontinue their longstanding association with Easter Seals Virginia. Virginia Blood Services was adopted in 2006 as the Lee District Junior Project Philanthropy for the 2006-2008 Administration.

In 2007, as the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Virginia celebrated their 100th Anniversary, Lee District celebrated 82 years of community service. Lee District

clubwomen devoted 117,199 volunteer hours to 3,219 projects and reported monetary and “in-kind” donations in the amount of \$657,087.

In 2008, the Lee District Unity Project was established for the Generals and Juniors to work together toward a common goal. This replaced the longstanding Lee District Junior Project. Comfort Zone Camp for grieving children was chosen as the beneficiary for the 2008-2010 administration. The first Lee District Game Night was held as a membership event.

The 2010-2012 Lee District Unity Project was the Autism Society of Central Virginia. Clubs made contributions of over \$3000.00 to provide a Holiday Party, two picnics, and “camperships” to benefit children and families affected by autism. Members also supported a Walk for Autism Awareness at Innsbrook in 2011, with volunteer hours and monetary donations.

The 2012-2014 Lee District theme was Federation—A Chapter in Our Story. Over 700 paperbacks were donated to the USO, new books were collected by clubs and donated to the Children’s Museum Of Richmond. The District Project was the library at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School in Louisa. A check for \$6,000 was donated at the end of the administration to help refurbish the library after the earthquake of 2011.

Lee District is proud of the outstanding clubwomen who have served as GFWC Virginia President. To date, eight members have held that distinction and nine members have served as GFWC Virginia Third Vice-President/Director of Junior Clubs.

Lee District clubwomen truly exemplify these words from the Collect for Clubwomen, written by Mary Stewart in 1904. “...Let us be large in thought, in word, in deed” and “...Oh Lord God, let us forget not to be kind.”

The theme of the 2014-2016 administration was “Federation—Share the Volunteer Spirit.” The Lee District Special Project was furnishing financial and in-kind support to the Richmond Airport USO that serves over 3000 military men and women each month. District clubs donated gift cards for food and supplies as well as in-kind items such as toiletries, snacks and bottled water totaling over \$8,000 during the two years. In 2015 the GFWC River City Junior Woman’s Club was chartered and welcomed into the district.