

## Newcomers of Central Florida, Inc. History

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Today (September 15, 2011), we are celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To understand our club's rich history, we must look earlier than 1991, the year our club name officially changed to "Newcomers Club of Central Florida." In fact, we could look back 60 years to 1951, when a Central Florida group of women formed a local chapter of the Welcome Wagon Club. These are the "roots" from which our club has grown. The Welcome Wagon was established in 1928 by Thomas Briggs in Memphis, Tennessee. He wanted his company to emulate the same welcoming and warm hospitality shown by the early Conestoga "Welcome Wagons" that greeted pioneers and provided water and food as they began their long trek west to make a new life. The Welcome Wagon expanded across the country. Except for a few men, including its founder, Thomas Briggs, this company became one of the first all-female companies in the United States. The Welcome Wagon Clubs were an extension of this organization. The clubs paid a monthly fee to the Welcome Wagon. In return, the Welcome Wagon "hostesses" visited new homeowners to welcome them into their new communities and distribute gifts and coupons from local businesses as well as provide information about cultural and civic activities. In addition, they invited the "lady of the house" to join the local chapter of the Welcome Wagon Club and provided lists of prospective new members the club could invite to a future meeting. One such club began in Maitland, Florida in 1951. Not much is known about the early years of the club but there are many women who were members starting in the late 1970's who fondly recall the activities and the many friendships formed over the years.

The Welcome Wagon Club's name changed three more times before 1991. In 1970, the new name became Maitland-Seminole Welcome Wagon Club. In 1980, the name was changed again to Maitland-South Seminole Newcomer's Welcome Wagon Club of Maitland and Florida. The club's focus was centered on new residents in the community so after two years, members were encouraged to discontinue their membership. Some women left and went to another organization still in existence today, the Seminole Spokes. By the early 1980's, the club lifted all restrictions on membership longevity.

The club was thriving. Membership steadily increased as new families continued to relocate to the Central Florida and heard about the club primarily through "word of mouth" advertising. In 1984, members felt that support from Welcome Wagon was no longer necessary. The club withdrew from the Welcome Wagon organization and embraced a third and very significant name change. The new name was Maitland Newcomers Club. For the first time, "Welcome Wagon" was no longer part of the club's name.

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By 1991, the membership represented not just the Maitland area, but the entire Central Florida region. To reflect this scope, the club changed its name to Newcomers Club of Central Florida. In the past, the club did not meet during the summer months since many members traveled out of town. However, in 1991, the membership voted to become a true 12-month club and planned activities throughout the year. A more recent club name change occurred around 1998, when the word "Club" was removed. In keeping with the traditions of the Welcome Wagon organization, the club has kept "Newcomers" in its name as a way of welcoming new women to the area. Earlier this year, the club was incorporated for the first time. The official name is now Newcomers of Central Florida, Inc.

Charities have always been important to the club. In the early 1980's, the Russell Home for Atypical Children was chosen as the club's main charity. Each month, a small portion of the luncheon money was set aside to support this organization. At each luncheon, revenue from "Dollars for Diapers" was collected and donated to the Russell Home to help defray the cost of diapers for its residents. It's interesting that today, in 2011, the club has adopted the same Russell Home as its main charity. Throughout the 1990's, Seminole Children's Village was the club's main charity. Members donated school supplies and backpacks, purchased enough tickets for all the Village children to attend the circus, and volunteered their time and manpower (along with their spouses and friends) to improve the facility and build a barbeque pit. Over the years, other charities supported by the club, in no particular order, have included:

*Safe House of Seminole, Soles4Souls, Smile Train, Spouse Abuse, Inc. (now Harbor House of Central Florida), Mustard Seed of Central Florida, Second Harvest Food Bank, Quest, Inc., Children's Home Society, American Cancer Society for Breast Cancer, Hospice of the Comforter, Elizabeth House, Edgewood Children's Ranch, Dress Smart, Ronald McDonald House, Central Florida Zoo, Smile Train, Pet Rescue by Judy, Bread of Life, Dignity U Wear, House of Hope, Heifer Project, Gift from God Computer Foundation, Winter Park Playhouse, Gift for Teaching, Freedom Ride, Jewish World Watch, SPCA of Central Florida, various projects supporting our Troops overseas and many more.*

Club members have always liked to have fun. Today we support many of the same interest groups started much earlier in our club's history. The following is a list, in random order, of many of the interest groups formed by club members over the years.

*Book Club, Bookenders, Hooked on Books, Potluck, Gourmet Dining, Adventure Group, Lunch Bunch, Movie Matinee, Couples Pot Luck, Bridge, Couples Bridge, Craft of the Month, Canasta, Mah Jongg, Quilting/Needlework, Special Events, Bowling, Investments, Fun with Finances, Stitch 'N Bitch, Golf,*

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*Theater Group, Gardening Club, Painting, P.C. Pals, Casual Dining, Pinochle Pals, Couples Bunko, Couples Euchre, Night-time Bunko, Salad Bunko, Bunko Belles, "Crazy Cards", Let's Do It, Wild Child, Poker Pals, Bunko Babes, Bunko, Euchre, Inside the Arts, Shanghai, M&M(Munch and Meander) Gang, A Day Away, Celebrations and many more. (Note from Ronnie: Not all of these are still in existence.)*

This list helps to explain the club's longevity. With such a wide variety of activities, there is truly something for everyone.

It is unknown when the club's monthly luncheons began, but they were in effect in the late 1970's and are still extremely popular today. The club continues to support the community by making luncheon reservations at various local restaurants for its monthly meetings. The luncheon format has remained about the same including club business discussions and a guest speaker from the local community.

In the 1980's, the club newsletter was reproduced on a local church mimeograph machine, hand-sorted by zip code and brought to the post office. Technological advances resulted in computer-generated newsletters by the mid 1990's, with pictures added as an enhancement around 2002. Today, the majority of our publications are e-mailed to our members.

Prior to the late 1980's, the club Historian appended a "master scrapbook" depicting the yearly activities and brought it to each luncheon for viewing by the members. Over the years, as more pages were added, the scrapbook became heavy and cumbersome to transport. As a result, around 1992, club Historians created scrapbooks that reflected all the year's activities and presented it to the outgoing President. This is still the practice today. Copies of recent scrapbooks are found on-line viewing at [www.newcomerscfl.org](http://www.newcomerscfl.org).

Our club motto is: "There Are No Strangers, Just Friends We Haven't Met!"

Our Mission Statement is the following:

*"To welcome newcomers to our club. To make them feel 'at home.' To provide interest groups to help them integrate into their new community by making new friends. To acquaint them with local restaurants. And, to provide opportunities to visit with new and well-acquainted friends while having fun!"*

We are grateful to the women who, in 1951, founded the Maitland Welcome Wagon Club and ignited the spark that grew into a steady flame illuminating friendship and bringing a welcoming spirit to women all over the Central Florida area. We extend a special "thank you" to all the Presidents, their Boards and membership who were part of our forty-year heritage.

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Without your contributions, our club's twenty-year celebration as Newcomers of Central Florida, Inc. would not be possible.

Today we come together to remember and honor our club: its past and present members; its long and vibrant history; its charitable generosity to the community; its diverse and exciting interests and its warm and lasting friendships. For all those things, we are grateful and celebrate this special twentieth year of Newcomers of Central Florida, Inc. Special recognition goes to the women who volunteered their time to chair our outreach to the community, special interest groups, the club's board members and a special "thank you" to our present and past Presidents from 1991 to 2011.

1991-1992 Lynne Snowden

1992-1993 Sharon Reighn

1993-1994 Nancy Thornton

1994-1995 Barbara Kasch

1995-1996 Helen Terefinko

1996-1997 Carole Montgomery

1997-1998 Anne McQuiggan

1998-1999 Margie Simmons

1999-2000 Margie Simmons

2000-2001 Sandi Eckstein

2001-2002 Judy Grieve

2002-2003 Lynne Snowden

2003-2004 Anne McQuiggan

2004-2005 Linda Selby

2005-2006 Joan Bove

2006-2007 Joan Bove

2007-2008 Lynne Snowden

2008-2009 Dru Juhl

2009-2010 Joan Bove

2010-2011 Joan Bove

2011-2012 Joan Lenard

\*2012-2013 Joan Lenard

\*2013-2014 Judy Babine

\*2014-2015 Ronnie Telzer

\*2015-2016 Ronnie Telzer

\*2016-2017 Judy Babine

\*2017- Judy Babine *\*Updated after original 2011 presentation. Our thanks to members Nancy Jaeger and Georgeann Clemons for putting together this comprehensive historical document.*

We are fortunate to be part of this great club and look forward to a bright and successful future while remembering our past by keeping that "welcoming" spirit alive.