

GFWC NORTH PINELLAS WOMAN'S CLUB
2010 PUBLIC ISSUES REPORT

Partnership With GFWC

1. SEW MUCH COMFORT - It is hard to imagine how to put on clothing by yourself when you have only one arm or one leg that has limitations, but the Sew Much Comfort Organization makes it easier. This organization provides adaptive clothing free of charge to service members who are severely wounded so they can wear real clothes rather than just hospital gowns. Our club collected 45 new garments and has three members that are “official seamstresses.” Many others offer to be unofficial helpers ripping seams or ironing bias tape, etc. We sewed 21 adaptive garments this year.

Collaboration with GFWC FLORIDA

3. CARE PACKAGES FOR THE TROOPS - How do you show 90 military people in the Middle East that you are thinking of them and want to thank them for their service to our country? Send each a bag of comfort items they can't normally get. At the June meeting our club members made 90 care packages for the troops overseas. Bob Williams, with Support Our Troops Inc., sends 200 boxes each week to 215 different units in the Middle East. He put some of our zip lock bags in each of his boxes and that way troops all over would get something from us. We sent toiletries, accessories, food, CDs and DVDs mostly geared toward female personnel. One of our members printed out 90 patriotic note cards on her computer with our club name and GFWC logo on them, and we had members sign them and put one in each bag along with a club brochure. We donated \$100 to Support Our Troops Inc. to help with his shipping costs. Members took the bags and check to the facility and were given a tour.

4. VETERANS HOSPITAL GUEST HOUSE - Can you imagine the expenses of staying near a military family member in the hospital for days and weeks? The free Fisher House, located on the campus of the Bay Pines Veteran's Administration next to the hospital and outpatient clinics, helps military families in this situation. The house can accommodate 16 guests who have a relative/friend who is hospitalized at Bay Pines Hospital. The guests can stay as long as the patient is hospitalized with no time limit. Throughout the year club members donated shampoo, conditioner, lotions, mouthwash, soap, t shirts, family games and magazines for the Fisher House guests. We also prepared and served 40 servings for a St. Patrick's Day luncheon. Our club's monthly cooking group donated non perishable food items for the Fisher House food pantry.

5. BAY PINES VETERANS HOSPITAL - Our “Sock it to the Vets” campaign collected 100 new white socks for the local veteran's hospital. We contacted the local veteran's hospital and found out what their needs were. Items needed were posted in our newsletters and collected through out the year. The items included clothing, reading glasses, books, magazines, craft items and new white socks.

6. HOMELESS VETERANS - “Stand Downs” are events put on by the Dept. of Veteran Affairs to provide services to homeless veterans. Health screenings, counseling, clothing, housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, VA and SS benefits are given to veterans through this department. Club members donated 122 new and used garments to this program at Bay Pines Veterans Administration.

7. GROCERY COUPONS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES - Being called a “cut up” doesn’t always mean you like to joke around. It might also mean you like to cut out coupons for others. Throughout the year our members collected and cut out approximately \$7000 in grocery coupons and gave them to the local Coast Guard station to distribute to their military families. Coupons that were expired were sent to overseas bases where they can be used for up to six months after expiration.

8. HUG A HERO DOLLS - Imagine a young child caressing a soft doll dressed in military fatigues and calling it “Mommy.” These soft dolls are called Hug A Hero dolls. Our club donated \$50 for two Hug A Hero dolls. These soft dolls have a photo imprinted with a military parent in uniform. Dolls can be bought, but donations allow the Hug A Hero dolls to be donated to children who can not afford one and their parent is currently deployed or if a child has lost a loved one in the line of duty.

9. REMINDER TO VOTE - Who are the candidates? Where do they stand on issues? What are the consequences of the referendums if they pass? Club members were reminded by emails and newsletters to vote on issues and referendums. Location, date and times of forums were distributed.

10. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES - Do you know who your representative is? Members were sent an email encouraging them to be informed citizens by reading the Florida upcoming legislative session issues on line and communicating with their legislators about their concerns or support of the issues. Members were told how to contact their state representative. The Pinellas County commission, budget, and city sample ballot websites were listed. Our members are informed on who their representatives are, how to contact them and issues that were on the ballot.

11. THANKING THE POLL WORKERS - Water + snacks + note = smiles. Club members took bottled water and individually wrapped snacks to various north county polling sites on voting days to thank the poll workers. A thank you note from our club on patriotic paper was left with the snacks. Because our club website was on the thank you note we received several thank you notes from poll workers who appreciated our small token of appreciation.

12. XEROX CARDS FOR THE TROOPS - It is possible to send a letter without a stamp. On the website www.LetsSayThanks.com you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to a member of the armed services. We sent out an email to all our members about this and many of them participated in this easy, but worthwhile project.

13. DONATION TO AT-RISK TEEN FACILITY - Prevention now means productive citizens in the future. Our club donated snacks for fieldtrips, \$50 for summer activities and \$440 worth of school supplies to the Sheriff’s Ranch. Members attended the Open House Appreciation BBQ. The Sheriff’s Ranch in Safety Harbor, Florida is home to 30 youth in three cottages. This coed facility allows brothers and sisters to stay together at the same facility. The Sheriff’s Ranch is dedicated to the prevention of juvenile delinquency and the development of lawful, productive citizens through counseling and services to trouble and at risk children.

14. TEEN DATING 101 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKSHOP - Teen Dating 101 started four years ago as a program to address good and bad dating relationships. We have a wonderful partnership with Pinellas County’s largest high school, where we have the event. Teens and parents are invited to learn important strategies about successful relationships and warning signs of dating violence. Our club contributed the refreshments, helped with registration, set up/clean up and distributed flyers to neighboring church youth groups to help with this worthwhile project. This evening event featured speakers including our club president, the school resource officer from the Clearwater Police Department, a social worker and school psychologist, a representative from the

Central Florida Behavior Health Network, and special guests from The Haven, the domestic violence shelter in north Pinellas County. Our GFWC Clearwater Juniorettes were hostesses.

15. NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME AWARENESS - Through our newsletter members were made aware of the new Pinellas County Sheriff's Department and nine local police agencies crime information in a map form on line. After typing in an address and a desired radius you can see what crimes were reported in your neighborhood.

16. CENSUS SAFETY - Our newsletter informed about census safety and stressed that SS numbers and bank information would not be requested. Questions census takers may legally ask were listed.

17. VEHICLE SAFETY - A vehicle safety reminder was included in the April newsletter about the Move Over Act of the Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles which requires that vehicles move over at least one lane when authorized emergency vehicles or wreckers are on the side of the road with flashing lights. A fine or points on your driver's license can be issued when you fail to obey this law.

18. SEXUAL OFFENDER AND PREDATOR AWARENESS - Club members were told in a newsletter about the website that identifies sexual offenders and predators by address. Members were told to check out the web site <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/>

19. SENIOR DRIVER SAFETY - Drive safer and save money. Information was given to club members in a newsletter about the AARP Driver Safety Courses offered to drivers over 50 years of age. Participants can lower their insurance rates by attending. A website and phone number was given to learn the dates and location of classes.

20. ELIMINATE TELEMARKETING CALLS - Don't you hate getting junk calls? Information about eliminating unwanted telemarketing calls was distributed to all members in the newsletter. Members were given the website and phone numbers needed to register.

21. USED CELL PHONES - Fourteen gently used cell phones were collected and donated to Senior Citizens Services of Pinellas County for local needy senior citizens to use as 911 emergency phones.

22. U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION RECALLS - Be safe – be informed. Information about safety recalls were listed in several club newsletters along with the website for more information www.cpsc.gov

23. SMOKE ALARM SAFETY - The April and November newsletter reminded members to change the batteries in their smoke detectors when they moved their clocks for daylight savings time.

24. HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION – An email was sent to all members about location, dates and times of electronic and chemical waste collection in north Pinellas County.

25. TEACHING CPR AND FIRST AID - CPR and First Aid classes were taught to high school students from several high schools needing it for state ECPC certification. A club member is a certified instructor and taught the classes for free. Other club members assisted the trainings. Each student normally pays \$25 for certification in both courses. (ECPC = Early Childhood Professional Certificate. Students with an ECPC earn "Staff Credential" from the Fla. Dept. of Children and Families to work in licensed child care centers.)

26. FILE OF LIFE - File of Life is a small plastic file that provides critical information to EMS. It includes name, medications, medical conditions, allergies, blood type, emergency contact and

physician's name. File of Life stickers are placed at participant's front doors to direct emergency personnel to the easily accessible file magnetized to the refrigerator. A pocket size file is also included. Information on how to get the File of Life was distributed to club members by newsletter and explained at a meeting.

27. RED RIBBON WEEK - Red Ribbon Week is the oldest and largest drug prevention campaign in the country and our local high schools are happy to participate. In October, it serves as a vehicle for communities and individuals to take a stand for the hopes and dreams of our children through a commitment to drug prevention and education and a personal commitment to live drug free lives with the ultimate goal being the creation of a drug free America. Our club donated \$50.

28. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS – This special 15 member committee met in February to plan the year's projects and kept in touch via email and at monthly meetings throughout the year. The main thrust was to support The Haven, the domestic violence shelter in north Pinellas County. We began our support by meeting with Executive Director Chris Warwick and touring the facility in Clearwater. We gave her a huge gift basket filled with purple coffee mugs, coffees, teas and candy to share with her staff. Our Yearbook featured a page of information about this ongoing project of GFWC to inform our members and encourage their involvement. At the first meeting of the club year, we gave each member a purple coffee mug filled with a profile of The Haven, purple beads, Melitta coffee, and specialty printed purple M&M's that read GFWC Forever, We Love NPWC (our club) and Domestic Violence Awareness. We wanted our members to "think domestic violence awareness" all year long. We provided them with a listing of shelters in the neighboring three counties and encouraged them to share this list with friends. We donated 44 cell phones, 14 bed pillows, six sets of bed sheets, six tote bags and 75 items of clothing to families in crisis. Concerned with legislative priorities, we distributed information about the Violence Against Women Act and from the Florida Coalition Against Violence in Tallahassee that included topics of resource needs and why Florida needs protection for victims in residential lease agreements. Members attended the domestic violence workshop at GFWC Florida convention. Mother's Day at The Haven was a favorite project this year as we interacted with 16 children ages 2-17 on two Monday evenings prior to Mother's Day. While their moms were attending life improvement workshops, we read to the children and helped them create homemade cards, photo frames and select a gift for their mom from a table of gifts donated by our members along with tissue and gift bags. One mother cried and told us that she had never received a Mother's Day gift in her life. We also took a picture of each mom and their child(ren) to place in the handmade frame their child made. The Faces of Domestic Violence Luncheon is an annual event for area business leaders, government officials and concerned citizens. Our club was a major sponsor on October 21. The keynote speaker was Lissette Campos from ABC Action News in Tampa. Other speakers were from The Haven, local government, and women who have survived domestic violence. We created the table centerpieces, Boxes of Love. Members provided 55 unique hat boxes and filled them with items a woman would need when she entered the shelter – hair supplies, cleansers, toothpaste, toothbrushes, razor, makeup, tissues, mints, umbrella, sanitary items, socks, nail enamel, cologne, rain poncho, flip flops, sunscreen, reusable water bottles and our club brochure. Each hat box was different and several came from the Museum of Fine Arts. The Boxes of Love were the centerpieces at the luncheon and were transported to The Haven to be given to women who would be entering the shelter.

30. LEGISLATIVE DAYS – Four members, including our President, travelled together to Tallahassee for this GFWC Florida organized event. We toured the Senate and House of Representatives and had a mock session. We ate, we lobbied, we enjoyed the company of our sister club members and we had our picture taken with the Governor. But most of all, we learned so much about how our state government works and what we can do to improve our own communities through legislation. We returned with lots of information for our members. What a wonderful opportunity for clubwomen.