



CELENE POST
GFWC PUBLIC ISSUES
COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM CHAIRMAN
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HELLO LADIES AND FRIENDS IN GFWC!

What a glorious time we had at our recent GFWC Convention in Austin, Texas! I hope you enjoyed our time together as much as I did. It was so good to “meet and greet” several of you in person!

Recognizing so many of our GFWC clubs for the work they completed in the area of Public Issues was such an honor for me. Your reports filled me with pride with the wide variety of projects undertaken during the past year. Embracing “Women in the Military,” one of the 7 Grand Initiatives, filled my heart with admiration for all your volunteer efforts. I have no doubt we will meet our 1,000 project goal by next year’s convention in Atlanta. For those of you unable to attend the convention I gave a PUBLIC ISSUES folder to your state president. On the left side of the folder are ideas to use under Citizenship, Emergency and Disaster Preparedness and Safety and Crime Prevention. The right side contains ideas for Military Personnel, several for Women in the Military. I hope these ideas will be helpful as you plan your presentations for the 2019-2020 club year!

For this newsletter, we are going to focus on the Public Issues area of Citizenship! **If your clubs are engaged in activities celebrating the anniversary of the 19th Amendment, August 26, please remember to include the information in the Public Issues, Citizenship area when writing club and state reports.**

Do you need some background on this time in our history? Do you want to become familiar with some of the “leading cast of characters?” What about some project ideas for your enthusiastic club women? Look no further!!! Hopefully the following information is just what you need to get your clubs motivated to join women across America in planning and organizing events for the 2020 Centennial of women winning the right to vote!

“NOW IS THE TIME”

The goal of winning the right to vote involved hundreds of thousands of American Women at the beginning of the 20th century. These suffragists revitalized the women’s rights movement and developed modern strategies that convinced voters, won elections and urged passage of a Constitutional amendment. However, it was not easy. Throughout their movement they faced ridicule, misrepresentation and outright rejection, especially their own families. Powerful men kept them within limits. Only with committed unified action would they change their condition.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and **Lucretia Mott** met while attending the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London. They immediately bonded and pledged to hold a convention and form a society to advocate the rights of women. In 1848, they invited women to a meeting in Seneca Falls, NY. They had no idea how many ladies would attend. As the convention dates drew near, women started arriving from all parts of America, and soon 300 women –and a few men- listened as impassioned women discuss the need for women’s rights and equality. Remember, during this time, women had few rights. They had no voice in the laws. No independent rights after marriage. No custody of children in case of divorce. No right to a college education. No opportunity to enter most professions and no right to vote. In addition, they were to call their husbands...Mr. Henry Stanton (in the case of Elizabeth). During the next years, Stanton often addressed the GFWC annual conventions, and worked tirelessly, canvassing the country on behalf of Women’s Rights. **Julia Ward Howe**, author of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic, was also a founding member of the New England Woman’s Club. In 1869, she was a co-founder of the American Woman’s Suffrage Association with **Lucy Stone**. **Frances E. Willard** was an educator and reformer, who spoke at the biennial convention of GFWC in 1892, representing the Chicago Woman’s Club. GFWC Clubwoman **Susan B. Anthony** was a temperance and abolition organizer. She first worked with **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** in 1850 by taking suffrage petitions door-to-door. She advocated “equal pay for equal work” and encouraged women to form unions. Anthony spoke across the country for 30 years and was active in many state campaigns. She became an internationally respected symbol of the woman’s movement. **Carrie Chapman Catt**, along with **Susan B. Anthony**, reorganized the National American Woman Suffrage Association. **Anthony** lobbied President Woodrow Wilson, opposed militants and then organized a successful campaign for women winning the right to vote and also founding the

League of Women voters. Our list of suffragists would not be complete without **Carrie Chapman Catt** and **Alice Paul**. **Catt** took over as President of the National Woman Suffrage Association. She was a great organizer. New chapters were formed, parades were staged that drew the attention of thousands of women to the cause. **Alice Paul** stepped up pressure directly on Congress for passage of the federal amendment. For over a year **Paul**, coordinated ongoing demonstrations in front of the White House. Women took turns standing quietly. After the United States became involved in World War I, the men decided it was unpatriotic for these women to be outside the White House – they were arrested and thrown in jail. Over 200 women were jailed, among them, **Alice Paul**. The women started a hunger strike. The jailers retaliated by brutally forcing food down their throats. They lived in dark, rat infested cells. Their harsh treatment was reported in the papers, raising the public’s awareness of what women they admired were willing to endure to win the vote. As women across the country continued to campaign, wrote letters and petitions, on August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was finally ratified! It gave 26 million American women the right to vote! Women were jubilant!

The countdown to the 100th Anniversary of that event is here. What can GFWC Clubs do to honor and remember these women? How can your club select a project that will be “just right for your community?” Here are some suggestions:

1. First – form a committee in your local club, district or state to plan events! It is not too soon to get started on that.
2. At the same time educate YOUR club members! They will be more engaged, if they understand the GFWC connection and how important this is to GFWC history.
3. Engage your local and state representatives and ask they begin with a proclamation for Women’s Equality Day, 2020. This is an easy win that can be duplicated each year.
4. Hold a Commemorative Tea. During July, 1840, 5 advocates for women’s rights met for tea in New York. From that meeting, these 5 women started planning the Seneca Fall Convention of 1848.
5. Contact community libraries, your state historical society and museums. Ask what their plans are to celebrate Equality Day. Offer to partner with them as you prepare for the 2020 celebration.
6. Contact a local bookstore and ask if they might be willing to have a “Highlights of the Women’s Suffrage Movement” display for the entire month of August.
7. Recognize and celebrate the progress for women’s rights since obtaining the vote.

8. The Girl Scouts offers several opportunities to earn a badge related to Women's History. For more information for your Girl Scout troop or to collaborate with the scouts on a project visit:<https://www.girlscouts.org>

Centennial projects have already begun in many states. Search for activity you area and contact these groups to get involved. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity! See below for additional resources:

Women's Vote Centennial Initiative, www.2020Centennial.org

National Women's History Alliance, www.nwhp.org

National Votes for Women Trail, www.ncwhs.org

It took 72 years, countless campaigns and hundreds of thousands of people mobilizing for women to win the right to vote. With each defeat came a stronger resolve to move forward. Never relenting and always determined, American women won the right to vote in 1920 and never looked back. The work of winning equality is work worthy of us all!

Celene Post, Chairman
GFWC PUBLIC ISSUES
3624 W. Laredo Street
Chandler, Az. 85226
602-502-1117 (c)

Resources for this newsletter include:

National Women's History Alliance Newsletter "Women Win the Vote", August, 2019

Reaching Out: A Story of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, Mary Jean Houde, Author

Mr. President, HOW LONG MUST WE WAIT? Alice Paul, Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the Right to Vote, Tina Cassidy, Author

ROSES and RADICALS: The Epic Story of How American Women Won the Right to Vote, Susan Zimet, Author

WINNING THE VOTE: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement, Robert P.J. Cooney, Jr., Author