

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH PROJECT IDEAS 2026-2028

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The GFWC Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program is designed to connect clubwomen with their communities through volunteerism, advocacy, and social responsibility. It focuses on four core areas to create a better quality of life locally, regionally, and globally. The four core areas are citizenship, military personnel, safety and crime prevention, and emergency and disaster preparedness.

GFWC Community Connection Issue: GFWC clubs are encouraged to focus on efforts to educate their community members in the life-saving skills of CPR and First Aid.

- Present a Proclamation for "First Aid Awareness Month."
- Distribute information about the benefits of First Aid and CPR training to local businesses, churches, daycares, stores, schools, etc.
- Host CPR and First Aid training classes with your local volunteer fire department and ambulance association.
- Raise funds to offset the costs incurred by the organizations providing CPR and First Aid training
- Assist with the purchase of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) devices for locations in your community where they are not readily available.

CITIZENSHIP

- Promote student education in United States heritage and history. In conjunction with other organizations (such as Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Daughters of the American Revolution or local Rotary chapters) encourage high school/college participation in available scholarship or grants. For younger students a coloring contest or essay contest would be interesting and informative
- Attend a naturalization ceremony and welcome those graduating with a U.S. flag or other memento of the event. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov) has available resources which are used to 'help newcomers assimilate into American civic society'.
- Honor and celebrate patriotic holidays by hosting or volunteering for events commemorating Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Constitution Day, and others. Consider purchasing or printing copies of the United States Constitution for distribution. One organization that provides copies at a bulk rate is Freedom Factor.
- Provide information on correctly folding a United States flag, plus the meaning and symbolism in the flag folding ceremony, to scouts, school groups, and others. The American Legion offers clear and concise instructions.
- Collect books that celebrate women of the suffrage movement or other women and girls of historical or societal importance, including biographies, nonfiction, and historic fiction, and donate them to local schools, libraries, and programs such as the Boys and Girls Club, YWCA, and Girls, Inc.
- Invite a speaker from the League of Women Voters to provide information on voting rights and how to increase participation and educate voters.
- Celebrate patriotism by holding a National Issues Forum, encouraging qualified local women to seek office or by helping a Boy Scout or Girl Scout earn their merit badges in *American Heritage*, *Citizenship in the Nation*, *Behind the Ballot*, or *Celebrating Community*.
- Preserve historic sites, monuments and homes within the community – the refurbishing of signs noting these can be, according to New Jersey regulations, done by residents. Try making a map of these within your community, visit the Historical Marker Database website

(www.hmdb.org) or the New Jersey Historical Commission to learn about those in your area.
Don't forget 2026 will be the 250th Anniversary of the United States!

CRIME PREVENTION, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- Hold an in-house club program on Disaster Preparedness. Contact AARP for the bulletin (www.aarp.org/emergency/preparedness) on the essential items in a toolkit. Prepare a pamphlet (including the club's information) for free distribution to town residents.
- **National Fire Prevention Week** is observed in October (www.nfpa.org/Events/Fire-Prevention-Week). Co-sponsor, with your local fire department, community programs on fire safety. The International Association of Fire Fighters (www.IAFF.org) is a resource that will help.
- Work with the local police department for observing **National Night Out**, which is held the first Tuesday in August. Register, free of charge, at www.natw.org. They will send out the necessary information and resources for the year.
- December is **National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month**. Support the Red Ribbon Campaign – Mothers Against Drunk Drivers [MADD] or the Texting Kills thumb band program – Students Against Destructive Decisions [SADD]. Their websites: www.madd.org or www.SADD.org have additional information. For a speaker on the AARP Driver Safety Program for Mature Drivers, contact AARP at www.aarp.org.
- **The National Safe Kids Campaign** (www.safekids.org) works to help families and communities keep kids safe from injuries. There are a multitude of hints for children of all ages. Events held during Safe Kids Week (May 5 – 12) are listed on their website. Consider having the club become a partner.
- **Research the National Police Dog Association website at www.nationalpolicedogfoundation.org**
Check out "How you Can Help".
- Contact area schools or houses of worship to ask if there are student volunteer service requirements. Have club members initiate ways to fulfill those requirements.
- Support and thank local Police and Fire Departments for keeping the community safe. Consider making gift bags that include snacks, beverages, gift certificates, other small treats or necessities, and a handwritten thank you note. Or, provide a monthly meal and/or dessert to these first responders, with groups of club members working together.
- Host a community educational program on Identity Theft from USA.gov (www.usa.gov/identity-theft), including potential victims, types of theft, warning signs, and prevention.
- Go to the National Council on Aging for information about scams against seniors that target grieving spouses, worried grandparents, and those with medical concerns. Share fact sheets with members and friends, including "The Top Ten Financial Scams Targeting Seniors," and "Eight Tips for How Seniors Can Protect Themselves from Money Scams."
- Hold a bicycle safety workshop for children during National Bicycle Safety Month in May.
- Utilize materials from the National Safety Council and other experts to educate teen drivers about the dangers of distracted driving. Work with first responders and your local high schools to provide motivational presentations on at-risk driving practices, such as texting and failure to use seat belts.
- Provide information to community members on how to make a Disaster Preparedness Toolkit.
- Safety Town is a program designed to teach young children pedestrian and bike safety, crosswalk safety, and more. Work with local recreation departments and first responders to support a Safety Town in your community or begin to create one in your own community.
- Utilize a speaker on Internet safety and Driving Responsibly for a club meeting. The Arc of New Jersey has specialized speakers for internet safety (arcnj.org) and AARP is another source to try. Try www.jerseydrives.com for a list of programs and speakers throughout New Jersey.

THE UNDERSERVED, HUNGRY AND THE HOMELESS

- Food pantries: Support, or continue to support, food pantries by donating cash, food or volunteering to work at the site. Have a year-long collection from club members. When dining out, save the change from the tab – rounding it up to the nearest dollar (i.e.: \$19.72 becomes \$20.00 or 28 cents saved). At the end of the club year, these funds can be donated to a local food pantry or homeless shelter.
- Homeless shelters: Contact a **homeless shelter** and see what donations they may need. Why not hold a knitting/crocheting/sewing party that makes needed items for a shelter, or hold a clothing drive for an agency that distributes to the needy, especially those shelters for homeless women veterans. Mentor a Girl Scout in obtaining her *Simple Meals* badge at the local shelter, or sponsor a meal.
- Securing economic security along with women's empowerment and environmental sustainability is at the center of **Heifer International's mission**. Holding a "Quarters for Quackers" or a "livestock auction" (cupcakes decorated with animals) will raise funds for Heifer International (www.heifer.org). If club members wish to help Heifer within the United States, funds can be earmarked for the USA program in Arkansas and Appalachia.
- Consult your local welfare office, shelters, churches, and other community-assistance organizations to determine community needs and help provide provisions for the needy.
- Organize a winter clothing drive in the fall, collecting, sorting, and cleaning gently used coats, jackets, sweaters, hats, scarves, and gloves. Partner with a school, church, or another local agency to distribute the clothing.
- Collect socks at a club, District, or State meeting and donate this "number one most requested item" to homeless shelters.
- Contact other international nonprofit groups that serve the community as a whole. Some examples are: Habitat for Humanity (www.habitat.org), Plan USA (www.planusa.org), Pedals for Progress (www.p4p.org) and No Kid Hungry (www.nokidhungry.org). Each of these organizations would be pleased to provide a speaker or program for a club or community meeting.

OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VETERANS

- **Canine Companions for Independence** is a GFWC partner. Their Northeast Region, serving New Jersey, is located on SUNY Farmingdale Campus in New York. Help with an existing DogFest event or start one in your area.
- Contact one of the three veteran's nursing homes (Menlo Park, Paramus, Vineland) or the Veteran's Affairs New Jersey Health Care Campuses (East Orange and Lyons) to see if there are any items needed. Can they use book, puzzles, volunteers for bingo or for sing-a-longs? Check with an **assisted living facility** to see if there are any supplies they could they use.
- The **USO** – United Service Organization works in more than 200 locations and keeps active service members connected with their families, provides care packages, holds entertainment events and provides transitioning resources for service members, military families and veterans. The many areas in which they help the military are on their website (www.uso.org), which entails programs and projects for clubs.
- Honor our military by observing Memorial Day, Veterans Day and the National Day of Remembrance.
- Promote the hiring of returning veterans, advocate for and assist other programs that support returning veterans and retired military personnel and their families.
- Another group which trains dogs to assist disabled veterans is **Patriot Paws**. Investigate how you can help them at www.patriotpaws.org
- Donate clothing, nonperishable food items, backpacks, and other items to Stand Downs, VA events that provide necessities, health screenings, and referrals for homeless veterans. Ask

for the wish list and each month provide a few items on that list. It changes per season and by the number of homeless veterans.

- Participate in NJSFWC's Operation Holiday Stocking each Fall.
- Continue to work with Operation Chill Out (www.operationchillout.org)
- Contribute to the Honor Flight Network by donating, volunteering as a "Guardian" to accompany an honoree, and/or being part of a "Welcome Home" congregation. Write cards for the "Mail Call" during the return home.
- Create packets of cards and stamps for veterans in care facilities which they can use to stay in touch with their family and friends. Include holiday, birthday, get well, thinking of you, sympathy and blank cards in each packet

SUPPORT AND AID WOMEN VETERANS

- Connect with women veterans to support health needs, reduce isolation and depression, and provide comfort and encouragement, with the assistance of a Women Veterans Program Manager* at your VA Medical Center.
- Support **The Women In Military Service For America Memorial**. www.womensmemorial.org.
- Supply beverages and snacks for the waiting area of the Veteran Women's Health Clinic, with a small group of members hosting to provide camaraderie and new contacts.
- Collect new and slightly used jewelry and hold a club social for polishing and packaging the jewelry in decorated boxes or bags for distribution at the Veteran Women's Health Clinic.
- Create "Beauty Bags" for women veterans, including face care, body care, feminine products, and nail care products. Provide hand cream, cleansers, brushes, combs, special soaps, shampoo, and bath bombs. Include a special beauty item like a lip gloss or lipstick or cologne.
- Send gift cards from Costco, Walmart or Amazon to FOR THE TROOPS, who will purchase products to be included in care packages shipped to deployed troops. Mail donations to: 2690 Cochran St., Simi Valley, CA 93065

GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

Canine Companions

- Sign Online Petition to Stand Against Service Dog Fraud. When untrained pets posing as service dogs behave badly, people who truly need assistance dogs can face added discrimination and lose access to public places, both violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act. www.cci.org/news-media/latestnews/take-a-stand-against-service.html
- Promote puppy raising. Volunteers are needed to raise puppies from eight weeks to 1.5 years old, attending dog obedience classes, and socializing the puppy in public settings.
- Raise funds to help place a dog with a veteran.

Heifer International

- Support Heifer by sponsoring a Community Animal Health Workers Kit. This kit includes tools such as thermometers, stethoscopes, hoof trimmers, gloves, disinfectants, medicine for animals, and more. It also trains participants in properly caring for gift animals. Visit www.heifer.org/campaign/gfwc.html and navigate to the Health Workers Toolkit.
- Inspire students to become global citizens through Heifer's free educational and fundraising programs catered to any age group. www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do/get-involved/schools/index.html

Review the Civic Engagement and Outreach section of the GFWC Club Manual for additional projects and resources. 2026-2028