

The Federation Family

Learning to understand the different levels of our Federation can be very confusing, both to a new member and also to a member who has been in club work for a while. Often when we have new member functions, we talk all about the GFWC, GFWC-CFWC, District and Club and so on. And we, of course, are certain that everyone goes home and understands everything, right? Well, I don't think that's exactly true. What we are going to do today is explain, hopefully in an easy to understand way, the different ladders of the Federation using the family as a comparison. This is not such a strange comparison, because I think of Federation and all of its members like a family. Just as you depend on your family to help you make decisions or get you through hard times or share the good times with you, the friends you make through Federation can help you through these times also. Many of my closest friends today are those I made through club and my ties with the Federation and I think of them as family.

The definition of *family* in Webster's dictionary is *a group of people sharing a common ancestry*. We are a group of women sharing a common ancestry—that being the General Federation of Women's Clubs. That is where we all have our club roots. The General Federation of Women's Clubs (or GFWC)

was born in 1890—over 100 years ago. We can compare the General Federation in our club family to our Grandmother in our own families, Just as our grandmothers are the link and backbone of a family, the GFWC is the link and backbone of the Federation. Once you become a member of a woman's club, you automatically a member of the Federation. The GFWC is both nationwide and worldwide. Club members just like us are involved in clubs in other states and countries...but there is a bond that links us all together...that bond is that we are all members of this very special family...General Federation of Women's Clubs. The GFWC has a President, a President-elect, a First Vice President, a Second Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer...very similar to our clubs. The GFWC also has Departments and Committee chairman, just like a club. The only difference is that the GFWC, since it is an international organization, has women serving in these positions from all over the country. Just as we rely and depend on Grandma for wisdom and information, we depend on GFWC for information and guidance also. Everyone knows that grandmothers can be a wonderful source of knowledge and a wealth of information. Well, so can the General Federation. A lot of information is available on the history and background of the GFWC, as well as information about the many

Collaboration and Partnership Programs. All you have to do is go ON-LINE to www.gfwc.org for a listing of available materials...some for free downloads, or you can purchase informative booklets from the GFWC MarketPlace. So remember, just as Grandma is there to offer support, so is GFWC.

The next member of our family is our Mother. Our Mother can be compared to the GFWC-California Federation of Women's Clubs (or GFWC-GFWC). And since GFWC-CFWC is a bit of a tongue twister for me, I may also refer to our state organization as CFWC- even though GFWC is now included in our legal name. The GFWC gave birth to the CFWC in 1900. On January 18, 1900, 400 local women's clubs from all over California united to form the California Federation of Women's Clubs. The CFWC's first mission was to develop the state educational system and preserve national forests in California. Later, the clubs advocated such issues as bonds for good roads, programs for the disabled, and the first motion picture rating system. Well, we all know that moms can be very influential in our lives—we learn many, many things from our mothers. They teach us wonderful qualities: sharing, caring and giving of ourselves, unselfishness and independence, just to name a few. The CFWC gives us the same qualities. The CFWC family that I know shares its knowledge, cares about people and worthy

causes; gives of itself when needed and is definitely unselfish with its resources and its time. Just as our mother is directly related to our grandmother, the CFWC is directly related to the GFWC. The California Federation is a member of the General Federation, abiding by the rules and bylaws of the GFWC. Just as clubs from all over the world make up the GFWC, 281 clubs from around California make up the CFWC. And just like our grandmothers hand down advice, recipes and traditions to our mothers, GFWC hands down advice, projects and recipes for success to the CFWC, who in turn hands it down to us. We all depend on the wiser and more experienced members of our family. Our clubs depend on the GFWC and the CFWC. And just as GFWC has officers and chairmen from all over the country, the CFWC has officers and chairmen from all over the state. And as a side note—our state is divided into four AREAS...A, B, C & D.

The next member of our family is the daughter. We now have three “generations”—grandmothers, mothers and daughters. The daughter can be compared to the District. California has 21 Districts and 12,937 members. This District is Palomar (and we are in AREA D). We have 13 clubs and 519 members. Just as daughters report and listen to their mothers, our District reports and complies with directives from CFWC. Daughters learn a great deal

from their mothers, and similarly, Palomar District learns a great deal from the California Federation. It's the daughters' responsibility to take all of this information, wisdom and advice from their mother and teach it to their children. And, just so, it is the District's responsibility to take all of the information they learn and pass it on to the individual clubs.

That is where the child comes into the family. The child can be compared to the individual clubs. The child is very important to the family. They keep the family going; they are the leaders of the future. If we didn't have children to keep the family going, it would die out. If there were no club members and no new members, our Federation would die out too. You, the members are vital to the Federation Family. Just as a child is linked to the grandmother through the daughter and mother, the club member and the club are linked to the GFWC, through the District and the CFWC. If you don't understand something in your family, don't you usually consult one of your family members? Well, you can ask any of the members of the Federation Family questions about things you don't understand too. If your club doesn't have the answer, go to the District, or State or to the GFWC. Remember, the only dumb question is the one you don't ask. Questions are how we learn.

Just as I have explained the structure of the GFWC, the CFWC and the District, your club will

operate in the same manner...only on a smaller scale...thus we have our Federation Family. The Federation Family is supportive, caring, informative and has your best interests at heart...just like your own family. When you go to a family reunion, that's when you see all of these family members and learn many things about your family you may have not known before. When you go to an International (GFWC), State (CFWC), AREA D or Palomar District meeting, conference or convention, it is like going to a family reunion. You get to meet and greet members from all over the District, State and even the entire world. It is a great opportunity to share information and gather ideas.

As I said before, each club member is very important to the Federation. In your own families, you grow and expand your interests—and likewise, you will do this with your Federation Family. Each District, State and GFWC leader is a member of a club—just like YOU. And each of these leaders was at one time a brand new club member. So, you can indeed learn and grow and take on new challenges as a member of the Federation Family.

Thank you for having me and I look forward to seeing you at our next District event on November 16th at the San Luis Rey Downs Country Club. It's a Fashion Show and we will be celebrating Women's

History and our right to vote. And don't forget, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me. If I don't have the answer, I will find out for you.