A Brief History of The CWF

Sewing Bees

By Marolyn Robertson, CWF President

Georgia Smith - a long time member of Central and the Christian Women’s Fellowship - dreamed of a way to keep children in school cloths. She knew from her own experience the need for school clothes and it was her dream and her long ago need that she came to the conclusion that she could make a difference in children’s lives. She belonged to a women’s organization, so she had the womanpower and interest to get started.

In 1969 soon after I had been elected CWF President, she presented her idea to me. She asked would we fund it - would it be okay to ask the circles to contribute material - buttons, patterns, thread, zippers, sewing machines, irons and ironing boards. I told her our budget had already been accepted and we had no funds at that time - but we could be the answer to her other needs. She said “fine I can get the start-up money.” Women’s World on KTBC gave her a few minutes to ask for Austin’s help with her dream of a Sewing Room. Responses poured in. That was the last time Georgia had to ask for help. I’m happy to say her beloved project was included in our CWF budget the next year and for years after.

Georgia was an organizer; before the sewing could begin we had “cut-out days at Georgia’s home. We took a sack lunch and cut and visited for 3 or 4 hours once a month. That was our beginning. Sewing Bee days were once a month on the Tuesday following our CWF General meeting - which meant many of our ladies donated 4 days a month to Sewing Bee and CWF meetings. We had hand and sewing machine sewers, Kathleen Hall kept the buttons and zippers and threads separated by color and size. Dee Anderson and Opal Cullom not only helped sewers with cranky sewing machines but also managed to sew and keep pattern pieces in the proper folders. It was a happy day when Viola White, Thomas’s mother brought her famous Red Plum Jelly Cake to go with our sack lunches. Dresses, shirts and skirts were given out to visiting teachers from Austin Public schools. All were pressed and sized to fit their new owners. We even had a style show. It was just before Easter and Georgia thought we should make Nell Sholtz’s little first graders a new outfit for Easter. Nell brought the children for lunch and those adorable kids modeled them for us. The little girls felt like little princesses’ and those adorable front toothless little boys said “Thank you for our shirts.” Those happy children made our day brighter than we ever imagined. When Georgia and those dedicated Sewing Bees had sown for 10 years The Christian Women’s Fellowship gave them an afternoon reception inviting friends, relatives, clients and visiting teachers to celebrate with us.

When Georgia’s back became too painful for her to continue as chairman of the Sewing Bees Oleta Mading carried on for an additional ten years. We had added blue jeans, boy’s underwear and socks to our clothing list. Mary Lee Phillipi became our Levi Strauss. Some 25 years passed. Time took its toll on our sewers - some died, some moved away and some moved to rest homes. The distribution of clothing continued with Georgia Turner, Kathleen Hall and later Kathy Rodriguez handing out the garments left from our clothing closet. Schools put clothing needs in their budget and our work was done. Many dedicated women were involved thru the years. There are six of us who remember those days. They are Bonnie Bounds, Floss Cox, Inez Gains, Martha Towne, Marolyn Robertson and Kathy Cooke.