

GFWC TEXAS CLUBWOMAN



Newsletter

The Newsletter of GFWC Texas
Proud Member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs

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WINTER 2025

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2024 - 2026

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Novella Byrd

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*From the GFWC Texas
President*



Dear GFWC Texas Members,

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe we are already six months into the GFWC Texas 2024–2026 administration. Time is flying by, and your unwavering dedication to our shared mission continues to inspire me every day. Together, we have accomplished so much, and I am confident that even greater achievements lie ahead.

As we step into 2025, we have exciting opportunities to amplify our voice and strengthen our advocacy efforts. One of our most significant events this year will be our visit to the Texas Capitol on May 13, where we will unite to raise awareness about the critical issue of human trafficking for sexual purposes. Your participation will not only showcase the strength of our federation but also demonstrate our commitment to being catalysts for change. Let's make our presence known and our voices heard.

For those of you who have scheduled programs or projects related to human trafficking for sexual purposes in January—Human Trafficking Awareness Month—I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude. Your efforts bring much-needed attention to this issue, and your work is a vital part of our mission to create a safer and more just world.

As you prepare to report on the programs and projects that your club has performed in your communities, please know that I deeply appreciate your efforts. Reporting is essential, as it allows all levels of GFWC to see and celebrate the incredible work you have done. Your reports provide a clear picture of the collective impact we make and inspire others to join our cause.

This year, I encourage each of you to stay connected and engaged. Attend meetings, participate in service projects, and invite others to join our efforts. Together, we can grow our membership, broaden our reach, and deepen our impact.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to our shared goals. I am honored to serve as your president and look forward to all that we will achieve together in 2025.

Warm regards,

Barbara Harvey

GFWC Texas President 2024-2026





**GFWC Texas 128th
Spring Convention
April 30th - May 3rd, 2025
in
Corpus Christi, Texas.**

**The GFWC Texas Spring Convention is coming soon,
and we look forward to seeing our Federation sisters.**

**Please join us at the beautiful Omni Hotel in downtown Corpus Christi
overlooking the Corpus Christi Marina.**

Look for more information to come about the booking information and the call.



GFWC
ANNUAL CONVENTION
Atlanta
2025

SPINNING VISION INTO REALITY

June 6-9, 2025



From the President



Spinning Vision into Reality: Join Us for the 2025 GFWC Annual Convention

We are thrilled to invite you to an unforgettable experience at the 2025 GFWC Annual Convention, taking place June 6-9, 2025, in Atlanta, Georgia. This convention will be hosted at the luxurious Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park, offering a dynamic venue to inspire, connect, and energize members. The tours offered are phenomenal. GFWC will be *"Spinning Vision into Reality."*

The convention will feature a robust agenda designed to celebrate our mutual dedication to volunteerism and personal development. The achievements of various states and clubs will be recognized while also charting the future of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Attendees will engage in essential business sessions that focus on our key priorities and establish the foundation for future success.

The convention will showcase renowned speakers and experts from various fields. These thought leaders will provide valuable insights into critical topics such as health, literacy, significant advancements women have achieved throughout history, and the ongoing fight against domestic and sexual violence. Their expertise will deepen our understanding of these critical issues and inspire us to take action.

Workshops will provide tailored opportunities to educate members, equipping them with tools and strategies to amplify volunteer efforts and create meaningful change in communities everywhere. These sessions will engage participants with fresh ideas and strategies and empower them with new skills and insights to serve their communities more effectively.

Equally important, the convention will offer ample time to network with fellow members from around the world. This is your chance to reconnect with cherished friends, establish new relationships, and celebrate the unique diversity of our federation. Together, we will share stories, successes, and aspirations, strengthening the bonds that unite us.

As we gather in Atlanta, we will honor 135 years of empowering women and transforming lives. This milestone highlights the significant legacy we uphold and motivates us to create a future where GFWC is recognized for its global impact.

By the end of the convention, you will leave with a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for our mission. Our time together will strengthen the shape of unity and launch the General Federation of Women's Clubs for its next chapter, equipped and ready for the journey.

We eagerly await your arrival in Atlanta, where GFWC members will be Spinning Vision into Reality! Be ready for an inspiring experience!

Suellen B. Brazil
GFWC International President

Dr. Susan Gettys
GFWC Secretary

2024-2026 GFWC Executive Committee

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CHERI MEYER





GFWC Headquarters Christmas Open House - And, GFWC Texas Was There!

WASHINGTON, D.C. — GFWC Holiday Open HouseThe GFWC Texas delegation had a truly wonderful experience at the GFWC International Headquarters Holiday Open House! It's heartwarming to see so many representatives from across Texas come together for such a festive and meaningful event in Washington, DC. The dedication of the attendees, from the early arrival of Carol Habgood for the GFWC Executive Committee Meeting to the December 3rd flights of the remaining group, highlights their strong commitment to representing GFWC Texas on a national level. The delegation's mix of leadership—from President Barbara Harvey and First Vice President Kathy Horak Smith, PhD, to esteemed district and club representatives like Nancy Snead, Monica Benoit-Beatty, and Julie Lundy-Booker—showcases the strength and diversity of GFWC Texas. It's wonderful that GFWC Texas Member Karen Vaughn, as the photographer, was present to document and preserve these cherished moments for the group. Julie's daughter-in-law accompanied the group. She was delightful and would make a wonderful GFWC Texas member.

As the delegation entered the building, they were greeted by a stunning wreath displaying ornaments sent from all the states, hanging proudly over the door. The Texas ornament was quickly located, filling the group with pride and joy. As they proceeded to the next level, the delegation was warmly welcomed by GFWC International President Suellen Brazil and Shannon Bailey, GFWC Director of Junior Clubs. This heartfelt greeting made the visit even more special. The group had the chance to reconnect with old friends while admiring the two beautiful Christmas trees that adorned the space, adding a touch of holiday magic to the occasion. The next stop in the festivities was a choice of regular or "naughty" punch before entering the dining room, which offered a wonderful selection of delicious food. The variety was sure to please every palate, creating a festive and delightful atmosphere for all. The group continued their tour throughout the headquarters, with a member of the GFWC Executive Committee on hand to explain the function of each room and point out notable items. One particularly special moment was when the group located and admired the picture of Anna Pennybacker, the only GFWC Texas International President. Her legacy stood out as an important and inspiring part of the GFWC history. After about two hours, the tour of the headquarters concluded, leaving the group with wonderful memories of the event.

The next item on the agenda was to return to the hotel to change into warm clothes for the Washington, DC tour, organized by

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Kathy Horak Smith, who had previously lived in the district. This tour promised to be a **special way to explore the city and** add even more excitement to the trip. Dressed warmly, Ubers were summoned to proceed to the first stop, the beautiful Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The group arrived just in time for a tour of the stunning Basilica. However, towards the end of the tour, while admiring the breathtaking ceilings, an accident occurred when Nancy Snead fell. EMTs were called, and she was promptly transported to the hospital. Monica Beniot-Beatty accompanied her to the hospital and remained with her throughout the ordeal. Nancy was diagnosed with a broken humerus and a fever, and, to make matters worse, she was also found to have COVID-19. Then Nancy and Monica spent 23 hours at the hospital before they could return to the hotel. A huge thank you to Monica for her dedication in staying with Nancy and ensuring she safely returned to Texas to be with her **family**.

The remainder of the group continued their tour, which was highlighted by a visit to Café Berlin, owned and operated by a former student and her husband of Kathy's at Tarleton University. The German food served there was delicious and offered a warm respite from the chilly weather. The next activity was a golf cart nighttime tour of the monuments. Knowing it would be cold, Kathy thoughtfully sent individual thermoses to the restaurant, filled with hot chocolate or hot tea for everyone to enjoy during the tour. Julie Lundy-Booker also added a special touch to the tour by making cookies to share with everyone. These homemade treats were the perfect snack for the group as they enjoyed their time together in the city. Despite the cold, the city was beautifully lit and offered a magical view of the monuments at night. The group returned to the hotel around 10:30 p.m., tired but filled with gratitude for the wonderful day—though the accident with Nancy was a sobering reminder of how quickly things can change.

The following morning, Kathy had an early 5:00 a.m. flight as she had to return to Tarleton University to administer a final exam. Julie and her daughter-in-law stayed a few extra days to visit with family. Nancy and Monica remained in Washington, DC, until Friday to ensure that Nancy was well enough for her journey back. Carol remained in the city to complete the GFWC meetings. Barbara and Karen flew out later in the day, concluding a memorable trip for all. The holiday season made the visit to both the headquarters and the city even more magical. The festive atmosphere truly enhanced the beauty and warmth of the experience, leaving the group with lasting memories of a special time spent together.



GFWC Texas attendees in front of Hotel Tabard.



GFWC Texas attendees in front entrance to GFWC Headquarters.



Refreshments being served at GFWC Headquarters Christmas Open House 2025.



Delegation from Texas stand in front of beautiful doorway inside GFWC Headquarters building.



**GFWC Texas
President-elect
*Novella Byrd***

Message from the State Leadership Chairman

Leadership Can Happen

In the winter edition of the Leadership Newsletter from GFWC Leadership Chairman Ann Landis and Committee Members she mentions that “leadership is more than titles or positions – it’s empowering others and creating change.” In today’s world, the call for diverse leadership is louder than ever, and women play a pivotal role in answering that call—not just by stepping into leadership roles themselves but by uplifting one another. Empowering women to lead is more than a gesture; it’s a movement that fosters inclusion, innovation, and societal progress. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs is an organization that encourages and empowers its members to seek and thrive in leadership roles.

One of the most impactful ways women can empower each other is through mentorship. Sharing knowledge, offering guidance, and being a sounding board for ideas builds confidence and competence in aspiring leaders. When women mentor women, they create a cycle of empowerment that strengthens the entire community. Do not hesitate to ask the more seasoned members of your organization for their advice and guidance.

Networking is another powerful tool. By creating spaces where women can connect, share resources, and collaborate, they can amplify each other’s voices and tackle systemic challenges together. These networks provide not only opportunities but also support systems that sustain women through the unique challenges of leadership. Social media is a powerful networking tool, GFWC, GFWC Texas, many districts and clubs have Facebook pages. GFWC Advancements and Programs Forum sponsor a private group page. The moderators share various tips, strategies, and real-world tools for you to use to strengthen and grow your local clubs. In the forum members have access to monthly live mini workshops, live video streams, interviews, as well as live Q & A’s and daily posts designed to help support, inspire, and empower clubwomen. It is a private group, individuals must request admission. Representation also matters. When women see others like them in leadership positions, it dismantles the myth that such roles are out of reach. Women who lead by example inspire others to aim higher, challenge norms, and break barriers. Federation clubwomen have exemplary leaders and role models at every level.

Empowering women to lead is not just about individual success—it’s about creating a ripple effect that benefits everyone. A culture of support and collaboration among women has the potential to transform industries, communities, and societies for the better. Together, women can redefine leadership and pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future.

“When you help a woman fulfil her potential, magic happens.” – Sara Blakely



Message from the Dean of Reporting:

Why report?

GFWC Texas
First Vice President
Dr. Kathy Horak Smith

During the months of October, November, and December, I held Zoom meetings to assist people with reporting. They were great sessions with many questions being answered by those experienced in reporting. The link to the recorded sessions is https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16V2Zlg7CCjHpv5DRk1AWfourfPpC6Sqo?usp=drive_link. October 7 and 21 and November 4 (not recorded) were for club reporting. November 18 was for district reporting, and December 2 and 16 were for State reporting. We had lots of fun. If you attended or watched the recordings, do not forget to report the sessions you attended under leadership.

I know, I still haven't answered the question, why report? When I first got involved 25 years ago, I thought it was just for the awards. My mentors in the club were always so excited about winning awards. We still are, but reporting is so much more.

I didn't understand that that GFWC had resolutions that guides our mission (see <https://www.gfwc.org/priorities/> for an overview). "Since its inception in 1890, the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) has been a beacon of community-driven activism, uniting its members to address national and global concerns. " When 60,000 members in affiliated clubs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and more than a dozen countries report, GFWC can use those numbers to advocate. To learn more, check out this webpage <https://www.gfwc.org/legislative-impact/>. You do not need to login to read either of these articles.

The same works at the state level as well. When reports are sent to the state level, the executive committee can see what is important to our members. We can then focus our efforts in those areas. If you read the history of GFWC Texas (let me know if interested, I have copies I can loan you), you would learn about the impact our state organization had at the legislative level. Members visited the state capitol, served on state governmental committees, and started programs at the grassroots that impacted our state and country. We can continue to do the same with your help, so report!

Club reports due to the district level – February 1, 2025

District reports due to the state level – February 21, 2025

International reporting areas from state chairs due to the international level – March 15, 2025.

I want to end with a quote by Henry Ford. He reportedly said, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success." Let's show GFWC and the world how GFWC Texas clubs can work together to make a successful difference in our communities and our state.



**GFWC Texas
LEADS
Lou Hitt**

GFWC Texas LEADS “12” getting to the “Finish Line.”

Twelve ladies from across Texas were selected to participate in the very first GFWC Texas LEADS (Leadership and Development Seminar). This group of ladies have been adding to their leadership knowledge this fall.

Their first meeting was held in Austin in conjunction with GFWC Texas Fall Board and focused on the different types of leadership styles. The second session was held via Zoom on November 14. The main focus was body language, how to read other’s unspoken messages and ways to avoid giving false impressions to others through our own body language.

The third session was January 16 and was also held via Zoom. The theme was How to Run a Successful Meeting and topics included officer duties and responsibilities, ways to build an agenda and script, parliamentary procedure and myths that are sometimes misinterpreted about procedures. The importance of delegating tasks to members, how to respond to questions, conflict resolution, and ways to increase member participation while energizing your club rounded out the third session.

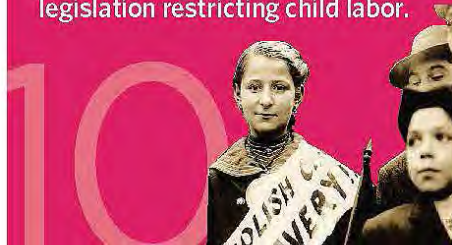
GFWC Texas LEADS will meet one more time via Zoom before graduating in April at the GFWC Texas Spring Convention.

1900

The Indiana Federation of Clubs was the only state organization that made an obvious **ALLOWANCE FOR MALE MEMBERS** by omitting “Women’s” from their name.

1901

Chicago clubwoman and social reformer Jane Addams headed **GFWC’S CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE** to advocate for legislation restricting child labor.



The 56th Congress of the United States of America granted the General Federation of Women’s Clubs a **FEDERAL CHARTER**.



Wreaths Across America

Several of GFWC Texas clubs participate in Wreaths Across America each year. If you are unfamiliar with this project and organization, here is a summary of what it is, and, more importantly, what it is about. Consider joining the many Americans that honor our veterans each December at the exact same time, with a wreath that symbolizes who they were and who we are that remember them.

Wreaths Across America started with a wreath maker in Maine donating 5000 wreaths to Arlington Cemetery in 1992. In 2005 this photo was taken and went viral. In 2007 Wreaths Across America was born as a non-profit organization. The mission of Wreaths Across America.

1. Remember the fallen
2. Honor those who serve.
3. Teach the next generation the value of freedom.



2005 'Wreaths in the Snow' iconic photo in Arlington Cemetery

Three balsam fir plantations are used to harvest the tips of the balsam trees for the wreaths. Each wreath has ten tips representing the ten special qualities that a veteran embodies.

1. Their Belief in a greater good.
2. Their love for each other.
3. Their strength, work ethic and character.
4. Their honesty and integrity.
5. Their humility, selflessness, and modesty.
6. Their ambitions and aspirations.
7. Their optimism for America.
8. Their concern for the future.
9. Their Pride in their duties.
10. Their hopes and dreams that didn't always come true, but left them with no regrets.

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The wreaths themselves are created with four symbols.

1. Balsam evergreen for longevity and endurance.
2. Forest sent for purity and simplicity.
3. Red boy for the great sacrifice.
4. Circular shape for eternity.

Karen Worcester, the Executive Director, ask all volunteers to try and say the name of the fallen when placing the wreath. See the following to appreciate clubs that sent in information and pictures of their participation last December.

The Woodville Women's Study Club, Magnolia District

The Woodville Women's Study Club, worked with Wreaths Across America to honor this country's veterans. Placed in memory of our country's veterans, over 3 million wreaths were placed by Wreaths Across America.

In their community the Women's Club placed 144 wreaths (or a family member placed wreaths) in Magnolia, Mt. Zion, Mt. Hope, Campground Baptist, Havis, Pine Grove, Pedigo, Seamans, Mt. Pisgah Allison, Kirbyville, Bean, Blue Water cemeteries and the Veteran's Memorial. Fourteen cemeteries or memorials in total had wreaths placed in/on them.



Carol and Jan sort out the wreaths when delivered at Pine Grove Baptist Church.



A special time to honor the veterans in this member's family.



Krista, Jan, Larry and Billy making sure everything is loaded and secure.



Dixie and Carol putting the finishing touches on the wreaths.

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The Amity Club, Pioneer District

For the seventh year, The Amity Club has taken great pride in participating in Wreaths Across America. Growing in participation from the community at large, the project has also encompassed the needs of other veteran related activities. This last fall, the club was approached by a member's brother to place flags on graves of veteran's at Elmwood Cemery for Veteran's Day. He offered to buy the flags if the club would place them at the graves of all veterans there. Elmwood Cemetery in Bowie had 678 veteran graves accounted for.

The idea of using PVC pipe to mark veteran's graves and provide a holder for the flags came about. Angela Short contacted the local Ace Hardware and worked to get a significant discount on PVC pipe to be cut into 8" lengths that became holders for the flags. The Bowie High School Shop Department was contacted and had them cut within an afternoon. Those holders were installed by club members, and friends, and left with a flag at the veterans' footstones making finding the graves of veterans easier to spot for the next event, Wreaths Across America. Finding veterans' graves can be quite time consuming if they do not have a military marker or indication on the headstone/footstone.

On December 14th, wreaths were placed at the flag pole in Elmwood Cemtery representing each branch of military service, followed by a short speech by a veteran, and ending with Tapps being played by a high school band student. 752 wreaths were placed in Montague County that day. The goal to is to increase the number placed every year and its' popularity is making that happen.



Above (Left) The Colors were raised and The Pledge of Allegiance was quoted in unison. Above (Right) Guest speaker.



Each branch of the service was recognized and a wreath placed in its' honor. Tapps was played at the end of the ceremony.



Club members, family and friends begin laying wreaths after the Opening Ceremony.



The laying of wreaths was accomplished within two hours - all 678 - in Elmwood Cemetery. Those left were purchased for other cemeteries.

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Gunter Ladies for Tomorrow, Trinity District

“To honor, remember, and teach” is more than a motto—it’s a calling. This year, Gunter Ladies for Tomorrow embraced this mission by joining the national Wreaths Across America initiative. On December 14th, the club held its first annual ceremony at the Gunter Community Cemetery, uniting with more than 4,400 participating locations across the country in paying tribute to America’s heroes.

The Lord blessed the event with a warm, calm day—a perfect backdrop for a momentous occasion that will resonate deeply within our community for years to come. Club members, supported by their husbands, prepared the site with care, organizing wreaths at the end of each row and fluffing the red bows that adorned the fresh fir wreaths. The ceremony honored 76 veterans laid to rest in the cemetery, including one Civil War veteran, eight World War I veterans, thirty four World War II veterans, eight Korean War veterans, 12 Vietnam War veterans, and others who served in multiple conflicts across various branches of the armed forces.

Preparation for the ceremony was a labor of love. Club members’ husbands were instrumental in unloading and unpacking wreaths, then assisting in arranging them at the end of each row. Careful attention was given to the red Christmas bows adorning the live fir wreaths, which were fluffed and prepared to honor the fallen with dignity and respect.

As attendees arrived, the spirit of community and patriotism was immediately evident. The Grayson County Girl Scouts offered coffee and pastries, welcoming visitors with warmth, while the local Boy Scouts lined the cemetery entrance with large American flags, setting a tone of solemn importance.

The ceremony itself was both moving and memorable. Command Sergeant Major Justin Parker, husband of the club’s president-elect, led the Color Guard in the posting of the colors. Audrey McGaughy, a talented local student, sang a heartfelt rendition of the National Anthem, a moment that brought hands to hearts and tears to many eyes. Gunter Police Chief and Marine Corps veteran Sergeant Danny Jones delivered a stirring address. His words resonated deeply with the large crowd, as he reminded everyone of the profound sacrifices made by those who served to protect our freedoms.

A particularly poignant moment came when eight local veterans, representing the branches of service, laid ceremonial wreaths. Standing at attention, each veteran saluted in honor of their branch and those who served alongside them. The scene captured the gratitude and respect of the community, united in remembrance of the sacrifices made by these brave men and women.

As the ceremony concluded, attendees were encouraged to take a small plastic toy soldier as a daily reminder to pray for the safety of active-duty military personnel. Then, families, veterans, and community members dispersed throughout the cemetery to lay wreaths on the graves of the fallen. With each wreath placed, a name was spoken aloud and a prayer of thanks offered—a simple yet profound gesture ensuring that no veteran would be forgotten.

This ceremony served not only as a tribute to the past but also as a powerful lesson for the present and future. It reminded all in attendance that the freedoms we enjoy today are a direct result of the sacrifices made by the courageous men and women who have served our country. Because of these brave men and women, we have the privilege of living in a land of freedom and opportunity. May

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we never forget their service and always strive to honor their legacy.

Through the efforts of Gunter Ladies for Tomorrow, Wreaths Across America has become more than an event – it is a heartfelt tribute that unites our community in gratitude, respect, and remembrance. As we honor the past, we teach future generations the value of service, ensuring that the legacy of our veterans lives on.



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“To honor, remember, and teach” is more than a motto – it’s a calling. This year, Gunter Ladies for Tomorrow embraced this mission by joining the national Wreaths Across America initiative.



Grayson County Girl Scouts offered coffee and pastries, welcoming visitors with warmth.



Boy Scouts lined the cemetery entrance with large American flags, setting a tone of solemn importance.

Fortnightly Club, Lone Star Administrative District

On December 11th, along with help from the City of Merkel and Taylor County, we unloaded 90 boxes of wreaths from Wreaths Across America. Then on Saturday, December 14th, we placed wreaths on the graves of EVERY veteran at Rose Hill Cemetery in Merkel, all 824 of them. This is the third year we have been able to place a wreath on the grave of every veteran in our cemetery. Dyess AFB did a flyover and went into the missing man formation during our ceremony.



GFWC Texas President's Special Project Advocating Against Human Trafficking GFWC Texas Takes Action

Beth Henby / Maridell Fryer

Americans hold dear the fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Yet, these rights are gravely endangered by human trafficking, a crime that affects nearly 25 million people globally each year. Defined by sexual exploitation or forced labor, human trafficking is often regarded as modern slavery. It is a shared duty to end this atrocity by identifying warning signs, responding with urgency, and championing efforts to rescue and support victims.

The GFWC Texas President's Special Project is a bold and impactful initiative to combat Human Trafficking for Sexual Purposes. President Harvey is thrilled that this critical issue aligns with the priorities of Governor Abbott, who has issued a proclamation declaring January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month. This collaboration highlights the urgency and importance of our collective fight against this heinous crime.

In support of this mission, GFWC Texas members are stepping up to make a real difference. On **May 13th**, members from across our great state will unite in Austin to advocate for an end to human trafficking. With one shared purpose, members will meet with representatives to champion laws that protect victims, prosecute offenders, and secure funding for rehabilitation programs.

Members will arrive on Friday, May 12th, and stay at the DoubleTree by Hilton Austin Northwest Arboretum, located at 8901 Business Park Drive, Austin, Texas. The hotel provides a comfortable and convenient base for members to prepare for the important mission. On **May 13th**, members will board a bus to the Texas State Capitol. Dressed in distinctive blue shirts, will make a bold and unified statement. Order forms for these shirts will be sent separately via Constant Contact and delivered at the April convention.

GFWC Texas has secured a meeting room at the Capitol where members will gather to prepare for the day's activities. At 9:00 a.m., members will commemorate this momentous occasion with a group photo, a powerful visual of solidarity and commitment. At 10:00 a.m. members will take their seats in the House Gallery and at 11:00 a.m. members will proceed to the Senate Gallery. In both chambers, the GFWC Texas presence will underscore the importance of enacting stronger laws to fight human trafficking. Member's voices will carry the message of hope and justice.

The most impactful part of the day comes as each member meets directly with their representatives. This is a chance to make personal connections, share stories, and advocate for meaningful change. Together, GFWC Texas will push for laws that protect and support victims, hold traffickers accountable and ensure funding for rehabilitation services.

As the day concludes, every member can leave with the confidence that their collective efforts have made a difference. By raising awareness, advocating for change, and standing united, we are shaping a safer, more just world for future generations.

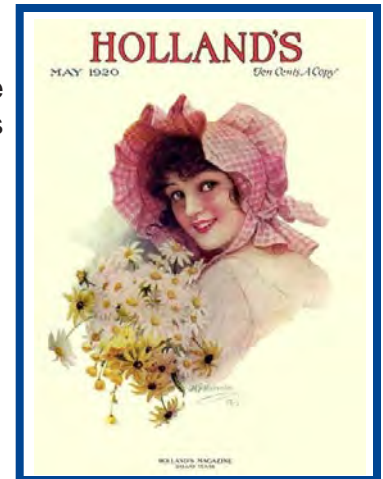
Together, GFWC Texas members are not just participating—they are leading the charge against human trafficking. **Let's make history on May 13th. Let's make a difference.**

The Influence of One - Ethel Osborn Hill

We have heard the adage, “the importance of **one**” and, with GFWC Texas wanting to make a difference in the shape of our society’s footprint in history this coming **May 13th**, let’s take time to remember **one** who made a difference in the world around her, **one** step at a time. Let’s remember Ethel Osborn Hill and her work toward preserving The Big Thicket. Thanks to Karen Vaughn for providing this information and pictures.

Ethel Osborn Patterson was born on November 3, 1878, in Ames, Iowa. The family relocated for warmer winters to Fort Worth, Texas, in March of 1888. Ethel was 9 years old. They arrived by train right after a blue northerner blew in. The storm lasted from March 11-14, 1888, and was called the Great White Hurricane. It was one of the most severe blizzards in American history.

Patterson married W.H. Hill, a building contractor, in 1898. She was 20 at the time. They had four children (2 sons and 2 daughters). She started writing as a young homemaker and wrote about human interest features and articles on agriculture. The articles were published in the Fort Worth and Dallas newspapers. In 1920, she became the associate editor of the *Holland’s Magazine* published in Dallas.



By 1921, and after 23 years of marriage, her husband was gone. She was alone in Fort Worth. She had to support herself and her youngest child. In 1922, the 44 year old moved to Port Arthur, Texas, to be near her oldest son. She was a freelance writer for many years. She wanted “to see well to the ways of her household” personally. With her writing she contributed regularly to leading newspaper sections and many magazines until her children were all grown.

Mrs. Hill never gave up on writing. She was always interested in historic trees and the environment. She was instrumental in leading the movement to save “The Treaty Oak” in Austin, Texas. She spearheaded the movement for school children to give a penny toward buying the land and establishing a park to preserve the tree.

In 1927, Hill wrote “The Treaty Oak” that was published in *Holland’s Magazine* in October of that year. The tree was the last of the Council Oaks of the local native Americans. It was estimated to be 500 to 600 years old with a branch span of over 128 feet.

The family that owned the tree, in 1926, needed to sell the land. Patriotic groups tried to induce the state legislature to buy the land for a park but failed. In 1937, the Austin City Council purchased the land and tree and placed a plaque and fence around the tree. It was purchased to stand as a living and fitting symbol of the mighty state it watched develop.



“The Caldwell Treaty Oak Park”

Estimated to have been a majestic tree of about 100 years when Columbus first landed on North American shores, this live oak tree has been pronounced the most perfect specimen of a tree in North America, and its picture hangs in the Hall of Fame of Forestry in Washington. Formerly standing as the center of a group of trees called “The Council Oaks,” this tree takes its name from its role in the history of the Lone Star State. Stephen F. Austin is reputed to have signed the first

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boundary line agreement between Indians and whites under the canopy of its branches; battles and important conferences have been planned, pacts signed, and feasts and religious ceremonies celebrated in its shade.

Always interested in plants, the environment, and her community, Hill became active in the area's programs during the early 1930's by involvement in the Writer's Club, the Bluebonnet Club, and the Garden Club. She became associate editor of a Houston magazine with an "Editorial of the Month" column. She also joined the GFWC in Port Arthur in 1930-1931 and became involved with many phases of the club's activities. She later became the President of the Jefferson County Federation of Women's Clubs.

It was a busy and productive time. She purchased 25 acres about 6 miles, southeast of Woodville, Texas in 1930. She paid \$19.00 an acre (about \$456.00) for the land. She would spend the rest of her life between Port Arthur and Woodville. And, true to her keen interest, became a member of the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs and served as President of the Woodville Garden Club.

Hill built on her acreage and called it "Dogwood Den." It was a two room log cabin with a brick patio and front porch. She used kerosene lamps for light and a fireplace for heat. There was an outhouse outback, a hand pump for water, and a woodburning stove for cooking. Another building was added for a garage but was later turned into a bunkhouse for visitors. Visitors were always welcome to a cup of her sassafras tea from her wood-burning stove.

The land had a spring that ran into the lake in front of the cabin. Part of her cabin was her writing studio where she used a manual typewriter to create her stories, articles and poems. She was a natural composer of poetry. For many years her syndicated column, 'American Still Is' was carried in eighty East Texas newspapers. On this old typewriter she poured out her heart and her woes to the world. She wrote what her heart believed.



In 1933, she "was the first woman in the world appointed as a rural home supervisor."¹ It was part of the 'New Deal' and she worked for the Department of Agriculture. She served four counties: Jefferson, Liberty, Chambers and Orange. She looked after approximately 400 families. From 1942-1945, Hill did food conservation work. Her efforts earned her a citation from the state of Texas. Also during this time, she would teach at the Beaumont District Methodist Encampment in Corsicana, reading programs, and other places each summer. Her lesson was entitled "Sticks, Stones, Shells, and Bones" or "There's Nothing That's Nothing." These were craft classes teaching the children how to use the ordinary things they saw everyday and the things in the Big Thicket to create unique pieces. She was around 64 years old at this juncture of her life. But age did not slow her down. 1953 at age 75, she became the dorm mother, then the supervisor and manager, for the Hughen School for Crippled Children in Port Arthur, Texas. At age 76 she retired.

Retired from one thing to begin actively persuing another. 1964, at age 86, she was one of the founding members of the Big Thicket Association on October 4th. The Big Thicket Association is now 61 years old.

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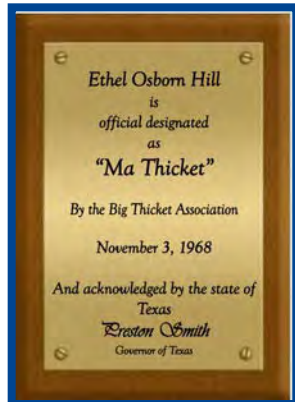
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Her latter years she spent as much time as she could in 'Dogwood Den.' The squirrels ate out of her hand. In the Houston Chronicle's Texas Magazine, June 27, 1965, she was pictured on her front porch. The caption read, 'A woman of many talents, Mrs. Ethel Osborn Hill is considered a top authority on the Big Thicket.' She entertained her grandchildren at Dogwood Den. She took them to the fire tower, showed them the trees the garden club planted by the hotel and stood with them watching the Dogwood Festival Parade. Sometimes she rode in the parade. Later she would take them to Jarrott's Pharmacy for a ice treat to break the heat.

In 1966, at age 88, she was still driving her 1957 Chevrolet all over the state of Texas, giving talks on the Big Thicket to civic clubs, school groups and garden clubs. She spoke to over 2,000 people a week at times. Hill was honored



in 1967 at the age of 89 by the Tyler County Historical Survey Committee as "Poet Laureate of Tyler County." 1968 the Big Thicket Association awarded her a certificate and an engraved plaque designating her as "Ma Thicket." It was signed by Texas Governor Preston Smith. October 1-3, 1968 – Texas Federation of Women's Clubs Board of Directors Meeting – Big Thicket Committee was formed.

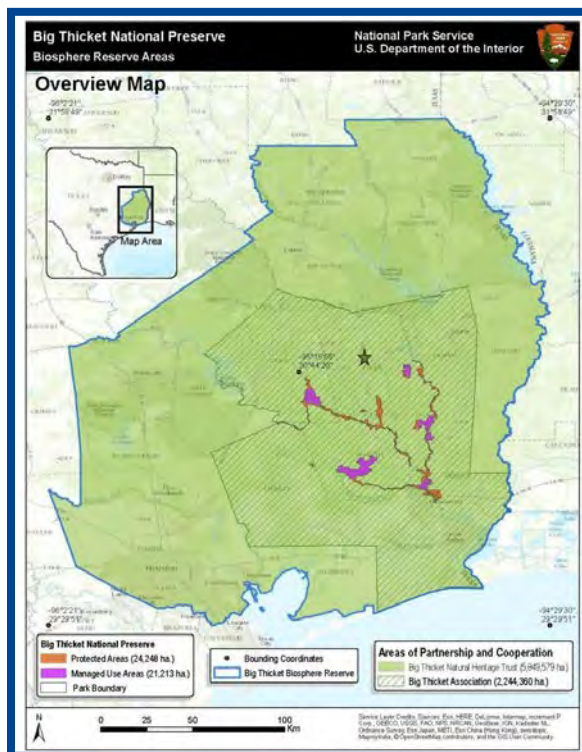


In November of 1969, at 91, she presented an extensive exhibit and display of the flora and fauna of the Big Thicket at the GFWC Texas State Board Meeting in Austin, Texas. It was the most extensive exhibit and display on the big Thicket that has ever been seen in Austin. In 1970, she was honored by being a Golden Book Entry – Outstanding Clubwoman, January-February 1970. She also served at age 91, she served on the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.

There was a hearing on June 10, 1972, on the Big Thicket in Beaumont, Texas. The National Parks and Recreation Committee of the Interior conducted it with the officials present to hear testimony on both sides. The recommendations of this committee would show the path of the future of the Big Thicket. One of the speakers was Mrs. Edna Jagoe, Big Thicket chairman for the Federation of Women's Clubs. Other notable speakers were Geraldine Watson and Ethel Osborn Hill.

Our organization (GFWC Texas), historically, has fought for the preservation of the Big Thicket, establishment of parks and museums, preservation of old courthouses, historical markers along our highways and preserve the history of the past, present or future. During this time our organization passed two resolutions in two state conventions and the international convention also passed resolutions to save the Big Thicket. Edna Jagoe boldly told the officials at the hearing that the new cry for the GFWC was "Save the Big Thicket"

For 40 years people pushed for the Big Thicket to be a national park. Legislators suggested a monument or recreation area or a biological reserve. Instead, something new was created, a national preserve. The first National Preserve in America.



On October 11, 1974, the Big Thicket National Preserve was established with 84,550 acres. In 2024, the acreage has now increased to 113,114 acres. The Big Thicket National Preserve is 50 years old.

From establishing her 'Dogwood Den' in the 1930's to 1974, Ethel Osborn Hill wrote, lectured, taught, campaigned and supported the movement to preserve the Big Thicket.

All through her life she expressed herself in words. Through her writing love has been poured out in hundreds of columns, and articles appearing in major Texas newspaper and periodicals over the years. Her efforts include her poems. One of her last honors was to be named 1975-76 Texas Poet Laureate by the State Musician and State Committee, at the Writer's Club banquet in Port Arthur.

Ethel Osborn Hill passed away on April 2, 1979, at 100 ½ years old, in the Cresthaven Nursing Home in Port Arthur, Texas. She was a small woman in stature but a giant in the footprint she left behind.

She had been a member and made an impact on these clubs:

Texas Federation of Garden Clubs

Past President of the Woodville Garden Club

Texas Federation of Women's Clubs

Texas Press Women's Association

Texas Poetry Association

State Historical Association

Texas Agricultural Workers Conference

Past President

Writer's Club

Bluebonnet Club

National Child Welfare Association

Social Worker in Texas and Louisiana



Ethel Osborn Hill

This statement can be found on the Big Thicket Association's website, '...By 1968, the Big Thicket Coordinating Committee was formed. Over 39 conservation and civic groups were represented by this consortium, including many Texas based conservation groups and Texas chapters of national organizations, as well as scientific groups. **It should be noted that one of the most active groups, and most determined to pass the legislation, was the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs.**

A small lady, left with only her wits and words to support herself in the 1920's, she found her place. She poured out millions of words of love and nature for the world to read and realize how marvelous our country is. She alone was not enough to try and keep the nature she saw all around her. She aligned herself with others that felt the same way. Through their combined voices they created force that the authorities listened to.

Today in our trying times, that are so noisy and frustrating, it is hard to see how we can help make a difference. **We need to follow the example of 'Ma Thicket.' Join with others to let our voice be heard.**

GFWC is making a resolution to bring awareness and hopefully solutions to the human trafficking in our country. As individuals we can write our congress people, attend rallies and let our voice be heard as a united front. Our battle cry might not be 'Save the Big Thicket,' but a battle cry we must have to unite us all. We must support the cause the GFWC is centered on with letters, cards, telegrams, lectures, films, programs, slides, television, radio, newspapers, magazine articles, interviews and by word of mouth.

Together we can make a difference, just like 'Ma Thicket' and all her contemporaries did to save the Big Thicket. We just must have a plan and act. Human trafficking must be ended NOW!!

BE LIKE ETHEL OSBORN HILL!! WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!

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Thank you, Karen Vaughn, who so graciously shared her slide presentation and text making this possible to share with all of you. I took the liberty of weaving it all together and making edits.

- Linda L. Mesler

Special Thanks:

Michael T. Gracey • Michael G. Maness • Amanda Montgomery

The members of the Woodville Women's Study Club for putting up with my questions and their opinions and their resources.

Acknowledgments

1. 'Ma Thicket' The Story of Ethel Osborn Hill by Michael T. Gracey 2014 – CreatSpace Independent Publishing Platform North Charleston, South Carolina
2. Texas Women's University – Amanda Montgomery, MLS – Librarian Special Collections Generalist – Special Collectins and University Archives – Blagg-Huey Library/ 2nd Floor – 307 Administration Drive/ Denton, Tx 76021
3. 'Message in a Bottle' – Biographies of Tyler County Folks – Michael G. Maness – PerciousHeart.net/message
4. Big Thicket Association – 700 North Street, Suite 79 – Beaumont, Texas 77701




My Creed

By
Ethel Osborn Hill

I am not meek and humble and I shall never be –
For having ears to hear and eyes to see,
And heart to feel and reasoning mind to think,
I will not let my spirit meekly sink
Beneath the cares and burdens of this life.
Nay, rather would I live in endless strife
That weakly, uncomplainingly to bend my back
Beneath life's blows and tread the beaten track.

I'll hew my way, and if I stumble on the road
I'll count each jagged rock and goad
To spur me on, nor shall I once look back,
And weep to see my footprints bloody track,
But with my heart fixed on my life's desire,
Man's betterment and beauty, ever higher
I'll hold my torch until I've reached the crest,
Then only shall feel I've earned the right to rest.



Amity Study Club, Trinity District, Promotes Human Trafficking Awareness

Atlanta, Texas - The General Federation of Women's Club of Texas and Amity Study Club of Atlanta, Texas, are on a mission to promote awareness of this horrific act against human rights. GFWC has partnered with "Hope for Justice" as these organizations share a common mission and vision: to live in a world free from trafficking. As members of GFWC, members of Amity Study Club are joining this mission and sponsored an educational day on January 25, 2025, at Laws Chapel Methodist Church, Atlanta. Speakers from GFWC-Texas, Texas Department of Public Safety, and "Hope for Justice" educated all attending on this crime and how "You" can join in the fight against this atrocity of human slavery. A round table discussion was led by members of the community and some of our Cass County Officials.

Amity Study Club President, Marie Shelton and Members of the Club worked on a day filled with education with a target audience of leaders in Cass County and surrounding areas. The Club sent invitations to local government officials, school superintendents, churches, healthcare leaders, civic clubs as well as advertised in our local newspapers, radio station, and on social media pages. Amity Study Club's goal is for our community leaders to use this education and empower others and engage those in their circle of influence to: **STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING!**



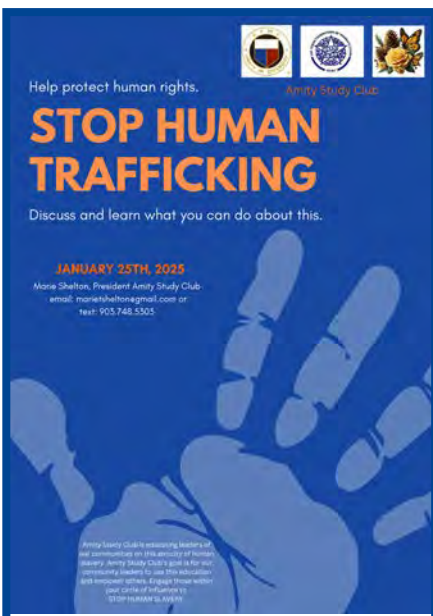
Invitation



Invitation



Making contact with media.



GFWC Texas Disaster Relief Fund

Dear GFWC Texas Clubwomen,

GFWC Texas has been blessed by the generosity of our federation sisters across the country in times of need. Following the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey, we received nearly \$100,000 in donations to aid recovery efforts along the Texas coast.

Now, it is our turn to give back. Our federation sisters have been affected by recent hurricanes and California wildfires, and they need our support. Unfortunately, our Disaster Relief Fund was nearly depleted last year after contributing to relief efforts for the Texas Panhandle wildfires.

To help replenish the fund and provide assistance to those in need, we ask for your generous donations. Checks should be made payable to GFWC Texas, with Disaster Relief Fund noted in the memo section. Please mail your donations to:

GFWC Texas

2312 San Gabriel

Austin, Texas 78705-5014



We kindly request your donations as soon as possible so that we can quickly distribute funds to those in need.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication. Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

GFWC Texas Executive Committee



“What’s Been Brewing?”



Odds and Ends of GFWC Texas Club Activities

The Fortnightly Study Club of Merkel, Lone Star Administrative District, was very busy the last couple of months of 2024. We had our annual bake sale at Prosperity Bank where we raised funds to give three (3) scholarships to graduates from Merkel High School in April of 2025.



The Woman’s Club of Cotulla, Alamo District, has been very busy since the Fall Newsletter. In November the Club hosted a Friendsgiving for the local homeless population. Member Minerva Rios became aware of these local homeless residents through her work as coordinator for the People’s Food Pantry sponsored by Cotulla ISD. She approached the executive committee about serving them a Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings. The idea quickly grew to a meal of ham, turkey, dressing, gravy, corn, green beans, mashed potatoes and a myriad of desserts served as a sit-down dinner with decorations and door prizes. A total of 58 guests were served. The expressions of gratitude



from the guests of honor touched all of the volunteers’ hearts and plans are already being discussed for next year! Volunteers included Woman’s Club members, spouses and children who were treated to a Friendsgiving after our guests of honor went home.



In order to prepare for Veterans Day ceremony in front of the LaSalle County Courthouse, club members met at the courthouse to decorate the lawn with American flags and the flags of the different service branches. The Woman’s Club wanted to show local veterans that we honor and appreciate them and will never forget their service to our country.

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December is a month dedicated to supporting Christmas Cheer for Children. A toy drive for LaSalle

County children that was initiated by two local teachers in the early 1990s. After the two teachers retired in 2004, members Louisa Franklin and Cissy Allen became involved, Christmas Cheer is now a 501(c)3 and is led by a group of dedicated board of directors. This past December 352 children from 140 families received two wrapped gifts from Christmas Cheer. Woman's Club members raise funds, volunteer to wrap gifts and help with delivery. Every member who helps with delivery say they feel that they have found the true meaning of Christmas. Members participate in an ugly Christmas sweater contest to raise funds for Christmas Cheer at the December meeting.



The GFWC Tau Lambda Study Club, Western District, celebrated Christmas on Wednesday, December 11 by exchanging gifts at a luncheon at the Fermin's Restaurant in Monahans. Everyone enjoyed opening their gift and giving thanks. **Pictured Right, Seated R to L/ front row: President Donna Haupt, Betty Ice, Faye Mayhall, Kayla Murphree, and Nancy Williams. Back row R to L: Linda Grant, Becky Melius, Shirley Bagley, and Mary Vongsavath.**



Shown displayed on table are Christmas Tree cookies with a devotional phrase ornament attached (made by President Haupt). They were used as decor for the table and given to members and guests in attendance. Attendees were also treated to a slice of her delicious cranberry cake.

The group's annual fundraising event was held on the first Saturday in December at the Chili Market/Arts & Crafts Festival sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce of Monahans at the Ward County event center. The event raises needed funds for club projects and scholarships that are awarded to Monahans students going to college. The group reflected on how their efforts are impacting their community and friends and how they are committed to living lives of gratefulness and service in the new year.

GFWC Culture Club, Western District, was the only club in Western District that participated in the National Day of Service. We organized "Sanderson Strong: Community Food Drive" which was held on Sept. 28th. We contacted the area churches, the school, Terrell County offices, Sanderson Chamber of Commerce, and the 4-H Club and worked with representatives of each. We placed donation boxes at various retail locations that were convenient for people to put their donations in 10 days in advance of the event. We advertised via Face Book and with flyers (attached) placed around town. (There is no newspaper or radio in Sanderson).

We collected 150 pounds of food, most of which was from a list of items that the Terrell County Food Pantry had requested. Our club donated \$400, and members donated \$40 plus \$164.23 In Kind food donations. There was a \$28 cash donation from a hunter that was in town and saw our poster. Our members spent a couple of hours sorting, organizing, and storing the food that was donated, and husbands were

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sent out to collect the donation boxes.

We thought the response from the community was good and that the drive was a success. Terrell County and the Food Pantry were thrilled! And as an extra special bonus, one of the Food Pantry volunteers that we worked with came to our meeting and wants to join our club!!!

Modern Study Club. Capitol District, on November 13th, we adjusted our regular meeting to honor the memory of Gwendolyn Caviness. Instead of our scheduled program, we invited Monica Benoit to speak about Gwen's lasting impact as our president and her deep dedication to The General Federation of Women's Clubs. We shared cherished memories, photos and collectively voted to donate \$100 to "The Mansion" in her honor. **(Picture with Gwen's photo center of table)** Additionally, on November 16, 2024, our club, along with



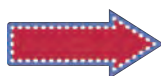
ladies from the district, attended Gwendolyn Caviness's funeral service (approx. 30 ladies attended). To honor her legacy, we wore purple, sat together, and reflected on the wonderful memories we shared with her. **(Left, Picture of those members at funeral service for Gwen)**



Lastly, the photo of us **(Left)** with our husbands was taken at the Last Annual Friendship Night Dinner with Gwendolyn on February 6, 2024, at Let Us Eat Texas Diner. She cherished bringing us together and was always full of joy. Her theme for the evening was red and hearts—a perfect reflection of her love for the color red and her kind, generous spirit. The night concluded with her heartfelt gesture of handing out Modern Study Club certificates recognizing our years of membership, a beautiful reminder of her warmth and dedication.

The Fortnightly Study Club of Merkel, Lone Star Administrative District, Audra Horton wrote, "In the Jan/Feb 2025 edition of *Southern Living*, on Page 103, there is a reference to GFWC in the "Cook of the Month" section. Thought you might enjoy seeing it and sharing with the membership."

THANKS, AUDRA!



More articles and snip-its in the next GFWC Texas Newsletter.

COOK OF THE MONTH

Leigh Mosenfelder
MILAN, ILLINOIS

Proudest moment in the kitchen: "A sit-down dinner for 12 featuring fresh-caught salmon from the Great Lakes stuffed with crab in a white wine sauce."

Favorite cookbooks: "Barefoot Contessa Back to Basics and America Cooks: The General Federation of Women's Clubs Cook Book."

Early food memory: "I spent most summers on my grandparents' farm in Oklahoma. They had a garden, a dairy cow, and chickens. There was always something to be done: making butter, snapping peas, canning vegetables, preparing sauerkraut, and baking bread every week."

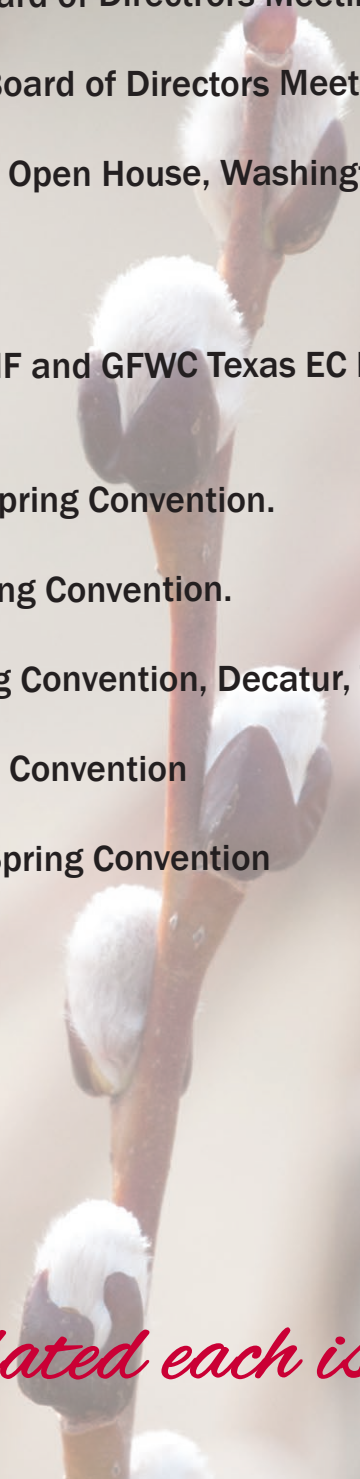
Calendar of Events

February 2025- May 2026

2025

February 20	Reports to GFWC Texas Chairmen due
March 1	Alamo Spring Convention.
March 15	South Texas Spring Convention.
March 22	Magnolia Spring Convention.
March 29	Pioneer Spring Convention.
April 2	Capitol Spring Convention.
April 5	Caprock Spring Convention.
April 12	Trinity Spring Convention.
April 30 - May 3	GFWC Texas Spring Convention, Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi.
June 5 - 9	GFWC Annual Convention, Omni Atlanta CNN Center, Atlanta, Georgia.
July 21-22	GFWC Texas HF and GFWC Texas EC Meeting, Austin, Texas.
September 4-7	GFWC South Central Region Meeting, Courtyard SA, Riverwalk, San Antonio.
September 26-27	GFWC Texas Fall Board of Directors Meeting, Austin.
October 4	South Texas Fall Board of Directors Meeting.

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October 11	Pioneer Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
October 15	Capitol Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
October 18	Magnolia Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
October 25	Trinity Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
November 1	Alamo Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
November 8	Caprock Fall Board of Directors Meeting.
December 10	GFWC Holiday Open House, Washington, DC.

2026

January 19-20	GFWC Texas HF and GFWC Texas EC Meeting, Austin, Texas.
March 13-14	South Texas Spring Convention.
March 21	Magnolia Spring Convention.
March 28	Pioneer Spring Convention, Decatur, Texas.
April 1	Capitol Spring Convention
April 29 - May 3	GFWC Texas Spring Convention

Calendar will be updated each issue.



In Memoriam

Harriet Berlin
Western District

Gwendolyn Caviness
Capitol District

Lydia Garza Saenz
South Texas District

Peggy Whatley Harrison
Trinity District