

## **BOULDER DAILY CAMERA: DECEMBER 15, 2000**

### Woman's Club of Boulder disbanding

\* \* Members of The Woman's Club of Boulder started the Boulder Day Nursery in 1917 and has provided generous support over the years. In recognition of their 100 year anniversary and their disbanding of the club, the nursery is posting this article so that others may recognize their many contributions to Boulder.

The few remaining members of the Woman's Club of Boulder stood up, raised their hands to their hearts and recited the Pledge of Allegiance together Thursday, just as they always do at the opening of their monthly meetings. Only this time, it marked the end of an era.

"In a way it is sad that a club that has been successful for 100 years can't make it," said club president Charlotte Haynes, 82. "Today is bittersweet."

Haynes joined about 35 present and former club members and local luminaries at Angel Pines Country Club to celebrate the Woman's Club's 100th anniversary, announce it was disbanding, and present a parting gift: \$200,000 for the Boulder Community Hospital Foundation.

At a time when more women hold full-time jobs, children's after-school activities are mounting and time is scarce, the women's volunteer clubs that thrived mid-century are fast becoming an anachronism. Boulder's is just the latest to give up the cause.

"It's time," said Haynes. "Our shrinking number of members is growing older. We're spending more time taking care of ourselves, and we have less time for community improvement."

After a century of volunteering and raising money for local causes, the club has dwindled from a high of 518 in 1928 to a mere eight members, the oldest age 98.

Some members have died; others have moved away or shifted to clubs that focus on education or politics.

With no Web site, an aging membership and a meeting time set for Thursday afternoons, the club has failed to attract younger members.

It is not alone.

Statewide, only 45 clubs with roughly 1,000 members remain, according to the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs. That compares to 300 clubs with more than 5,000 members at the federation's high point.

Seventy-five percent of the member are older than age 60.

"It's a lost cause at the moment because everyone is so stressed for time," said Dorothy Hass, a member of the American Association of University Women, which is also seeing its numbers decline. "People just don't have time for doing good things anymore."

Debbie Hoellen, president of The Junior League of Denver, an 80-year-old volunteer group for women, says she thinks people still want to volunteer but only on a short-term basis.

"People like to come in and do a day and call it good," she says. "They don't realize that it is the ongoing continuous care that is so important." In part due to a well-run Web site, the group has kept its active membership at 600, 318 between the ages of 21 and 30. However, it too is declining, Hoellen said.

At Thursday's luncheon, long-time members reminisced about a long history of good deeds, including what could be their largest yet — an estimated \$200,000 in AT&T stock it will transfer to the Boulder Community Hospital Foundation this week. Early members sold fruit cake and candy and held rummage sales to buy a few dollars worth of stock certificates now and then. Their investments paid off.

The Foundation's Andrea Forssander said the money will go toward further education for the hospital's nursing staff. The club's philanthropy and volunteerism spans to Dec. 8, 1900, when Jennie Baker, wife of then-CU President James Baker, formed the club under the motto, "Where ever there is work, there we are." At a time when Boulder's population was just 6,150, the group boasted 184 charter members.

One of its first crusades, according Daily Camera records, was "a crusade against men who sold cigarettes to boys under 16, and on expectation on the old wooden sidewalks." The group raised money for iron benches and a clock by the old courthouse, planted \$400 worth of trees at Chautauqua Park, and held weekly community dances.

They made bandages for the war effort in World War I and joined other women's clubs in a "buy a bomber" campaign for the Air Force during World War II.

In 1917, as women began to join the work force while their husbands were at war, club members offered to watch their children. The idea evolved into the Boulder Day Nursery, the county's first, which still exists and receives frequent checks from the club.

For years, the club has given a cash gift of \$600 to one female graduate of each local high school to help her with college expenses.

Emotions ran high at Thursday's lunch, from those angered that young women aren't volunteering to those just thrilled to see old friends they met through the club.

"I wouldn't miss this for the world," said a tearful Dorothy Rosenberger, who flew to Boulder from her home in Washington state for the luncheon.

As club members stood for the last time to recite by heart "A Collect for Club Women," a prayer for women's volunteer clubs, few had a dry eye.

"Grant that we may realize it is the little things that create differences..." they said. "And Oh, Lord God, let us forget not to be kind."

December 15, 2000, By Lisa Marshall, Camera Staff Writer