

NEWCOMERS CLUB OF GREATER HUNTSVILLE "HISTORY OF THE CLUB"

(Completed March 2014)

(Updated January 2017)

INTRODUCTION

FOUNDING MEMBER

The woman credited as being the "founder" of the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville was **Jacqueline (Jacki) Lanphere**. Jacki had moved to Huntsville from Arlington Texas. While in Arlington, she had been involved in a newcomers club there; however, upon moving to Huntsville she found that a newcomers club did not exist. In 1980 she decided to start one.

In Jacki's own words NCGH is "a social club to help people adjust to new environments". And according to a 1993 article in the Huntsville Times "the main thrust of the organization from the beginning was to promote friendship among newcomers and to help them become adjusted to their community". Jacki's words still ring true today.

Jacki moved from Huntsville in 1993; we wonder if she may have started other newcomer clubs in her travels after Huntsville. Sadly we learned that Jacki passed away on January 7, 2014 at the age of 77. Thank you to Jacki since she certainly left her stamp and her legacy on the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville!



HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 25, 1980

On September 25, 1980 thirteen founding members met and formed the Greater Huntsville Newcomers Club, or as we know it today, the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville.

NAME

The Club was originally known as the Greater Huntsville Newcomers Club. In June of 1998 the Board of Directors recommended that the name be changed to the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville with the idea being that it would be easier to find the Club in a phone book or any type of directory by putting "newcomers" first in the name. Minutes from July 1998 indicated that "no change could be made legally for 2 years". In a review of minutes during the next two years, there was no further discussion about the name change until a February 17, 2000 board meeting where it indicated the name to be the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville. In March of 2000 a "press release" was sent to the Huntsville Times announcing the name change. Continuing until today, the Club is known as the Newcomers Club of Greater Huntsville.

FISCAL YEAR

NCGH was founded in the month of October and for many years its fiscal year ran from October 1 through September 30th annually. There have been 34 women who have served as president of NCGH; each of these women served a term of one year with the exception of **Michelle Ross** who served from October 1, 2008 until May 31, 2010 which allowed the Club's fiscal year to be changed to June 1st through May 31st annually. As of this writing, the Club's fiscal year continues to be June 1 through May 31.

CLUB BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

For several years following its formation the Club would observe the event with an annual birthday celebration each October. The 20 year birthday was celebrated during the installation luncheon on October 12, 1999 at Valley Hill Country Club. Attending was special guest **Dorothy Zikas** who was a past president and a charter member of NCGH when it began 20 years ago. The 25th anniversary commemoration was attended by 10 past presidents and was celebrated during the installation luncheon at the Botanical Gardens on October 19, 2004. The Club celebrated its 30th anniversary at the Get Acquainted Coffee in October 2010. In addition the Club offered special awards and prizes throughout the entire year at its monthly activities.

35TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION (2015)

On October 9, 2016 the Club celebrated its 35th birthday with a gala bash held at The Weeden House Museum and Garden. In attendance were 96 guests that

included current and past members. Special guests included 14 past presidents of the Club, Tim Higgens, Director of the Weeden House and **current Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle**. It was a beautiful garden party with a catered lunch and color coordinated decorations and birthday cakes at each table. The event featured not only our history but also three comedy skits by and about the current interest groups. In addition the Board of Directors chose to support Crisis Services of North Alabama (CSNA).

MEMBERSHIP

The Club began with its thirteen founding members. One year later in November 1981, the Club had more than quadrupled in size with a membership of 56. On its five year anniversary the Club had reached a membership of 227.

NCGH is a "women's only" Club. To be a member a woman has to have lived in the Huntsville area for less than three years. When the Club was established in 1980, women could be a member of NCGH for a period of only five years. After five years they could move on to the alumni group that had been created called "Encore". Encore would meet monthly for luncheons to enable the ladies to "keep friendships when we are no longer Newcomers". Encore was first discussed in August of 1984 as the founding members were about to reach their five year mark of membership in NCGH. The first Encore luncheon was held in February 1985. Over the years both NCGH and Encore by-laws have changed.

One of the more interesting changes that have occurred is the status of the "associate member". Parliamentary records show that as early as 1990 a member "may" become an "associate member" after they have been an NCGH member for five years. In 1990 an "associate member" paid the same dues but could not serve on the Board of Directors nor could they vote. Over the course of the next twenty years the definition of the "associate member" was tweaked by various by-law committees. However, finally in 2010 the "associate member" was abolished and currently all members have equal status and all are eligible to vote and to hold board positions.

In 2003 Encore determined that an NCGH member could become an Encore member after one year instead of five years. NCGH by-laws also changed so that today there is no limit as to how long one can be a member of Newcomers. However, even today there is no reason that you can't hold dual membership in both NCGH and Encore thereby taking advantage of both groups.

Currently the longest serving member of NCGH is **Jean Simon** who joined in October 1984 and has continuously been a member since that time. The Club must be doing something right!

Over the years membership numbers have fluctuated. It began with thirteen members and continued to grow. In more recent years the membership seems to hover around the 200 mark annually. A common theme since 1980 is the continuing increase in membership and being able to accommodate everyone at outside venues or in a member's home; however, each year the Club manages to persevere and overcome and continues to flourish.

DUES

In 1980 membership dues were \$5 a year. Due to their fast-growing membership, in October 1981 the dues increased to \$10 a year. In September 1985 there was another increase to \$12 a year. In 1998 dues were \$23/year. In August 2004 dues again increased to \$25 a year and continue to remain at \$25 a year as of this writing. No matter what the cost of dues, it has been proclaimed by many a member that "for \$25 a year, Newcomers is the best deal in town"!

NEWSLETTERS

Since its inception the primary source of communication to the Club's membership has been by a monthly newsletter. The Newsletter contains pertinent Club information including important names, phone numbers and email addresses as well as showcasing the monthly activities that are offered.

Originally the newsletter was mailed to each and every member and that continued until December 2006. As technology and communications improved, in December 2006 and January 2007 the newsletter was both mailed and emailed to all members. Then beginning in February 2007, for the first time, the newsletter was only emailed to the Club members. In August 2008 there were discussions about publishing the Newsletter through our website and currently that is how our members receive it. With a user ID and a unique password to the member's only portion of our website, members are able to access the Newsletter as well as all information pertaining to our Club and our activities.

In September of 2000 the Board voted to purchase a software program to do its newsletter. There is no specific information concerning the program that was purchased in 2000; however to this day the Newsletter Editor makes use of a software program to assist her in creating the monthly newsletter.

In an effort to keep the history of the Club intact newsletters beginning in 1980 and continuing to the present day are maintained by the current President of the Club. There are a few years where there are missing newsletters but the ones we have are being retained in three-ring binders.

GET ACQUANTED COFFEE

The monthly *Get-Acquainted Coffee* is the venue where guests and prospective new members are welcomed and introduced to NCGH and its activities. The Club's first *Get Acquainted Coffee* was held in October 1980 and was held in a member's home. It was attended by 25 members and guests. For many years the *Coffees* continued to be held in a member's home. However, the Club continued to be very successful and eventually the coffees became too large to be held in homes; therefore, the Club began holding the *Coffee* in public places. For the past several years it has been held the first Tuesday of each month at the Huntsville Madison County Public Library located at 915 Monroe Street SW, Huntsville AL.

LUNCHEON MEETING

The first luncheon/meeting of the Club was held on October 16, 1980. At that time the Club had twenty dues paying members. The following ladies were elected to be the first officers of the Club:

Georgia Williams, President
Marybeth Howard, Vice President
Brenda Marett, Secretary-Treasurer

The Club's founder, Jacki Lanphere, never served as president of the Club. However she did serve as Chairperson for Membership and wrote the monthly Newsletter for the Club for many years.

During the first year there were two luncheon/meetings and they were also held in a member's home. Currently the Club holds at least six luncheon/meetings per year. The luncheon/meetings have been held in numerous and varied venues over the years including local restaurants as well as Huntsville Country Club, Valley Hill Country Club, The Heritage Club and The Ledges. Although it's unclear when the practice began, for many years guest speakers have been invited to speak at our luncheons. Speakers have included many local business people as well as artists, authors and historians.

Through a by-law change in 2013, the number of luncheon meetings was decreased and a December luncheon was no longer a routine part of the Club's schedule. In December 2013 member **Jeanne Bach** took it upon herself to host a luncheon that year at Valley Hill Country Club. It was a well-attended event and many members expressed disappointment that there was no longer an annual December luncheon. In December 2014 and 2015, ten (10) "active" past presidents of the Club hosted a December Holiday Luncheon at The Ledges. In December 2016 it was hosted by the current Board of Directors.

TOURS

In March 1985 NCGH started Tours which would meet monthly and go on a tour in Huntsville or the surrounding area. It was so successful that it is still a part of NCGH today. The tours have included many locations in and around Huntsville as well as Birmingham, Nashville, Chattanooga, Lynchburg, Cullman and much of the surrounding area. It is a great way to help introduce newcomers to area landmarks and travel destinations.

SOCIALS

Since its inception NCGH has done at least one social each year. NCGH membership is only available to women; however, our socials have always included the men. Over the years there have been many and varied socials including 50's sock hops, bowling, hoedowns, picnics, baseball or other sports games, Valentine parties, masquerade parties, road rallies, St. Patrick's parties, Mardi Gras parties, casino nights. You name it and NCGH has done it!

On September 11, 2001 when the attack on America occurred, NCGH had a sock hop social scheduled that weekend on Redstone Arsenal. Of course once the attack happened and security across the nation tightened, NCGH was denied access to the Arsenal. Rather than cancel the event, **Bob and Sandy Hovde** graciously opened their home and hosted a very successful social.

Currently NCGH holds three or four socials each year and the 1st VP of the Club is responsible for putting them together. One of the socials has always been the annual Holiday Dinner Dance. The other three can be of her choosing with the approval of the NCGH Board of Directors.

HOLIDAY PARTY

In December of 1980 the Club held a holiday cocktail party at Sutton Place Apartments Clubhouse in southeast Huntsville. This was the first event that had included men. It was a huge success and men have been included in all the socials and many other activities since that time.

Currently the Club offers a Holiday Dinner Dance the first Saturday in December. It is a formal event that includes dinner and dancing and for the past several years it has been held at The Summit on Redstone Arsenal.

FASHION SHOW

In September 1983 NCGH presented its first Fashion Show. It was presented as a part of their monthly luncheon and was held at Valley Hill Country Club. The fashions were presented by Parisians and it was called "Fall Fashion Forecast".

The Fashion Show continues to thrive and is very popular. It is an annual event where fashions are presented by a local store and our own Newcomer ladies are the models. It is always a fun and well-attended event.

SCARECROW

Annually the Huntsville Botanical Gardens offers a Scarecrow Trail in the fall of the year. Based on a theme determined by the Gardens, local businesses and clubs are invited to create and erect scarecrows. In the fall of 2011, NCGH made its first entry into the Scarecrow Trail. Co-chairs **Ann Marie Crosswhite and Sandy Hovde**, along with their committee, created "Scarelock Holmes and the Hound of Huntsville"; the Club placed 2nd with our inaugural entry. We have continued to submit a scarecrow since that time and we hope the tradition will continue for many more years. It is a good source of advertising for the Club and the ladies have had a fun time preparing the NCGH scarecrow.

INTEREST GROUPS

As the Club continued to grow Interest Groups were added as a part of the Club's monthly activities. The first year Interest Groups included Ladies Bridge (held twice a month); Couples Bridge; Antiques; and a couple's activity. Since the Club's inception, Bridge has been an interest group and continues to this day. Over the years other card groups have been introduced but have never sustained the way that Bridge has. Currently the card playing ladies of the Club are also enjoying Euchre, Couples Euchre, Hand 'n Foot and Hearts, all of which are quite popular.

Various interest groups seem to have come and gone throughout the past 30+ years. Along with Bridge, those that have been successful and survived over the years are Pot Luck, Punch 'n Lunch and Tours.

In January 1981 Creative Crafts were added as an Interest Group. Since that time craft groups have come and they have gone and then they reappear. There always seems to be an interest in crafting but sometimes the lack of a leader keeps it from developing.

A Book Club was started in April 1984 and like so many other newcomer activities it continues to thrive in 2014.

A Gourmet Group was started in November 1982 with the group getting together for hors d'oeuvres and wine. Since that time some type of a fine dining group has continued to meet and although there have been name changes, venue changes and idea changes, the group continues to thrive. Beginning in 2001 and continuing to today the group is called Dining with Flair.

Another Interest Group called the Young and the Restless ran for a while which was intended for young mothers with young children and to find activities for them to participate in together. In December 2000 it was noted that membership was declining and by December 2001 the group was no longer active.

MISCELLANEOUS

Installation Ceremony

Bonnie Jones was not a member of NCGH; however she was a great friend of the Club. Beginning in 1987 Bonnie was invited to act as the installer of the new officers at our annual Officer Installation Luncheons; she continued to install the new officers through 2008. She always made the installation ceremony very special and very meaningful to those being installed. In addition, Bonnie was instrumental in helping the Club print its membership directory through the marketing department of AmSouth Bank. Since 2008 most of the installers have been a member of NCGH.

Beginning in 2014, it was determined by the Board of Directors that the immediate past president would be the installer for the incoming president each year at the Installation Luncheon. By following that tradition, it would alleviate the necessity of trying to find a willing volunteer to conduct the installation.

Tree Dedication

During the 1989-1990 year, according to a "press release" NCGH attended a tree dedication ceremony at the Huntsville Madison County Public Library where a fir tree was presented to the library as an expression of appreciation for use of the library's community auditorium for the Club's monthly get acquainted coffees. It was dedicated "to the children of the Greater Huntsville area". It is unknown if one of the trees that currently surrounds the Library is the one that was donated by NCGH.

Pot of Gold

During the 1994-95 year, the Pot of Gold was introduced to help offset Club expenses due to rising costs of the Club including fees that the Library had started charging for our use of their facilities. To this day, we continue to promote the Pot of Gold during luncheon/meetings. The winner of the drawing receives 50% of the money raised and the other 50% goes into the Club's general membership fund.

Cookbook

In 1996 and 1997 the Newcomer ladies put together a cookbook entitled "Til we Eat Again". Two hundred cookbooks were created that included recipes from the membership and sold for \$11 each.

Christmas Tree

The Huntsville Madison County Public Library annually invites area clubs and organizations to participate in their Christmas tree display at the main library. In December 1998 NCGH was invited to display a tree and the Club still continues with that tradition each year.

Incorporation

Through an abundance of paperwork and submissions by the Club, NCGH was incorporated on June 27, 2008 and officially recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (7) tax exempt organization.

Email, Website and Facebook

Beginning in 1998, references were being made about emails and websites. In December of 1998 discussions were held about "gathering email addresses and adding them to the membership directory"; and in 1999 there were discussions about "communicating by email" so obviously many of the members were beginning to make use of email and becoming computer savvy - all very new concepts. In April of 1999, there was a statement made that "Newcomers Club is on the internet". During 2000-01 references are made to a "website". In 2003-04 conversations took place about having an email designation for NCGH members to use. Finally in 2005 it was noted that the NCGH website went "online" on or about November 8, 2005.

All the above references seem to have culminated in 2004-05, through the combined efforts of a committee that was formed by President **Katherine Karlinger** when our domain name was reserved by member Reta Turner with www.register.com. At the time Reta was the newsletter editor and with her computer experience she was instrumental in creating our first website; from that joint effort was born the Club's current website and our current email address.

If you're reading this history, you may have found our website at www.newcomersofgreaterhuntsville.org where it tells you all about our Club and what it has to offer. And if you need to contact the Club it can be done via email at info@newcomersofgreaterhuntsville.org

In addition NCGH has another presence on the internet with a Facebook page which was established during the 2012-13 year. The administrator of the Facebook page provides weekly updates about activities for the week in addition to posting pictures of NCGH events.

Logo

In 2010 a very creative and talented member, **Anita Zomkowski**, was asked to design several new logos for the Club. By a vote of the membership, the current logo was chosen and is still being used as of this writing.



Publicity

Over the years there have been many attempts to promote NCGH. There have been a few newspaper articles about the Club and there have been some radio and/or TV announcements. Also, flyers and/or brochures have always been distributed to area realtors, doctor's offices, spas, salons and the like. The most recent tri-fold brochures were designed and developed by a committee in 2010-11. The Club also has a supply of business cards that are easier to carry and distribute by members. However, despite all promotion efforts it would seem that the majority of new members find NCGH through "word of mouth" from a friend or a neighbor. Despite all publicity efforts, many members seem to feel that NCGH is "one of the best kept secrets in Huntsville".

"Early Bird Renewal Program"

During membership renewal in the spring of 2014, the "Early Bird Renewal Program" went into effect. This was an incentive program for members to renew earlier - rather than later. If a membership was renewed prior to the May coffee, their name would be entered into a drawing for a free year's membership for the following year. The early renewal also gave the Club a clearer idea of funds available for the upcoming year and their proposed budget.

"Audio Memories"

During the 2015-16 year the Board of Directors approved a new feature to our website entitled "Audio Memories". The intent is for the Historian to record a memory that a member would like to share about her life or her family or an experience with the rest of the membership. Once recorded, it would be added to our website for all to listen to.

This History

This "History of the Club" was completed in March 2014 by Past President **Connie Walker** (2012-13). The history was updated in January 2017.

The information was gathered by reviewing past president's notes, past secretary's minutes, newsletters of the Club and conversations with past presidents. This history was offered for review to past presidents and I would like to thank those that did review the same and for their feedback and then giving me their "blessings". I would also like to thank member **Lynne McIntyre** and her "expert eye" for her time in proofreading the history and her suggested changes.

The writing of this history was authorized by 2013-14 President **Sheelagh Kirby** and her Board of Directors. This history has also been reviewed and approved by them. Finally, I would like to thank Sheelagh and the 2013-14 Board for their vote of confidence in allowing me to undertake this project.

This history has been posted onto the Club's website and as the Club continues to go forward, it is envisioned that important events and information will be added to keep the Club's history ongoing.



NCGH PRESIDENTS

Jacki Lanphere	Founder (deceased)
Georgia Williams	1980-81
Dorothy Zikas	1981-82
Ruth Taylor	1982-83
Elaine Hofer	1983-84
Marian Harris	1984-85
Norma Zeigler	1985-86
Wanda Pullen	1986-87
Kay Lampe/Myrna McDonald	1987-88
Andrea Karwoski	1988-89
Karen Kiss	1989-90
Valerie Barker	1990-91 (deceased)
Carol Smith	1991-92
Sally Zavadil	1992-93
Dee Buzby	1993-94
Bonnie Dilworth	1994-95
Harriet Havron	1995-96 (deceased)
Barbara Daggett	1996-97
Sandy Hovde	1997-98
Patti Thompson	1998-99
Rosie Geoffrey	1999-00
Patsy Prewett	2000-01
Rosie Geoffrey	2001-02
Angela Fabrizi	2002-03
Susan Daniel	2003-04
Katherine Karlinger	2004-05
Ann Marie Crosswhite	2005-06
Gay LeJeune	2006-07
Lori Smith	2007-08
Michelle Ross	2008-10
Sandee Gorham	2010-11
Katherine Karlinger	2011-12
Connie Walker	2012-13
Sheelagh Kirby	2013-14
Lynn Scherer	2014-15
Eugenie Candon	2015-16
Cathy Brickey	2016-17