

VGWC President's Yearend Update

I always take a minute to reflect on what we have accomplished over the past year. Our organization does so much for so many. This past year we have continued to be invested in our clubhouse community and members. Our members led the Clubhouse Renovation and Lifestyles committees. One member volunteered her time to make the draperies and valences for the Ballroom, and we are a primary user of Clubhouse Food and Beverage where we spent over \$12,000 in F&B, contributing to salary and gratuities for Vine staff. We offered high value programs to raise awareness of local nature through Maritime Discovery Center and the Birdseye view of Wild About Owls. The Shoestring Theatre, Antique Roadshow and Deland Museum of Art raised our awareness of local cultural gems. And who could not resist a visit from Mary Flynn, the Hallmark Card Writer! We got our shopping fix through Peppers fashion show and holiday craft shopping. Whew!! What an outstanding year and special thanks to our Program and Hospitality Committees for all the planning and prep to bring us these programs!

But we didn't just give back to VG community, our reach extended to our local Deland charities we support. Through fundraising efforts of A Spirited Night, Casino Night, Mah Jong, 50/25/25, and Lottery Board raffles we were able to donate \$35,450 to local charities. A Spirited Night, Casino Night and MahJongg Mardi Gras were our major fundraising events this year. Many people went into ensuring they were successful but want to thank Cindy Coto, Rosie McKenna, Roberta O'Neill, Laura Blackburn and Bonnie Friedman for their leadership and committees on these events!! All club fundraising must go directly to a designated 501 (c) 3 non-profit as dictated by state and club bylaws. Social with a Purpose. Agencies who benefited from our support are The Neighborhood Center, Family Renew, Council On Aging, Volusia County Edith I Starke and Blue Lake Elementary Schools and Halifax Hospice Children's Bereavement Program.

And we didn't just stop with fundraising. Many of our members have been actively engaged on a regular basis contributing their time and talent. We have members who manage the reception desk at The Neighborhood Center, Friendship Branches who keep the Bridge Dining room looking festive and welcoming, members who clean, stock, and furnish apartments for new families moving into Family Renew. We volunteer in the schools, managing the Starke Koala Store, Blue Lake Holiday Store, Teacher appreciation events, reading program, sorting/organizing, and supplying snacks. Members helped at senior centers and VGWC knitters created 36 shawls for Deland seniors and delivered them through Council On Aging. Thanks to the Charitable Action Committee for bringing us these opportunities.

We actively supported each other through our Sunshine Connection network, keeping touch and helping when needed. Our Friendship Branches also provide a great opportunity to meet often and build tight friendships. And they have "branched" out everywhere this year (no pun intended)!! They have been to Mt Dora, Barberville Pioneer Settlement, Museums, Winter Park Scenic Boat Ride, Create Space Deland for Painting,

Mini Golf, toured The Casements, Leu Gardens and got into basket weaving. And I lost count of the number of local eateries they visited and supported!!

We continue to look towards technology to make our jobs easier. Our members have fully adopted online registrations and membership renewal. We can communicate easily with all members through email and recently launched our own Facebook Page. Like us and follow us on Facebook at Victoria Gardens Women's Club!

Today I had the honor of recognizing four amazing women as they complete their terms on the VG Board of Directors! Each of them as contributed so much and I will miss seeing them each month at the meetings. These four ladies have been involved on the Board since Covid shutdown and with Laura Blackburn and others, devised a solution in an environment where meetings in large groups were not allowed and clubhouse was closed. That solution was the Friendship Branch network, which we know is successful even today. We appreciate these trailblazers who took on Director roles that aligned to our new non-profit status and delivered a high value experience for members.

Lynn Reim worked through event scheduling in a post covid environment, always flexible and nimble as events and clubhouse re-opened. She and her committee searched far and wide for fun, creative, educational programming! I was always amazed at the variety of programming and every event closed with compliments for job well done. Lynn organized, planned, and executed with a smile and grace, even when things didn't always go smooth. But no one would have ever known, she was always focused on her guests experience and oh what an experience she provided us. Thanks, Lynn, for your service as Director of Programming!

With the creation of a Friendship Network came the need for a director role to lead and keep them aligned, **Nancy Greenfield** took on this new role and defined it as we know today. Nancy and her team ensured Branch Leaders were prepared to lead, knew what resources were available and always a contact for questions and guidance. As the network grew and matured so did Nancy's role. It is a vital role to our organization today, working closely with Membership Director and Branch Leaders. Thank you, Nancy, for your leadership and strategic planning lending to this successful model!

A goal of this organization is to create a welcoming environment that offers a variety of ways to engage and participate as a member. No better person to put in charge of this was **Connie Hampton**. Let me just comment of what Connie brought to this role. Connie and her team committed to ensuring new members felt welcomed and included. Growing and maintaining membership is also a goal and we have grown to a membership of over 270 members. Connie also worked closely with the Friendship Branch Director and branch assignments. Connie has been an outstanding ambassador of this club and never misses an opportunity to invite a resident to join VGWC. Thanks to Connie for her service as Membership Director

When we registered as a 501 (c) 3 non-profit, managing relationships with local non-profit agencies took on much more importance. We take this responsibility very seriously, giving careful consideration to agencies we support and no-one is more serious about this than **Rosie McKenna**. Rosie stepped into the Charitable Action Director role a year ago with a goal of expanding our volunteer engagements and relationships in local schools. She worked closely with our agencies to understand their need for volunteer assistance, got the word out to those interested and today we have very viable engagements with all our agency partners. Rosie is stepping down from the Director role, but not stepping away from her passion to be involved. She will continue to lead the volunteer engagements as a member of the Charitable Action Committee. We are so grateful for her commitment to the club and happy she is not going too far away! Thank you, Rosie, for all you have accomplished in this role this year!

In closing I want to thank each of you for your support. We offer many ways to stay connected and welcome your input and comments.