



### **Juniors' founding in the 1930s**

A young woman named Miss Lorraine Bender turned the concept of a junior woman's club into reality on February 8, 1937. Miss Bender and 34 others gathered together at her home. The majority were graduates from the RB class of 1935. Dues were \$0.75 for the year and could be paid in \$0.15 increments.

Early letters between the President of the Riverside Woman's Club and Miss Bender confirm that the Juniors had the full blessing of the senior ladies.

Meetings were held at the Presbyterian Church until the Alumni Lounge at RBHS was added in an expansion project in the 1950s. Since some members did not drive or did not have a car, a car pool system was formed. Juniors met at RBHS until they moved to Town Hall.

The first fundraiser was a dance held early that summer which included a style show and a dance by some of the members. They sold 108 tickets, spent \$75 and had \$45 in profits which were given to the local welfare department.

Other new traditions included a mother-daughter tea, a bridge party and a fall formal dance. Having a Christmas party at a member's house, with games and caroling, started in 1938, and of course continues today.

In the fall of 1938, the Constitution was amended to allow married women to stay in the club and were allowed full voting rights.

Some of the topics in the early years included literature, radio, moving pictures, travelogues, book reviews, poetry, music and piano recitals. Life was gay.

### **Juniors in the 1940s**

By 1940 the war in Europe could not be ignored. European updates began to be given regularly at Juniors' monthly meetings and Juniors began to support the cause by wrapping bandages for the local Red Cross. The pledge of allegiance and singing of the Star Spangled Banner were added to the monthly meetings.

Most of the original members were no longer involved, due to finishing college, marriage and/or working long hours for the war. An annual Rush targeted recent RBHS graduates, so most members were 18-24 years of age and single.

In 1942, with many of the boyfriends having gone off to war, the young women decided not to cancel the annual fall dance but instead invited the Midshipman of the Great Lakes Navy Base to the dance. The Senior Woman's club found housing for the gentlemen in town in private homes for the weekend. This was a huge success and continued for three more years.

That year Riverside Juniors financially supported the Illinois Woman's Federation's efforts in purchasing a \$300,000 bomber and in 1943 a Hell Cat Fighter through the purchase of war bonds.

In 1943, the State Federation ruled that new members could not be older than 30, and must quit by 35. This was adopted in our bylaws, but the upper age limit was removed in 1949.

In 1947, the club stopped singing the Star Spangled Banner at meetings. Also, bylaws were changed to include Active, Inactive and Honorary Member categories.

Programs this decade included Portrait of a Business Girl, Preparation for Possible War, and Rehabilitation: Tomorrow's Woman. New annual traditions included a potluck, an ice-skating party, a bowling party, a rummage sale and the Juniors pledge.

### **Juniors in the 1950s**

Membership throughout the 1950s was consistently over 100 members. In fact, it was required that membership cards be presented for admittance to each meeting. Members were not just from Riverside – they came from Brookfield, North Riverside, Berwyn, and other surrounding communities.

In 1950, members voted to set aside \$125 for a silver tea service.



Many of the activities were social in nature: Spring and Fall dances, bridge groups, Christmas parties, white elephant auctions, potluck dinners, Men's Night, fashion shows and splash parties. The first Installation Dinner was held in 1959.

The first spring dance was in 1951. It was at the Riverside Golf Club and featured a dance orchestra. Popcorn, potato chips, and pretzels were served!

The first fashion show was held in early March of 1954. Juniors had to guarantee a certain number of people to fill the venue where the evening show would be held. The worst blizzard of the winter happened that day, and the group was very worried about the turnout for the event. Much to their surprise and relief, it was a full house! The second fashion show, in March of 1955, was held in the new Hauser Jr. High School auditorium. Profits from the show went to the building fund for the new Riverside Youth Center. The fashion show continued through the decades as Juniors' major fundraiser.

Women in the 1950s dressed for meetings – hats and gloves were common. Refreshments were served from the silver tea service on a lace table cloth. The programs took place after the business meetings. Smoking was not allowed during the programs. According to the Recording Secretary's minutes from October 1952, "There was a very interesting program by Mr. Miller who presented colored movies on health, beauty, and cooking." Other programs featured Dr. L.J. Hauser speaking on elementary education; members' presentations on their overseas trips; a Chicago Tribune cartoonist; the Federal Bureau of Narcotics on drug abuse. Some programs were presented by organizations who were recipients of Junior donations. Among some of the memorable program titles, "Chapeau Madness", and "Above All, The Right Hat!"

Juniors in the 1950s did much to aid the needy and support the growth of the community. Among their many service activities were: baking cookies for the Scottish Home for Christmas, collecting books to donate to mental hospitals and purchasing a hospital bed for a polio victim. In 1956, through their fundraising efforts, \$1000 was given to the Riverside Youth Center, which was a major philanthropy target throughout the decade. Juniors also helped to support the many philanthropies of the General Federation, and those of the Illinois Federation, namely – the Brain Research Foundation.

### **Juniors in the 1960s**

Membership in the 1960s started at well over 100 members. At mid-decade there were about 75 members, decreasing to 49 by 1969.

Many new activities were introduced in the 1960s. Most notably, the decade was the start of such children's events as the very popular Easter Egg Hunt in Swan Pond, the Children's Christmas Party, and the Children's Theater productions. The Spring and Fall dances of the 1950s ultimately became one dinner dance. Other functions/activities introduced in the 1960s were participation in the District 6 Flower Shows, floats in the 4th of July Parade and LaGrange Pet Parade, the club newsletter, special groups for gardening, arts & crafts, dance, and a choral group and Day in Court (one day sitting in on the Criminal Court at 26th and California). Bridge continued to be a popular event throughout the decade, as well as Men's Night, the Attic Auction/Potluck, the Installation Dinner, and of course, the Fashion Show.

Programs continued to be a part of the monthly general meetings. Many programs reflected the political climate of the time: “Moral Decay in America & Some of the Cures We Need”, “Air Defense Communications” and “Communism – What It Is & What You Can Do About It”. Other presentations reflected the growing interest in women’s issues, such as “Menopause, Its Moods and Manners” and “Lady, Your Mind is Showing”.

Juniors continued to support the many State and General Federation philanthropies, namely, Scholarships for Teachers of Exceptional Children and Brain Research. Locally, funds went to the Youth Center, Riverside Recreation, the Library and area schools. The Juniors of the 1960s participated in the Polio Mothers March, went door to door for birth defects research, worked at tuberculosis mobile units in the city, set-up children’s reading programs at the Junior High School and at the Riverside Library, offered babysitting courses for area girls, and visited nursing homes and mental hospitals with baked goods and a choral group. Focusing on children, Juniors provided vision screening for preschoolers, formed a Community Improvement Project on Youth, providing a liaison between youth and the community, and donated (in 1964-1965 Juniors year) what continues to be a town treasure – the turtle in Turtle Park. RJWC received many awards for their work and donations to these causes. For one 1961 Federation Project, “Conquer Uterine Cancer”, Juniors required the membership to have PAP smears done, and to submit the results!

If all that wasn’t enough, they also threw some great parties! The 1961 Spring Dance “Hawaiian Holiday” featured 7 Chicago Bears dressed in Hula attire – grass skirts and all. Along with the talented Juniors chorus line, the dancing Chicago Bears performed traditional Hawaiian dances for a crowd of 500! At that time, “Hawaiian Holiday” was billed as the most successful event in Juniors history.

This was a hard act to follow, but Juniors managed to take the social spotlight once again the following year with “The Roaring 20’s” dance. The Charleston and Black Bottom were performed by the Juniors Chorus Line led by a member who was a former professional dancer and choreographer. Most guests were also in period dress. Incidentally, the popular Juniors Chorus Line performed all over the area for other social functions.

The “Fete de Paris” dance of November 1963 was not a gay occasion, but memorable none-the-less. This event coincided with the funeral for President Kennedy. The group agonized over the decision to either cancel or go ahead with the event. The Juniors President made the difficult decision to go forward with the dance as planned. They had a full crowd who were very grateful for this temporary release from their shock and sadness.

There were two celebrated anniversaries in the 1960s – the 25<sup>th</sup>/Silver Anniversary, and the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Both events were in honor of past Presidents. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was held in conjunction with the annual fashion show, held that year in RB’s auditorium. Many past Presidents from all over the Midwest attended, including the founding President, Lorraine Bender Eicher, who came all the way from Columbus, Ohio! There

were a few uncomfortable moments for the current President of the club, who was announcing the names of the honorees when all the lights went out, and she couldn't see a thing! The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was a special tea held in the RB Alumni Lounge. Many past Presidents were in attendance.

### **Juniors in the 1970s**

The 1970s was as difficult for Juniors as it was for college sororities and women's organizations. Juniors experienced a substantial decline in membership – from 49 members in 1970, down to 29 by the mid-1970s. By the end of the decade, membership stood at only 32 members. The organization persevered, and through their hard work, dedication to the Federation and the community, and their close friendship bonds, they made significant contributions to the club and to Riverside.

The 1970s brought new activities such as: a bestseller book club, a spelling bee for local schools, candlelight bowl, a tennis group, craft-o-rama, an art auction and Las Vegas Night. The co-chairwoman of the 1970 fashion show, "Fortunes and Fashions" was our future State Comptroller and State Treasurer, Judy Topinka. The first ad book was introduced at the 1971 dinner dance, "Some Enchanted Evening". Some of the ads that appeared in the book were for the Taxi Cab Drivers, Maintenance & Garage Helpers Union Local 777 and the notorious Club Algiers.

The first honorary Junior was named in 1972. This was Miss Jeanne Heidler (RJWC President 1956-1957)!

Juniors introduced a Community Improvement project which included the beautiful home award and free tree program which was funded through the sale of a Juniors cookbook. Juniors helped to establish the Township Theater Guild. They located the director, did the publicity, bookkeeping, ticket sales, program planning and hostessing! Work with the theater became a significant fundraiser.

The Riverside Centennial celebration took place in 1975. Juniors turned out in full force on an old fashioned float. Members borrowed antique furniture and household utensils and dressed in period costume. Along with some other village organizations, Juniors co-sponsored the Centennial Ball.

The Juniors of the 1970s continued to support the Federation projects as in the past years. They also made significant contributions to local organizations. Among some of their worthy projects were contributions to: a new ambulance, ambulance equipment, relocation of Vietnamese families and children's records for the library. Their funds also purchased playground equipment in Longcommon Park, and refurbished and replaced equipment in Indian Gardens. Scholarship funds were provided to local students and a wood burning stove was purchased for the Scout Cabin.

The Juniors of the 1970s were very determined and hardworking women. With declining membership, each member had to participate equally to insure the success of each of their

many events. All this work in skirts! It was not until the late 1970's that they finally were allowed to wear slacks.

### **Juniors in the 1980s and 1990s**

The 1980s and 1990s brought in some important changes. As a group we left the National organization in 1985. Ronnie Rice was the big fundraiser in the early 1980s. A former lead singer for the New Colony Six, Ronnie sang nostalgic hits from the 1950s and 1960s. This fundraiser brought in \$3500 in 1986-1987, which, at that time, was the biggest fundraiser ever.

The Fashion Show was re-started in the 1980s and evolved into what you see today. It was held at the town hall. Initially members modeled the clothes and brought the food. In 1984 the Fashion Show was moved to the Drake Oakbrook. In 1993 a production company was hired to provide professional models at the Carlisle.

In the early 1980s the organization had various groups within the membership such as the craft club, fine arts club, bridge club, babysitting co-op and gourmet club. There was also a bowling group that cost the members \$1.00 and provided free babysitting. Gourmet is still active today, now as a progressive dinner.

The Christmas ornament was started in 1988 and the first design was the Water Tower. At that time each ornament sold for \$6.00, whereas in the late 1990s the price was \$12.00. Ushering for the local theater group continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. It was very profitable in 1993-1994. They ushered four plays and were able to give a great deal back in philanthropy.

There were a variety of programs that covered a wide range of topics. A few examples included Women's Car Clinic by Riverside Tire and Auto, Plastic Surgery – What is Can and Cannot Do, Adult Allegories in Winnie-the-Pooh, From Cottage to Castle American Society of Interior Designer and How to Boost Self Esteem.

In 1987 the League Pledge was changed. Prior to 1987 at each meeting the members recited the following pledge:

I pledge my loyalty to the Junior Club Women, by doing better than ever before what work I have to do, by being prompt, honest, courteous, by living each day trying to accomplish something, not merely to exist.

In 1987 the pledge was changed to the following new one:

I pledge my loyalty to the Junior Club Women, by having a sense of commitment to my family and myself. By giving service to my community. And in return, receiving genuine friendship from others.

Throughout the interviews with past presidents for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, several themes became apparent. First, many of them joined shortly after moving into the town of Riverside to meet people or they joined after having their first child. This organization

was attractive because of mutual interests and ages of the women. For many, Riverside Women's Club was chosen because it was philanthropic. And indeed this is true. This organization continues to provide strong support to the village of Riverside and to women issues. Throughout the years large donations have been made to the public parks such as Harrington, Blythe and Indian Gardens. In the 1990s large donations had been made to the Arts Center.

More important, the Riverside Junior Woman's Club and Charity gave these women memorable moments and fun times with lasting friendships. These feelings continue today and hopefully will into the future.

### **Juniors in the 2000s**

Fundraisers included Bootlegger Ball, Kitchen Walks, White Elephant Sales, Attack of the Killer Grapes Wine Tasting, Battle of the Brews, Safari Soiree at Brookfield Zoo and Pizza Fest (I) at the Village Center.

King Tut at the Field Museum of Natural History, two years in the planning, brought people together to dine, drink and dance at the museum and have a private viewing of the King Tut exhibit. This event netted nearly \$30,000. The Chew Chew even had a special cocktail leading up to the event – the Tut-tini!

Community Service Events such as Bike Rodeos, Truck Touch, Riverfest with Girl Scouts, Bunny Bop, Polar Express, and Breakfast with Santa were held as family-friendly events with 100-200 children attending each one.

Informational programs on topics such as ballroom dancing with Catherine Maciejewski, yoga, a Multiple Sclerosis 150 Ride, and 17 Year Cicada kept membership apprised of current events.

Charities of the month included Constance Morris House, Glass Slipper Project, Stroger Hospital, Operation Hero Care Package, Humane Society, Greater Chicago Food Depository, Share Our Soles, Bottomless Closet, Deborah's Place, Animal Care League, Ronald McDonald House, Ray Vanco Foundation and Working Bikes Foundation.

Social events were common, including Gourmet Night at the Culinary Institute of America in Chicago, cross-country skiing and an antique tour road trip. We started the Book Exchange inside the train station in the 2000s, which is now a self-sustaining book rack. In 2008, Juniors helped with the August flood by cleaning up and housing evacuees.

In the 2000s, Juniors started the scholarship program as we currently know it, giving \$1500 to a local high-school senior who is heading to college. We also began funding the July 3<sup>rd</sup> concert in the park, hiring the band and selling pizza and soda. We donated the bleachers for Harrington Park and started purchasing the liner for Big Chill's ice rink in Big Ball Park. We also donated nearly \$3000 to Riverside Little League for field improvements, \$3500 to renovate the Scout Cabin kitchen, \$2500 to the Riverside Public

Library for improvements to the parent/child room and \$1000 to the Village of Riverside Historical Commission for a display cabinet.

In 2005, RJWC was honored as Riverside Township Lions Club/Riverside Chamber of Commerce's Person of the Year, the only group to date to be recognized for their volunteer service to the community.

The RJWC Cookbook in honor of our 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary went on sale in 2005, along with the Water Tower Plates commemorating the village's iconic tower across four seasons.

Dues were raised to \$40 (the current amount), and in 2009, the 'club' portion of the group was dropped formally, and RJWC became a charity in full rather than a charity and a social society. The officers changed from President, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and Publicity, to President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President of Operations, Vice President of Membership, Vice President of Fundraising, and Vice President of Community Outreach. Reciting the Juniors Pledge at the monthly meetings was phased out and the bylaws and mission statement were updated.

### **Juniors in the 2010s**

Fundraisers evolved with the changing times. Brews Cruise – Pints with a Purpose was such a big hit that it became an ongoing event. Same for Trivia Nights. Other fundraisers included two Hollerin' Hootenannys, Riverside Haus Party (a beer tasting festival at The Chew Chew), Fiesta Mexicana (at the train station), Pizza Fest II, Murder in Three Acts (dinner theater), Food + Brew, Da Bears Super Fan Superbowl Eve, and Ozma of Oz and Frozen II children's theater events.

Community Service Events included KidStock at Town Hall with the band Boogers (an American Idol-style children's event), Breakfasts with Santa, Bike Rodeo, Santa's Workshop and a Health and Wellness Event.

We adopted two large perennial beds in Patriots Park, and each spring and summer a committee volunteered to mulch, weed, and plant the beds.

A new fundraiser called 'Riverside Gives' started mid-decade. Kicked off at the Holiday Stroll and continuing for the month of December, contributors could make a donation to the charity of their choice, and 100% of that donation goes to their charity. It often raised \$2000-\$3000 through the generosity of our community members. 'Giving Partnerships' paired local businesses (often women-owned) with our members. 'Gourmet Club' was changed to 'Dinner Club', with anyone allowed to participate in these progressive dinners. Typically, one house hosted the appetizers, another the entrée course, and a third the dessert course.

Philanthropy giving was as high as \$30,000 in a single year. We donated Narcan to the Riverside Police Department for the first time. This allows first responders to reverse an



opiate overdose and has thankfully saved lives in our small village. At the time, Riverside was only the fourth municipality in Cook County to have this ability.

Membership was as high as nearly 60 Active Members. We celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Riverside Wine Bar, with active, associate and honorary members, and our 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Riverside Public Library, with all member categories, past presidents, and philanthropy recipients. Also this decade, we adopted our current green and pink logo, designed by member Amanda Mans, and re-designed our website.

Partner charities included Aging Care Connections, Infant Welfare Society, NAMI, Reclaim13, Hines Fisher House, Bottomless Pantry, Helping Hands, Ray Vanco, Community Support Services and Seguin.

Joan Wiaduck kindly allowed us to store our decorations, fundraising items and dishware at Gaslight Realty in 2010. In 2019 we downsized and moved everything to the basement of Town Hall.

Compiled by three Past Presidents:

Sarah Thompson

Jenny White

Spring 1998, for Juniors' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Jill Mateo

Fall 2019