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Frisco Women's League President Amanda Fuller promoting literacy

photo by Chris Frithie

In a League of Their Own

By Wendy Crooks

WINSTON CHURCHILL once said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." In March of 2002, seven Frisco women exemplified that very sentiment and founded the Frisco Women's League (FWL). Volunteering their time to improve their community is the motivation at the core of the organization.

The seven founding women were Janet Crisco, Julie Gove, Gina Jannereth, Jody McDaniels, Tricia Redding, Lisa Rodgers and Laura Simmons. Although a few of the founders have moved from Frisco, today Julie Gove and Laura Simmons are still active members.

According to the group's past president, Karen Dawson, the original goal was to support non-profit

organizations and get people involved in the community. Early on they only worked with established organizations, but now, not only do they help other organizations, they have also developed their own fundraisers to further benefit the community.

The Frisco Women's League currently supports organizations such as CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children), the Boys and Girls Club, Frisco Family Services, the Heritage Association of Frisco and the Frisco Humane Society among others. Additionally, the members volunteer their time for such service projects as Clothe a Child, Taylor's Angels and blood drives.

Some of the special community events



Frisco Women's League Mission:

- To promote community service and enhance the quality of life in the City of Frisco and surrounding areas.
- To support activities, programs and projects which aid civic, cultural and educational development in the community.
- To assist the community through volunteerism, fundraisers and community projects.

that many Frisco residents look forward to are staffed by Frisco Women's League volunteers including the City of Frisco's Merry Main Street celebration in December, the Frisco Special Olympics, the Gary Burns Fun Run, the annual City of Frisco's Daddy/Daughter Dance and the North Texas Arthritis Walk.

In the summer of 2006, the Frisco Women's League sought a charter from the national organization known as the Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc (AJLI). They were denied a charter by the AJLI's home office in New York. The reason for the denial of the Frisco charter was that Frisco shared Collin County with Plano and Plano already had an established Junior League. According Ms. Dawson, "We were disappointed at first but soon realized that being an independent group allows us the flexibility of setting our own volunteer requirements and dues." Although they were snubbed by the Junior League, this town is certainly big enough for both organizations. Ms. Dawson added, "There is a need for both organizations. With ours, a member doesn't have to pay as much for dues as the Junior League and the volunteer requirements are less, so even busy moms can participate."

PROJECTS SUPPORTING THE MISSION

What started with only a handful of committed members has grown tremendously in scope and numbers with membership now more than 100 strong. In 2004, members donated over 415 hours in volunteer time to several agencies. The following year members gave support to 29 different area agencies or events. The North Texas Arthritis Walk, held in June at the Dr Pepper Ballpark, was the first event organized by the Frisco Women's League. The group managed to have 282 walkers and their efforts raised \$44,000.

This past year, 2006, was the most productive year yet for the Women's League with 80 members who completed 1115 hours of service work. They completed nine projects encompassing a variety of service organizations. They were:

- Baby Items Drive for the Frisco Family Services Center

- Blood Drive
- Float in the Homecoming Parade supporting the Veteran's Day theme
- Cookies for Heroes provided homemade cookies to all the Frisco Fire and Police Stations
- Troops Drive provided CDs and DVDs for troops serving overseas
- Share Our Hearts delivered Valentines to area assisted living communities
- Jr. FWL Prom Boutique provided dresses, shoes and accessories for area high school girls to ease the cost of prom
- Jr. FWL Stuffed Animal Drive collected stuffed animals for Centennial Medical Center's Emergency Room

SELECTING THE MISSION

Each year the Frisco Women's League chooses a platform and theme for their philanthropic work and the beneficiaries of their fundraising efforts. The 2006-2007 platform was "Stirrin' Things Up" named after the group's first cookbook that was published in 2006. They have sold 349 copies and it is available for purchase from a group member or at Chatterboxx Designs and Distinctively Hers for \$15. The women incorporated their platform of providing basic needs to the community such as nutrition, shelter and safety when selecting and providing aid for local organizations. The Food Pantry, Meals on Wheels, Frisco Family Services and Centennial Medical Center are just a few of the organizations that benefited from the 2006-2007 platform. According to Ms. Dawson, they try to infuse their platform into everything they do for the year. The 2007-year will kick off with 120 members working on their chosen platform of literacy.

Recently the group developed the Junior Frisco Women's League whose purpose is to promote philanthropy to young women in the Frisco area. The group targets incoming high school juniors and seniors and gives the young ladies the opportunity to help volunteer in the community. Three projects per year are offered. One beneficial project the Junior Frisco Women's League helps with is the Prom Boutique. The girls gathered dresses and accessories for

girls in the area who may not otherwise be able to afford to go to prom. Last year they collected over 200 dresses, shoes, purses and accessories. Since last year's Prom Boutique was such a success, it will become an ongoing service project. In 2006 the Junior Frisco Women's League also orchestrated a stuffed animal drive where they collected more than 300 stuffed animals to donate to children who are Emergency Room patients at Centennial Medical Center.

A key aspect of the Junior Frisco Women's League is the mentoring program for younger members. Senior members offer assistance in college preparation ranging from preparing for standardized tests to applying for scholarships. Last year's inaugural junior membership class had five graduating seniors and they plan to grow in numbers this year. Applications for the Junior Frisco Women's League are currently being accepted through the end of August for the upcoming year.

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Besides starting the Junior Frisco Women's League to mentor and train young women in Frisco, the Frisco Women's League also developed a \$1,000 scholarship for one lucky high school student to attend the college of her choice.

PERSONAL STORIES FROM MEMBERS

"I count myself lucky to be one of the founding members of the FWL. The group started as a few friends who decided to form a women's service league. We wanted to help the community while having fun and meeting new people," states Laura Simmons, founding member.



*Frisco Women's League Past President Karen Dawson and current President Amanda Fuller
photo by Chris Fritchie*

"Our little group has sure grown over the past five years. I am so proud to see where it started and where it has gone. I have been able to learn more about my community and the social service needs through the many FWL volunteer projects we have completed at local non-profit organizations. It is rewarding to know that even if your effort is small, you are helping someone in need. I plan to stay involved with FWL for as long as I am in Frisco."

"Frisco Women's League offers many fulfilling aspects as an organization. I have been a member for two years and have been able to witness many rewarding situations," explains Gabrielle Schermer. "I think the most rewarding is the opportunity to help people in our community who need a hand. Each year we assist in Clothe A Child. We were able to help provide children much needed school clothes so they have the pride of going to school on the first day with a new outfit. When you are a child, this plays a very important part in your self esteem.

"I also benefit greatly from taking my three-year-old to activities so he can understand that it is not just a 'me' world. It also helps him to be thankful for all the things that life has to offer and how lucky we really are to simply have a roof over our heads. This is a major goal of mine to instill in both of my children and FWL helps me with that goal," continues Ms. Schermer.

"I am amazed by the difference we have been able to make by just doing the smallest things that ultimately make such a big impact in people's lives. Sometimes, you don't know what the impact will be. In a way I feel like I am living the saying, 'Paying It Forward' for all the blessings that I received from people who saw I needed a helping hand as a child. I know that circumstances would have been different for me if I had not been given a little boost by those who by no means owed it to me. Some of these people still do not know what an impact they had on my life decisions and how I credit my success to them. So that is why I do

what I do with the FWL by volunteering my time.”

“As we grow as an organization, I look forward to the new ways we can reach people, and help, no matter how small the need,” Ms. Schermer further explains. “I plan to chair our annual blood drive in October and assist in the future growth and goals of the organization.”

“I joined FWL shortly after relocating from Southern California. I had just left the corporate world to stay at home with my daughter. Volunteering is something I always aspired to do, but never got around to doing. To me, Frisco is a dynamic, family-friendly community with a small town feel. I love Frisco so much so I decided it was time to get involved by serving the community. Joining FWL has definitely given me a sense of belonging to this community, while fulfilling personal goals and social needs,” states Marchand Froschheuser.

“Non-profits such as FWL pool resources to foster partnerships with other non-profit organizations or charitable causes. FWL is then ready to step up and provide resources to benefit our partners’ causes. FWL is all about building relationships with each other, charitable causes and the community. It is a valuable tool to help people connect through volunteer service.”

“Today, I juggle being a small business owner, (It’s A Grind Coffee House), wife and mother. However, I will make time to volunteer well into the future,” Ms. Froschheuser states. “Had I known how much the joy of serving others and the significant personal value that can be derived from the experience, I would have gotten involved much sooner.”

A VIEW FROM A BENEFICIARY

“About a year ago, the owner of Solare Spa Café, Rosanne Best, told me that I needed to meet some of the incredible women at the Frisco Women’s League. She had recently visited one of the group’s meetings and was truly impressed by their dedication to making a difference in the Frisco community. She was also impressed with how many women were involved in the group. She set up a meeting and a tour of our Frisco Branch with Daphne Caravella from the FWL Board and then invited me to

provide an informational presentation to the whole League during one of their regular meetings,” explains Cathy Barker, director of development for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Collin County.

“We had a huge response from the women and they instantly became passionate about our kids and in helping us to meet the need to serve more children in Frisco. We currently have a waiting list of 400 kids that we can’t serve due to limited space. After my presentation, I had more than 45 League members come out for personal tours of the Frisco Branch over a period of two weeks to learn more about how they could get involved.” Ms. Barker exclaims, “That equals almost 50 percent participation from the whole League!”

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“The League chose the Boys and Girls Clubs of Collin County to be the beneficiary of funds raised from their annual ‘Mad Hatter Mother-Daughter Tea’ held in May this year. The Frisco Women’s League members support us, not only financially, but also in their volunteerism with our kids. We are still in the process of working with individual members to find out where their interests lie in working with the kids or on special events as we continue to grow our relationship with the FWL.

We look forward to a long-term relationship with this incredible group of women and truly appreciate their support!”

SELECTING THE MEMBERS

The Frisco Women’s League is open to women in the city of Frisco and surrounding communities. General members must be 21 years of age or older to join but the majority of the members fall between the ages of 27

and 37. Women are not required to have a recommendation or a sponsor to join. It is the policy of Frisco Women’s League that no person, on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age or handicap shall be discriminated against in their activities, programs, membership or leadership opportunities. Each year the group has two recruitment sessions that are usually held in January and September. The next recruitment social will be held on September 13, 2007 at Stonebriar Country Club. This meeting will provide interested women with an opportunity to learn more about the organization and ask any questions. After attending the recruitment social, a member application must be completed and submitted along with \$75 for the annual membership dues. A new member orientation meeting follows. Upon completion of those requirements, interested women will then be able to participate in a number of wonderful community projects. The group meets monthly from August through May with a break during the summer months.

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

The Frisco Women’s League is looking for community leaders from both the business and non-profit sector to serve on their advisory board. The purpose of the board is to guide and inform members of community interests and needs and to support Frisco Women’s League in their volunteer and fundraising efforts. Interested parties can contact Frisco Women’s League via email at friscoamanda@tx.rr.com.

In addition to helping provide a sense of responsibility and pride to the Frisco community, other great benefits from becoming a member include volunteer training, developing great leadership skills and lasting friendships.

If you’re interested in making a life by giving, contact the Frisco Women’s League at friscowomensleague@yahoo.com or for more information on the Frisco Women’s League or membership, you may visit their website at www.friscowomensleague.org.

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano.