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Club celebrates 50 years

By Penny Hummel
Item Writer

As the old adage goes, "A lady never reveals her age," but the ladies at the Hamburg Woman's Club are celebrating the organization's 50th birthday in style this year.

On Nov. 6, 1956, the Hamburg Woman's Club officially began. It was divided by age, into the "senior" and "junior" women, and was a part of the Federation of Woman's Clubs.

The woman started right away working to benefit their community. Just one week later, the *Hamburg Area Item* reported that the group, headed by Mrs. Ellis Gaul, worked door to door to collect money for the United Fund. Pooling their efforts with The Business and Professional Women's Club, they raised nearly \$2,000.

Ruth Reed was the junior club's third president, and she recalled raising funds for UNICEF and Care, feed the children organizations to help children in war-ravaged Europe. The group also created a bedspread with an embroidered ship's seal for a hospital ship called "Hope", docked in New York Harbor.

The club is credited with starting the Northern Berks Food Pantry, which is now its own non-profit organization. Ginie Freeman, who was the organization's president at the time, received a national award for the project.

The club worked with the Jaycees in the past for a Christmas Lights display in the town, and used to collect cans every Wednesday to raise funds.

The Woman's Club was also responsible for raising money for playground equipment and having it installed at the Hamburg Park.

Sandy Christman, president during 1975 and 76 recalled many pizza sales and making Italian sandwiches in her home to raise money, as well as a "Tom Watt" kit which she described as "A box of little stuff that you'd peddle to your neighbors."

The ladies of Hamburg are still hard at work, raising money and helping the community.

Last year's fundraiser, a



Item photo by Penny Hummel

Hamburg Woman's Club President Anne Marie Henne stands before the American House Hotel, which will host a celebration for the club on Nov. 8 at 7 p.m.

show with Raymond the Amish Comic, was such a success, the organization has scaled back their fundraising efforts this year to selling flower bulbs.

But they're not scaling back their community service work.

The group is a regular sponsor of the Nutcracker performance by Dance Pointe Studio, donates to Berks Women in Crisis, and offers scholarships to graduating seniors of Hamburg Area High School.

The group organizes a fashion show to benefit the Hamburg Community Library each year. They also purchase a book for the library in the name of each baby born to club members.

"The year I was an officer, all the officers were pregnant and no one wanted to be an officer the next year," Christman said with a laugh.

Past presidents have donated scrapbooks to the Hamburg Area Historical Society and the group has purchased bricks in memory of past presidents.

This year the club is taking on the "Families helping Families" Dinner with the First United Church of Christ, an annual Christmas dinner hosted for area people in need.

As much as the organization helps the community, women

also join for the social interaction, and plan events for their family and children.

"It's something for me, yet I'm able to do something for the community and our kids," Current President, Anne Marie Henne said.

"Most of us were not working (at the time) so that was an outlet," Christman added. She recalled days of singing in a district chorus and luncheons with other area women's clubs.

The club has changed through the years, is no longer a part of the federation, and welcomes any woman over the age of 18 to join.

"Today we have members ranging from their early 20s to their late 50s," said Henne.

"I remember when we had to wear hats, gloves and dresses to our meetings," said Christman. "I'm glad that's changed!"

"I find it interesting, what a diverse group we've had," she said, pointing out that some of the women are stay-at-home moms, others are judges, teachers, or business owners. Some of the women are married, others are single.

"It's not just a bunch of moms getting together to talk about their kids," Henne said. "Although we do that, too."

To celebrate the milestone,

the Hamburg Woman's Club is hosting a celebration at the American House Hotel. Refreshments will be provided at the free event, which is Nov. 8 at 7 p.m.

"Everyone I've talked to seems really excited about it," Henne said.

Reed is one of those excited about the birthday celebration.

"I enjoyed the club when I was in it," she said.

According to Henne, past presidents of the organization will be receiving written invitations, but the group is issuing an open invitation to previous members, as well as women interested in joining the club.

"I joined 15 years ago to meet people," Henne said. "I stay in because I love it."

Contact Penny at plhummel@berksmontnews.com.

Join them

The Woman's Club of Hamburg meets at 7:15 p.m. on second Wednesday of the month at the First United Church of Christ, Third and Pine Streets. For

more information, send an e-mail to: HAWCNewsletter@comcast.net.