

HISTORY of CFUW - Peterborough

It was on March 8th, 1937, towards the end of the depression and two years prior to the outbreak of WW II, that a group of women met at the Y.W.C.A. to organize a local branch of the University Women's Club. (In 2004 the Club name was officially changed to the Canadian Federation of University Women - Peterborough.) There were 57 charter members and their first regular meeting was held April 14th, 1937. The first article of their mandate was to support the education of women and this goal persists to this day. The pattern of activities was established at those early meetings and to a large extent continues today, monthly meetings, usually business followed by a speaker or program, a Christmas dinner, and many diverse interest groups. It is important to note that these founding members were most probably the first in their families to earn a university degree. As educated women, they did have a "*quiet confidence and an inner conviction of their own equality*" (Joan McRae, a 50 year + member, 1987).

Programs have always been diverse and include topics such as the environment, culture, literature, world issues, history, education, women, children, and occasionally politics, when we hold forums with all candidates seeking election to boards of education or municipal or provincial governments. Interest groups were initiated with the founding of the club and continue today.

It was in 1949 that the first academic financial bursary was established and awarded to a Grade 13 girl graduating from PCVS (then the only public high school in the city). In 1990, the Club established a separate Awards Fund which has charitable status. The Awards Fund gives out a variety of bursaries within the education community. The Club has never considered itself a money-making organization, but like many organizations, it receives requests for donations, both monetary and otherwise. However, there have been several notable and fun-filled fund-raising events throughout our history, including pot-luck suppers for women in Afghanistan and for teen mothers, fashion shows to support the establishment of an academic bursary at Trent University, dragon boat racing competitions, a garage sale, coin collections, etc.

In the cultural domain, our club is a founding member of the Art Gallery of Peterborough. This began as a very successful University Women's Club initiative to establish an art-rental service. The Arts Committee brought several notable artistic performers to town in the days prior to the establishment of Showplace and Market Hall concert facilities. These included individual performers such as Glenn Gould in 1953 (for an admission price of \$1.00) and Maureen Forrester in 1956, as well as artistic companies such as the Canadian Opera Company and the National Ballet of Canada.

Throughout our history, there have been many special events that CFUW - Peterborough has organized. Among these are Kaleidoscope, the first Folk Arts Festival in Centennial Year 1967, an Indian Conference (the name *First Nations* was adopted in 1970), a Women-In-Nontraditional Careers workshop for female high-school students. In addition, several regional and provincial CFUW Conferences have been hosted by the Club.

An interest in public affairs and advocacy has been a strong focus of the Club throughout its history. This has led the Club to establish a speakers' bureau and to sponsor a candidate in school board elections. Over the past twenty-five years, the Club has actively studied and provided input into the annual CFUW Resolutions. These Resolutions are the basis of the advocacy initiatives which the national office promotes nationally and internationally on our behalf.

The diversity in the membership of CFUW - Peterborough, with its breadth of experiences, interests, and abilities has always enabled each individual to meet her expectations and indeed as an advocate, through one or more of the Club's interest groups, to make a unique contribution by expanding her learning, or participating in a variety of activities.