

CORAL GABLES

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Connecting Communities

Coral Gables Woman's Club is steeped in history

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At the outset, it's important to point out that the Coral Gables Woman's Club and the Junior Woman's Club have worked with common goals since their inception. Literacy, education, health and serving the needs of the community have always been at the forefront of our efforts.

Founded in 1923, the Coral Gables Woman's Club joined the Dade County Federation of Women's Club and the General Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1929, the Junior Department was created and became the Coral Gables Junior Woman's Club in 1936. Both the General and Junior Clubs continued to serve the community with the Junior Club starting what has now become the famous children's dental clinic. Originally, it was housed in cooperation with the city in the offices of the mayor for 19 years. The clinic closed in 1944 during WW II because of a shortage of dentists but reopened in the fall of 1946.

Under the presidencies of CGWC's Mrs. Louis Langford and Junior President Mrs. Alexander Orr, the women worked with WPA and the City of Coral Gables Commission to build on land donated by the City what is now their historically designated clubhouse at 1001-1009 East Ponce de Leon Blvd.

Kindergarten for the schools of Coral Gables was set up under the presidency of Mrs. Leo C. Cloney (1945-46). In 1949, the club turned over the sponsorship of the Kindergarten to the Exchange Club. There is a plaque at the Coral Gables Elementary School memorializing the establishment of

the first kindergarten in the city in 1945. Additionally, the first Coral Gables Library was housed in the 1009 side of the clubhouse until the city was able to build their own library.

During that same period juniors took over the production of a cabaret show designing costumes, hiring a choreographer and raising money to support their charitable efforts. They created a welfare budget to set aside money for the future construction of their own dental clinic. In September of 1957, the dental clinic was built at a cost of \$9,000 and opened its doors. Since first opening its doors in 1939, the dental clinic has served over 40,000 chil-



CGWC past president Dorothy Thomson, the first and only woman elected mayor of the City of Coral Gables.



Old Coral Gables Library converted to ballroom after CGWC bought the property.

dren in Miami-Dade County and provided over \$5.5M in free dental care.

Over the years the CGWC and the CGJWC merged to become the very vibrant and diverse club it is today. In fact, CGWC past president Dorothy Thomson served 16 years on the Coral Gables City Commission and made history in 1985 when she was the first and only woman elected mayor of the Coral of Coral Gables. The classic cabaret fundraisers became too expensive to produce and have been replaced with galas,

auctions, teas, and most recently with Gringo Bingo games at Clutch Burger. The historic clubhouse has been beautifully renovated. Rentals and grants from many foundations, such as the Dr. John T. Macdonald Foundation, provide the necessary income for keeping the club's free children's dental clinic open.

For more information on the dental clinic, clubhouse rentals or how to join the club or make a donation, visit online at www.gfwccoralgableswomensclub.org.



GFWC Coral Gables Junior Woman's Club Board of Directors (circa 1982).



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