

GFWC CT July Orientation and Board of Directors Meeting
Greater Danbury Irish Cultural Center, Danbury, CT
Saturday, July 12, 2025

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Kathy Barnes, President, GFWC/CT, at 10:30 am. Kathy welcomed all members to the meeting and asked that everyone be sure to choose a workshop to participate in, and to purchase raffle tickets.

Inspiration: Sara Newell, 3rd Vice President, came forward to give the Inspiration of the day, sharing her thoughts on the meaning of “inspiration”.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America: Nancy Corragio, Danbury/New Fairfield, led us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

Collect for Club Women: Georgeann Kishner, CPR Chair and member of Danbury/New Fairfield, led the Collect.

Credentials: Joanne Sullivan, Meeting Chairman, presented the credentials:

Past State Presidents	4
Club Presidents/Co Presidents	10
State Board Members	33
Total Non-Voting Attendees	11
Registered Guests	0
Total Attendees	48
District with the Largest Attendance	North Central - 44
Club with the Largest Attendance	Danbury/New Fairfield

The Chair declares a quorum.

Introduction of Officers: Mischa Campbell, Member at Large; Pam Lerner, Assistant Treasurer; Jeanne Kehoe, Treasurer; Joann Hohensee, Recording Secretary; 3rd Vice President, Sara Newell; 2nd Vice President, Nicole Karalli; President Elect, Wendy Clery.

Introduction of Past State Presidents: Jeanne Waseleski, 2006-2008; JoAnn Calnen, 2010-2012; Debbie Fiore, 2020-2022; and Kathy DeBurra, 2022-2024.

Reports of GFWC/CT Officers: **Member at Large**, Mischa Campbell reported that the clubs seem to be doing ok at this time. She has not had anyone reach out to her yet, and she is happy to come out and visit with your clubs at your meetings. Reminded us of the Suggestion Box. **Assistant Treasurer**, Pam Lerner reported that she will be sending out a request for each club to update its roster and then return it as soon as possible so that the club invoices can be sent out correctly. If your 2024 roster was sent in Excel as requested, then she will be sending your old roster back to you to review, make any corrections, add or delete members and information and return it to her via email. Please list your current officers on the bottom of the spreadsheet which will make communications easier. **Treasurer**, Jeanne Kehoe reported that the Finance Committee has met and approved the 2025-2026 budget, which has also been approved by the Executive Committee. Our accounts are up to date and all invoices have been paid or in process. Expenses are within budget. **Recording Secretary**, Joann Hohensee reported that the minutes for the May Convention are done and posted on the GFWC/CT website. She asked for three volunteers to read today’s minutes. They were: Sara Newell, Jeanne Kehoe, and Sandy Barry.

3rd Vice President Sara Newell recognized all Presidents and Copresidents in attendance: Madeline Gross and Kathy Aiello, Copresidents, Bethel WC; Sue Michaud, President, WC of Enfield; Deb Duval and Mary Jane McCarthy, Copresidents, Suburban WC of Greater New Britain; Charlene Pender, President, Newington/Wethersfield WC; Maria Aurigemma, President, Thomaston WC; Gerri Harvey, President, Windsor WC; Linda Mellilo, Copresident, Hamden WC; and Pam Lerner, President, North Haven WC. In addition, Sara reported two District Days have been scheduled so far for 2026: North Central, Sat., March 28th and North West, Saturday, April 11th. **2nd Vice President** Nicole Karalli has updated her CSP card to now include "Online Reporting Workshops." She will be conducting workshops every 2 weeks beginning Sept. 8th. The dates are: Sept. 8 & 22; Oct. 6 & 20; Nov. 3 & 17; Dec. 1, 15, & 29; and Jan. 5, beginning at 6:30 pm. If you wish to participate, please contact her at Nicole.karalli@att.net. She will be happy to come out to your club meeting night to talk about the reporting process. Also, new Word templates and Excel sheets will be available soon online at the GFWC/CT website. **GFWC President Elect** Wendy Clery spoke about the Leadership Library. She welcomes your suggestions and book donations focusing on leadership topics. A few books are available here to sign out which will be due at the next state meeting. Wendy thanked GFWC/CT members for donations made at the May meeting to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. If you wish to donate today, look for her mini blue recycle bin at the head table. Donations will be brought to the NER conference. Wendy continued, "It takes a village to raise a child and it takes a full and active board to support our GFWC/CT clubs. I would like to ask everyone to consider joining the next team to help our clubs thrive. There is a space for everybody. We can do better together." One of her goals is to contact as many clubs as possible and get to know your issues and concerns. She will be holding a mini-LEADS workshop on November 15th. Location to be announced. The workshop was inspired by the New York Times bestseller "The Let Them Theory" by Mel Robbins, which is now part of the Leadership Library, and was promptly checked out today.

Presidents Report, Kathy Barnes, President, GFWC/CT.

We are coming into the time when rosters are updated, dues are paid and insurance gets renewed. In both cases – the way we have always done it, is being tweaked. As Pam mentioned, rosters must be turned in as Excel compatible worksheets. Google docs, numbers document or Excel will work for me. Our rosters are the data we use for communication, and for definition of members. We request that all rosters contain name, address, preferred phone number, email. Please identify club presidents and treasurers. We do not share your information outside of GFWC. Insurance billing will be based on club size as of 5/31/25.

At national convention I was asked to share with other state presidents the concept of a comprehensive communication plan and I had an opportunity to speak of our website with both public and private sections, and our Facebook presence - public and private. I know many clubs also follow this process and you are to be congratulated for it.

At the New England region meeting, I was asked to share one pearl from the last year. About a year ago – one of our small but active clubs called me. They had a crisis. Could I help? Many of their leaders had resigned and the club had to shut down their main project because of changes to many members' health. When the president spoke at their year-end banquet, she spoke of accomplishments. Her unplanned Presidency had built a team, set goals, found ways to accomplish them, and had started working on recruiting more members into leadership positions.

They had a poor website, so they worked with the Chamber of Commerce to find an intern to rebuild it. They use Facebook to showcase their community events and membership events. They hosted a series of talks at the library focusing on local resources for people with different abilities. They expanded their support for veterans' coffee hours. Following the banquet, where so much recognition was given for members who tried new things and succeeded, the President leaned over to me and said– "nobody wants to volunteer for anything." Then she smiled because she too, realized members just needed to decide to choose action. You know what is so great about this story? I could be talking about a few different clubs in this state. It makes me so proud to serve as your President.

Cara Lawson, coach of Duke Women's basketball said: "Everyone has to lead in a way that is true to their personality and also true to the people they are being tasked with leading." Please let me know how I can support you as the leaders you are.

Connecting to GFWC Member Portal AND Legislative Action Center. Kathy Barnes, President.

The Member Portal on the GFWC website at gfwc.org holds a tremendous amount of information about the organization, opportunities for clubs and members. For example – the Club Manual has contacts for CSP projects, suggestions of how to activate your community, how-to's for some really different fundraising projects. Have you ever thought of a Pet Photo Contest as a Fundraiser?

The digital library holds the current emblem and brand logo for your use, graphics for International Day of Service, sample press releases, ESO book lists and GRANT APPLICATIONS.

Let's talk about how to sign up for the member portal.

1. Go to www.gfwc.org
2. Click on the Red/pink member portal button in the top right corner of the GFWC Website to go to the new login page.
3. Register your online profile
4. Click REGISTER HERE under "Welcome to...."
5. This takes you to a "Join the Federation" page
6. If you have ever had an online profile with GFWC use the same email address.
7. Click NEXT
8. Select our state federation from the drop-down menu NEXT
9. Select your club from the drop-down menu NEXT
10. Opt in or out of GFWC Updates if you leave it blank, it reverts to prior choices. Check the box I Am Not A Robot and then Join Now
11. For anyone who has used one of the old member portals – choose the profile you currently use. Then click Join Now.
12. Finally – wait for a profile approval. Hint – 1 to 2 business days. Real live humans will review your submission and approve.

Legislative Action Center: Do you support funding to support survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes by providing counseling, case management and crisis hotlines and community-based programs? The Crime Victims Fund is essential to provide these resources to victims of crimes.

I am enrolled in the Legislative Action Center. This week we got an alert, so today I will take action.

In your red folders is a form with the QR code to sign up for the LAC. Let's all do this right now to make our voices heard. Also in the folder is the reporting form for the Legislative Ladder to track how your club is doing in advocating.

On behalf of GFWC/CT and in partnership with Canine Companions, I advocated last year to have the Town of Tolland declare September National Service Dog Month. Canine Companions is offering their action portal again so you can do that in your community. It's easy and it gets the attention of your town. That is a great step towards advocacy. A flyer from C. C. is in your folder.

GFWC has several affiliates – organizations which support many of the same ideals of our club. These are partnerships and my goal is to have information about many of them brought to us during this administration.

Speaker: Jess Tessman, Development Manager, Central & Western CT – Alzheimer's Assoc., CT Chapter

Jess Tessmana, our speaker, is joining us remotely today. Jess is from the Alzheimer's Association. She had a car failure last night and is unable to join us in person – however, she sent her presentation and will join us by Facetime thanks to the successful efforts of Kathy Barnes and Wendy Clery.

Did you know that 70% of the caregivers for Alzheimer's patients are women? Not surprising. Did you also know that 2/3 of the people living with Alzheimer's disease are women? Mental health goes hand-in-hand with being a caregiver. In 2024, 7 million Americans suffered from A.D., with 80,000 in CT alone. Dementia is an umbrella term. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia and can strike as young as 40 years of age. It is important to know which form of dementia your loved one is suffering from. There is no cure, but there are research studies and treatments. 2025 stats reveal there are 11 million caregivers in America, with 130,000 caregivers in CT. Depression is prevalent among caregivers. There are consultants for families, and 50 virtual and in-person support groups available (go to www.ALZ.org), as well as 24/7 help lines (1-800-272-3900). Available so far only in CT is a program called "Bring Me Back Home". BMBH is a new registry for CT residents which allows law enforcement access to information to assist in the recovery of missing or wandering persons. The provided information and photo, accessible through the COLLECT criminal justice and safety system, helps first responders and families reunite with individuals living with cognitive challenges, such as Dementia or Autism. Go to www.ct.gov/BMBH to register. Also available in CT for families are \$500 respite grants for assistance. A new accessible free app called My ALZ Journey can provide support, guidance and connection for newly diagnosed people and their caregivers. Plus, there are 600 nationwide Walks to End Alzheimer's, including one coming up in New Fairfield, CT on September 21st. You may contact Jess for further information at jetessman@ALZ.org or 860-419-3155.

Break for Lunch

Expression of Thanks: Beverly Regan, WC of Danbury/New Fairfield and Scholarship Chairman, came forward to give the expression of thanks. She read, "Touching Shoulders", a resonant poem written by an unknown author.

Afternoon Session

Introduction of GFWC/CT 2024-2026 Jennie Nominee. Jeanne Waseleski, Jennie Award Chairman came forward to announce the CT nominee for this administration. **JoAnn Calnen, Congratulations!** “You were nominated by Sandra Barry, President of your Club. She was assisted by your current Club President, Susan Michaud. Your members were very good at keeping a secret! As a member of the Woman’s Club of Enfield, this Candidate exemplifies excellence in Commitment to Family, to Club and to Community. Commitment to Family: JoAnn has two sons, David and Andrew. David married Alison – they had two sons: Logan and Lukas. JoAnn was an active grandmother to her two grandsons, and loved babysitting. JoAnn is married to Dr. Gerald Calnen, a pediatrician, and helped him by working as the Office Manager at his busy practice in Enfield. Commitment to Club: JoAnn joined the Woman’s Club in 1991, and quickly became a very active member. She was the LEADS candidate in 2002. She has been the Club Parliamentarian from 2006 to the present day. She was State President from 2010-2012; and New England Region President from 2020-2022. This was a difficult time due to the Covid Pandemic. She has also served as a NER Representative, and on the National Level on the Leadership Committee. Commitment to Community: Upon graduation from high school, JoAnn joined the United States Air Force in 1971, serving as a computer operator until her discharge in 1975. She helped her husband and the community by helping Gerald with his campaigns for the Enfield Board of Education, talking to people about their concerns with education in Enfield; also helping with mailing literature and phone calls. JoAnn is an active volunteer with the Common Grounds Rotary Club community garden – located at the Enfield Senior Center. Produce from the garden is donated to the Enfield Food Shelf, which is given to clients. There is much more to this story, and, once more we are very happy to congratulate JoAnn!” At the New England Region Conference, the two national candidates for the Jennie Award from the New England states will be presented. The recipients from all regions will be recognized at the International Convention in Scottsdale in June 2026. President Kathy thanked Jeanne for managing this process and presenting our nominee, JoAnn Calnen.

GFWC International Convention Report. As reported by Kathy Barnes, Wendy Clery, Debbie Fiore, and Lynne Sarro (absent). Kathy began: “While the photos show laughter, fun events, friendships made and shared, and yes- yummy food – a whole lot takes place at the International Convention. Those of us who were able to attend this year will share a bit. *Lynne Sarro* is our 2025 LEADs graduate and she will be speaking at our Fall Conference. She has a family commitment today and is unable to join us. I did ask her if she would comment on the workshops and her take-aways: “Community Service Programs: the format of the workshop was to work in groups on given situations for roadblocks/barriers to a successful program and present solutions. Working in small groups, getting input from everyone, listening and being open led to creative solutions. Many CSP projects can become stale over the years and need an infusion of new ideas/new people to refresh and be successful. Signature Program: the speaker was amazing! Biggest takeaway: ONE person (or a small group) CAN make a difference. Going from an idea to involving town leaders to make something happen, is possible.”

Debbie Fiore: “This year we honored 135 years of empowering women and transformed lives. The GFWC committees put together great programs and offered lots of helpful tips and ideas to bring back to your clubs. My next favorite thing is the speakers. They are renowned and experts from various fields, providing valuable insights into critical topics such as health, literacy, advancements that women have

achieved throughout history, and the ongoing fight against domestic and sexual violence. My favorite speaker was Dr. Regina Benjamin, the Founder and CEO of Bayou Clinic, and she was the 18th Surgeon General (2009-2013). She had many stories about her challenges establishing a clinic in Alabama and watching it burn down the day before opening. She found a way to rebuild and continue to help the people who were most needy. She was very inspiring and a testament that hard work and determination pays off.”

Wendy Clery reported on two workshops she attended, Communications and Leadership. “GFWC updates us on different style guide changes, some basics, as well as any new tips and tricks they have to share. For me, in the Communications workshop, I really appreciated the portion about digital resource management and information security. I’m sure we all know how important keeping our personal information secure is, and they reminded us how it’s important for our clubs as well, plus tips on how best to do that. In the Leadership workshop, one of the things we did was talk about the types of leaders we were and how we approached and managed leadership positions. We compared our styles to construction tools and I chose a paintbrush for myself because I feel my strength as a leader is helping you all to shine. You work so hard and do such great projects that my job becomes all about showcasing YOU! I found helpful and insightful ways to help our clubs/districts/state work well together.”

Advocacy and GFWC’s Legislative Action Process. Kathy Barnes continued. “One of the great strengths of GFWC as an organization which makes a difference in the lives of many is our advocacy. This was brought home for me during the general session voting on resolutions. Do you remember hearing about the proposed legislation in Florida to drastically lower the age at which children may be employed and increase the hours which they may work? I was glad that CT would probably never go that route. However, the Florida Federation became energized, engaged and empowered and worked hard, using GFWC’s legislative action process to help defeat that bill. There is a lot of lead time for resolutions which are reviewed at each convention but we also have a provision for an emergency resolution. GFWC FL submitted one and it was approved to be included in the convention. The rationale was to address proposals in a number of states to relax the regulation of child labor and to address pending federal legislation that would strengthen child labor protections for federal government contractors. Some phrases were changed, our President Elect Wendy Clery spoke on the need to recognize people who may be under the age of 18 but in college, and needing to work – a concern I shared. That was addressed. Finally, the resolution was passed.” Wendy added, “does anyone know what our resolutions are and what they’re for? At convention, the Resolution Committee goes through their report of anything that needed review, revisions, subtractions, and additions. Members then review, discuss, offer amendments and then vote whether to include with minor adjustments. This resolution by the Florida Federation was approved. “

The business part of the convention is not what you see, but it was my pleasure to represent our state in doing the business of our club both during the convention and during the Board of Directors meeting. I would like to speak about recognition our members received at convention:

- GFWC CT was recognized by Shot@Life as a top Measles Mission Fundraiser. I would like to present this certificate to the **Woman’s Club of Danbury/New Fairfield** for their contribution.

- In the GFWC Photography Contest – **Holly Martin**, Harwinton WC, was presented with for 3rd place award in “Our World Up Close” for her “Green Bees” photo; and **Kathy Aiello**, Bethel WC, was presented with 3rd place award in the “Natural Wonders” category for her photo of the Northern Lights.
- The International Convention is June 27-29, 2026 in Scottsdale, AZ.
- International Day of Service: Our state is registered and 14 clubs have registered. New England Region is registered. Why the big push? Let’s think about what is covered in the area of domestic and sexual violence awareness and prevention: Teen dating violence, elder abuse, human trafficking, abuse in the military, child abuse, campus sexual assault, violence against Native American women. I know one small club is making hand-out cards with community support phone numbers for services and will be placing them in local convenience stores.

New England Region Conference Update: The conference will be in Meredith, NH on October 30-November 2. Registration for hotels may be done by phone at this time. The Call should be out next month.

Nominating Committee for 2026-2028. Kathy DeBurra, Nominating Committee Chairman introduced the Nominating Committee, and talked about the next Administration, 2026-2028. “I would like to recognize all of the Members of the Nominating Committee in attendance today: Kathy Aiello, Debbie Fiore, JoAnn Sullivan, Jeanne Waseleski. Also, Alternates Lynne Sarro and Madeline Gross. We are looking for You and know great LEADERS are in this room and in GFWC/CT. I know and have seen first-hand the wonderful leadership qualities in this room and beyond. I am asking you to consider the opportunities to support the next Administration, 2026-2028. I feel very proud of the status of our organization at this time and know that President Clery will bring amazing activities to GFWC/CT. We have 6 positions to fill. At this current time, we have 2 of those positions credibly filled with interested candidates. The “open” positions are 2nd Vice President, 3rd Vice President, Assistant Treasurer, and Recording Secretary. Please reach out to any of us to ask questions, offer input and inquiries on the positions. We look forward to those conversations and will support you fully!”

Workshops. Members signed up for and participated in one of the following workshops:

- **New, fairly new, and future Club Presidents – What is your connection to GFWC/CT and how can you use it to help your club.** Facilitator – Kathy Barnes, GFWC/CT President.
- **Membership – Recruit, Retain and Recognize GFWC Members** – Facilitator – Sara Newell, 3rd GFWC/CT Vice President.
- **Community Impact Program: What it can do for your club as well as the community** – Facilitator, Wendy Clery, GFWC/CT President Elect.
- **Fundraising – It can help your club with more than money!** – Facilitator – Jeanne Kehoe, GFWC/CT Treasurer.
- **Community Service Programs – Effective CSP Reporting – making the connection to your community** – Facilitators CSP Chairmen and Nicole Karalli, GFWC/CT 2nd Vice President.

Announcements. 1). Pam Lerner announced that the GFWC Women’s Club of North Haven is sponsoring a “Furry Friends Raffle” for the month of September 2025 to benefit the North Haven Animal Control for care of animals in need. \$10 enters you in the drawing for lots of good stuff all month long! For more information, see Pam or any WCNH member. 2). Ginny Chulkovs, GFWC/CT Health & Wellness Chairman, is looking for Clubs to participate in the “Sheila Macauley Memorial Walking Contest” which will take place the week of October 12, 2025. For more

information, see or email Ginny at ginny.chulkovs@gmail.com. 3). Donna Recknagel, Newington/Wethersfield WC, is looking for anyone interested in making pillow ports for children undergoing cancer treatment. It's a very basic little pillow. If clubs are interested, instructions can be found online. Just look up "port pillows". Children's Medical Center will accept them, and there are other medical offices as well. 4). Donna Farrell, WC of Madison, is looking for donations of gently-used pocket books, purses, brief cases for an on-going sale at state meetings. Bring your items to the September meeting. They'll be priced to sell! 5). President Kathy Barnes made a motion to donate \$200 to the Alzheimer's Organization. Seconded by Joanne Sullivan. All in favor. Motion passed. 6). Mark your calendars! GFWC/CT Fall meeting is Saturday, September 20th at Fairview Farms Golf Course in Harwinton.

Raffles. The 50/50 raffle raised \$230 with the lucky winner going home with \$115 and \$115 to GFWC/CT. Raffles were also held for 3 great prizes: a colorful birdbath plate for the garden, a basket of goodies donated by the Madison WC, and a lovely plant. The three raffles brought in \$220, for a grand total of \$335.00.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm by President Kathy Barnes.

Joann Hohensee,
GFWC/CT Recording Secretary
2024-2026 Administration