

25 Years of Community Service Reviewed

10 MAIL TRIBUNE, Medford, Oregon, Sunday, December 7, 1958

Anniversary of Girls Club Here Observed Monday

A story of 25 years of community service, particularly to young women, was re-told Monday evening at a dinner of Medford civic leaders.

The event celebrated the 25th anniversary of founding of the Girls Community club, and the dinner was held in the new clubhouse on North Bartlett st. which was opened for use a little more than a year ago.

Presiding over the program was Mrs. Dolph Phipps, the

woman who was largely instrumental in formation of the club 25 years ago and who has served continuously as president of the board of directors during the entire period.

Greet Guests

Eugene Thorndike, retired Medford banker who has served on the board of trustees for many years, greeted the guests and conducted a joint meeting of the two boards, with election of officers.

As Mrs. Phipps reviewed the first days of Girls Community club, and major events during the 25 years, she introduced a number of individuals who have been identified with its progress.

The club was formally incorporated in May of 1934, the papers listing Mrs. Phipps as president; Mrs. I. E. Schuler, vice-president; Miss Margaret Kerr, treasurer, and Mrs. Aletha E. Vawter, secretary.

First Directors

The first directors were Mrs. R. B. Hammond, Mrs. William Holloway, Mrs. Porter Neff, Mrs. Lewis Humphreys, Mrs. Lawrence Pennington, Miss Laura Drury (now Mrs. Norris Porter), Miss Marjorie Kelly, Mrs. W. W. Aldrich, Mrs. H. M. Weishaar and Mrs. M. M. Morris.

Mrs. Vawter and Mrs. Neff both remained on the board until their deaths. Mrs. Phipps paid tribute to both women; she told how Mrs. Neff, as

purposing agent, worked hard to keep the clubhouse furnished and equipped on the slimmest of budgets, and how Mrs. Vawter had served as treasurer throughout the years.

Mrs. Newbury and Mrs. Pennington no longer live in Medford, but Mrs. Pennington came from California for the dinner. Mrs. Morris is still on the board.

Eight Organizations

Mrs. Phipps pointed out that the first board represented eight organizations of the city, plus representatives from the former YWCA board.

Mrs. Phipps, assisted by Dr. B. R. Elliott, reviewed the history of the YWCA, Girls Community club predecessor, and told how support was withdrawn from that organization because of the expense of paying the salary of a secretary approved by YWCA national headquarters, and of paying national dues.

The new organization took over the YWCA clubhouse on North Bartlett, the former Haskins' home, and the present clubhouse was erected on the same site. Dr. Elliott mentioned that the site has now been used as a community center for 38 years.

Purpose of Club

Purpose of Girls Community club when organized was to provide low-cost housing and supervision for young women trying to get a start in the business world, to provide a recreation and program center for girls out of high school but not yet ready for a program such as offered by the business and professional women's organizations, and to operate club rooms where various organizations of the valley might hold meetings and social functions.

Through the years, this policy has continued with year-by-year adaptations to meet the community's needs.

Early activities included courses and classes in etiquette and social culture, sex education and health; bridge and dancing, and handicrafts.

A girls' basketball team was organized and played games throughout the area. Badminton and softball was also played by club members. An orchestra was organized, and directed by Mrs. E. E. Gore.

A free employment bureau for domestics was maintained for several years.

Useful Service

One of the most useful of the club's services was providing quarters for group meetings, and more than 40 different organizations have used both the old and the new clubhouse for this purpose. In addition parties, weddings and receptions, bazaars, hobby shows and various other functions have been held in the buildings.

Mrs. Phipps stressed that all the leadership and teaching had been on a volunteer basis. She introduced Mrs. C. Reese Braley, who had conducted some of the classes; Mrs. Charles Champlin, who had lived at the club as a young girl just out of high school; Mrs. H. G. Wilson, who had been on the YWCA board and supported the new club; Mrs. Norris Porter, who had attended some of the early classes, and Mrs. Nellie Laing, who had played on one of the basketball teams.

First Matron

Mrs. Florence Laing, who became the first matron of the club in 1935, was introduced. Mrs. Laing, now 85 years old, recalled that she had been paid \$20 a month for her services. The former matron spoke of the club's

early days, said "there were no idle girls in the clubhouse" and added that only one had been asked to leave because of misconduct.

Following Mrs. Laing's resignation, Mrs. Stella Hendrickson served as matron for a number of years until ill health forced her to leave.

Mrs. Mabel Houck was then hired as matron, and remains in the office at present. Mrs. Houck spoke of the manner in which girls wishing to live at the club are interviewed and chosen.

Twenty-two girls are now living at the club, and the average living at the club during each month is 26. Almost all are in their 'teens, a time limit is put on their length of stay since once they have become established in a job, the club directors believe they are able to find other suitable quarters.

Interest Shown

The president spoke of the interest shown in the club and its program by other cities of the state. Mrs. Phipps was asked to establish a similar club at Grants Pass, and served on a state committee which gathered and disseminated information on the subject for cities in Oregon. The National Youth association used the club as a plan for setting up other Oregon clubs.

Activities of the club during the war were reviewed. In addition to routine work, the club aided the wives of soldiers at Camp White in finding housing and employment.

Thorndike reviewed the club's methods of financing itself, spoke of the years when it was a Community Chest agency, and of the developments brought about by the club's being dropped from the Chest. The club then conducted its own fund-raising drive, with success, and continued to operate.

Fire Hazard

In 1955 the club building was termed a "fire hazard" by the Medford fire department, and the upstairs was closed as living quarters. It was then that the club's building committee, headed by Thorndike, redoubled efforts to find the money for a new structure.

Thorndike and Mrs. Phipps related how the late John R. Tomlin, retired Medford lumberman, selected the club as the recipient of a large donation for the proposed building.

Mrs. Phipps stressed that the directors had never sought Mr. Tomlin's help, but that in his efforts to find a worthy place for disposal of his for-

tune, he had decided that a community clubhouse would best suit his ideas. Mr. Tomlin made the gift anonymously and only after his death was it revealed.

Building Completed

The building was completed in the summer of 1957, and dedicated in September. One of the organizations which had met in the old building, and now meets in the new, is the Medford Chin-Up club. Harry Chipman, long-time Chin-Up member, related how Mrs. Phipps had determined what special planning was needed for the club members, many of whom are in wheel chairs or on crutches. As a result, the clubhouse has extra-wide doors and one floor-level entrance for the convenience of the physically handicapped.

The meeting closed with election of directors and trustees. Named to the board were Mrs. Phipps, Mrs. Martin Luther, Mrs. M. M. Morris, Mrs. Mamie E. Sleeter, Mrs. G. R. Owens, Mrs. Hugh Coleman, Mrs. T. K. Oliver and Mrs. Marrs Gibbons.

Mrs. Oliver read wires and letters from Mrs. W. W. Aldrich, now in Hawaii, and Mrs. Don Newbury, who spends the winters in Arizona, and Mrs. Holloway, who now lives in Tempe, Ariz.

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Mrs. Sleeter was chairman of the nominating committee. Faith circle of First Presbyterian church, Medford, prepared the dinner and five residents of the club served it.

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CONSIDERS VISIT

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Handicapped Children Get Care in Doll House



PLAY-TIME IN DOLL HOUSE—Mrs. L. L. Poutre, proprietor of the Doll House on Buckshot rd., Medford, hands one of her little charges a rattle. All of the children staying in this home are mentally handicapped. This small patient is in one of the play-pens in the nursery. Children are encouraged to entertain themselves and are prepared for the care they will receive later at Fairview Home which will give them more specialized treatment.

By JOE COWLEY
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

Many children are thinking of doll houses for Christmas. However, parents of southern Oregon are thankful for the Doll House, the name of a home on Buckshot rd., which care for mentally handicapped children.

The home is called the Doll House because Mrs. L. L. Poutre, 2653 Buckshot rd., thinks of her patients as "little dolls."

These children, most of them from four months to five years of age, are of delayed mental growth.

There are a variety of 10 to 15 syllable medical words to define their cases. Perhaps two of the most common cases are hydrocephalic and microcephalic. That means youngsters either have over-sized heads caused by too much fluid, or development of their heads is retarded, resulting in small-sized heads.

To the parents who place their children in Mrs. Poutre's care, the Doll House is a miracle. It's a place where they can put their children where they will receive both

loving and efficient care. It is a stopping place en route to Fairview, where the young patients will receive more expert care.

"Trouble is," a welfare department official said, "the parents of these children decide to send them to Fairview, then because of the long waiting list, they may have to wait as long as three or four years. Keeping the children at home a little longer works a strain on the parents. At the Doll House, the children receive the same loving care and they are prepared for the treatment they will receive at Fairview."

Parents are allowed to visit their children often and whenever they can. Mrs. Poutre sets no visiting hours since practically all of her patients are from other counties. In fact, during the two years the Doll House has been in licensed operation comparatively few of the youngsters have come from Jackson county.

The children at the Doll House are mostly from average families. These children may come under welfare sponsorship since their care is expensive. A medical bill for one of the youngsters often runs \$85 a month.

Mrs. Poutre keeps children up to 10 years old. The Doll House capacity is 18. The children receive loving care but at the same time it is firm. They must be given the control which they are incapable of providing for themselves.

Mrs. Poutre raised her own children, then missed having them around the house. So, 10 years ago she became a foster parent in the welfare department's program. She developed strong affection for handicapped children, and later, founded the Doll House.

The plain spoken, kindly woman manages the home with usually only a young girl assistant. Mrs. Poutre takes care of the children and does all the washing and meal

preparation. Her assistant does the house-cleaning.

Since the children have little or no control over themselves, washing is a continuous operation.

Although not especially trained in the care of these children, Mrs. Poutre has a knack for understanding the particular needs of each child, and the best way to handle him or her. However, all the children are placed firmly in a strict routine. They are awakened at 7 a.m. for the first feeding. Nap time comes in mid-afternoon, then finally at 7 p.m. it's lights out and nursery doors stay closed against everything "but an earthquake or fire," Mrs. Poutre said.

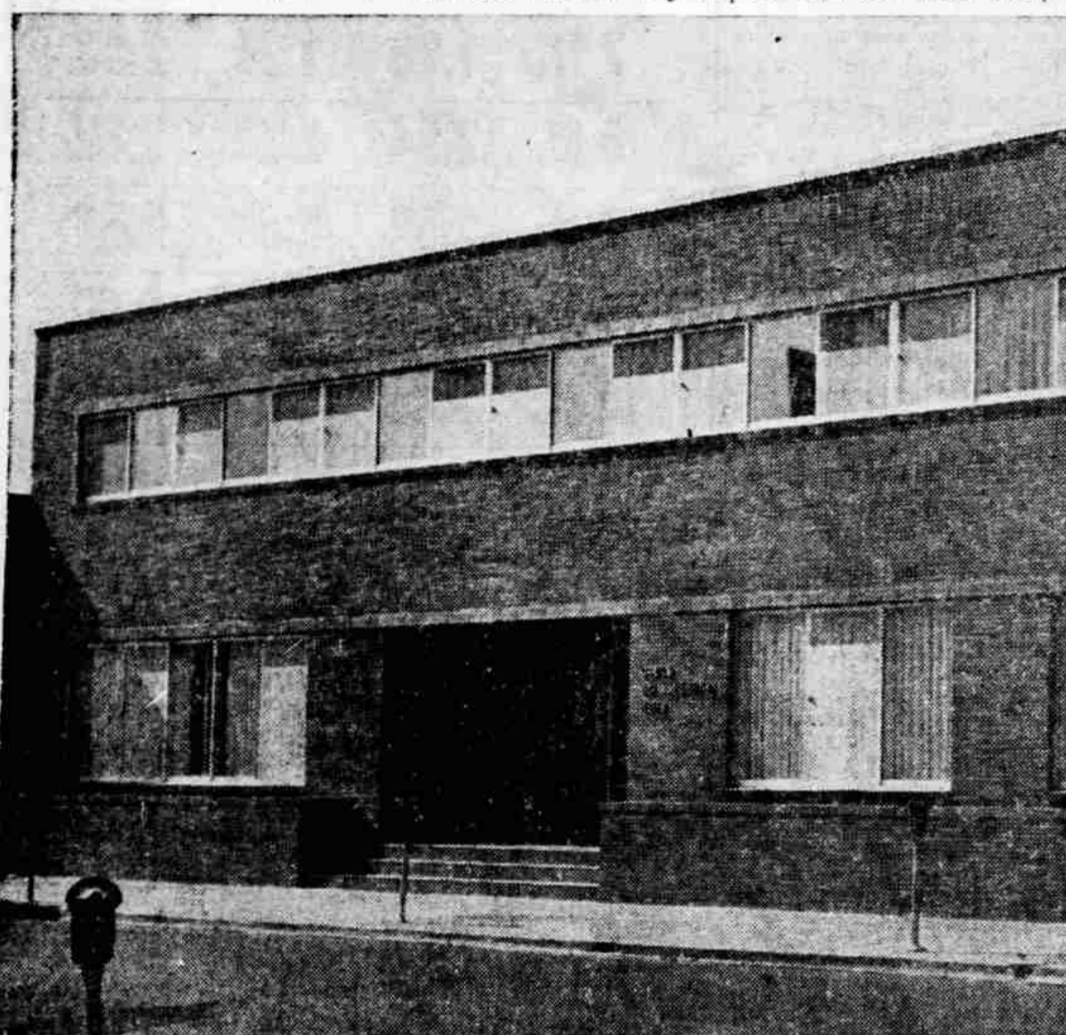
Feeding, in some cases, has its problems. The children need solids but some cannot be spoon-fed. So, Mrs. Poutre uses a plastic baby-bottle capped with a large hole cut in it. As the child sucks on the nipple, food is squirted down its throat.

"How do I feel about these kids? Why, like any woman should feel about children. They're no different. They just don't talk back!" Mrs. Poutre said.

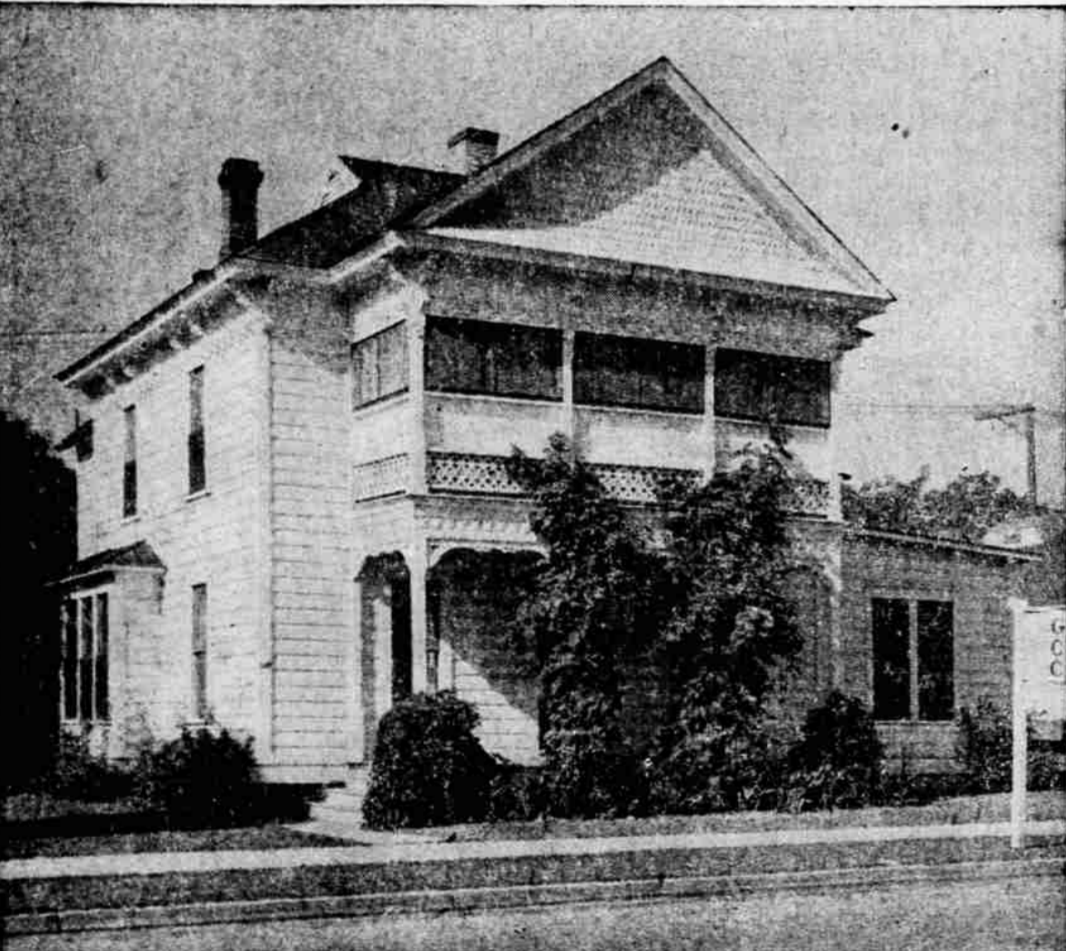
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Often she finds herself in the position of the woman in the nursery rhyme, "she had so many children she didn't know what to do." Then she thinks of expanding her home. But it, too, would have its problems. She would have to almost double the number of patients received in order to make it pay its way. It would mean more equipment, 24-hour service, and more staff.

So, the little Doll House on Buckshot rd. will remain just that—the little Doll House.



NEW CLUBHOUSE—This handsome brick and concrete structure at 229 North Bartlett street was erected in 1957 to replace the old frame building which had been in use by Girls Community club for more than 20 years. The new building was a gift from the late John R. Tomlin, retired Medford lumberman, who offered the club's board of directors a large sum of money without ever having been asked for a donation. The donor's name was unknown to the public until his death, shortly after the dedication of the building in September, 1957. Other individuals and groups of the valley donated funds to furnish the clubhouse, which supplies low-cost housing for young women coming to Medford to find employment. Many groups also use the clubhouse as a meeting place; parties, weddings and receptions are often held at the club.



FIRST HOME—Girls Community club, which celebrated its 25th anniversary of organization at a dinner Monday night, took over this building at 229 North Bartlett street when the club was first formed. Originally the residence of the well known Haskins family, the clubhouse was later used by the Medford YWCA. It was recalled Monday night that the site of the two buildings has now been used for community purposes for 38 years. In 1955 the Medford Fire department declared the old wooden structure a fire hazard, and use of the second story as living quarters was stopped.

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LONG-TIME LEADERS—Medford civic leaders who have worked for many years to keep the Girls Community club in operation attended a 25th anniversary dinner Monday night at the new clubhouse. Among those participating were (left to right) Dr. B. R. Elliott, member of the board of trustees; Mrs. Martin Luther, board of directors member for many years and now vice-president;

Mrs. Dolph Phipps, one of the club's founders and president of the directors continuously for 25 years; Eugene Thorndike, chairman of the building committee and trustee for a long period; Mrs. M. M. Morris, 25-year member of the board of directors and treasurer and Mrs. T. K. Oliver, board member and secretary.

ATTEND DINNER—Among the guests at the 25th anniversary dinner of Girls Community club Monday night were (left to right) Mrs. Lawrence Pennington, Redding, Calif.; Mrs. Florence Laing, the club's first housemother, and Col. W. H. Payne. Mrs. Pennington was a member of the first board of directors and Colonel Payne is one of the city's civic leaders identified with the history of the club. Mrs. Laing recalled that the girls aided by the club during her years as matron were for the most part hard-working, responsible young women who appreciated the fact that they were being helped.

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