

## Women's Club collectively give back to community

BY MIKELL FREY

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While its members do enjoy a good ol' fashioned make-up party and fashion show from time to time, there is a whole lot more to the Mint Hill Women's Club than initially meets the eye.

The organization, first begun in 1974 as a small neighborhood called The Farmwood Women's Auxiliary; recently took on the entire town of Mint Hill with its current 66-member status.

Serving the community for more than 31 years, the club has contributed more than \$65,000 to Independence High School and Butler High School senior scholarships, the Mint Hill Fire & Ambulance Squad, the Idlewild Fire Department, the Mint Hill Police Department and a number of other organizations and associations throughout the Mint Hill community. In addition to their contributions, club members have adopted families and shut-ins at Christmas time, taken part in Operation Christmas Child from year to year and offered up their volunteer services at the annual Mint Hill Madness festivities. Oh a weekly basis two MHC members, Toni Rollins and Segrid McKell, contribute time to organizing the contributions room at Mecklenburg County Shelter for Battered Women, and recognition of soldiers who have served overseas continues to be an ongoing project for MHC.

On top of all of their community service, the MHC is active in holding an annual auction and tour of homes in order to raise money for their community contributions. Last November



the organization's action, held at the Mint Hill The funding brought in by the women's crafts at their annual auction (the auction serves as the organization's most successful fundraiser) is quickly turned back out to the community in the months following.

"Our mission is service, social and self-improvement," MHC president Dixie Helms said. "Because of our nurturing nature, we are always looking for opportunities where our abilities can be used, and by doing the service projects we have really built a camaraderie. Working together with our neighbors builds on this great sense of community."

"Our club has become a place where you can be home away from home," MHC member Nena Hartz added. "We are a family away from home."

As the MHC continues to grow, they are now looking to appeal to a younger crowd interested in friendship and service. The group keeps active with numerous day trips

to areas throughout North Carolina, such as Seagrove and Asheville, and members also take part in a monthly Lunch Bunch at area restaurants throughout the Mint Hill and Charlotte area. The organization provides women, from all walks of life, to come together and collectively serve the community they live in. From home decorating to health issues, the organization also provides women with a chance to socialize and learn from other women.

"I've been a member for 28 years, and the thing I have liked the most about this club is the fact that it's open to women of all ages," Helms said. "Whether you're a stay at home mom or a full time working woman, it's an organization for all women. Joining our club provides a way to really become connected to your neighborhood."

"The friendships have been the best part of this club." MHC personal enrichment coordinator Bonnie

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Kramer added. "This is just a great bunch of people."

To learn more about becoming a member of the Mint Hill Women's Club drop by the organization's next meeting April 10 at Mint Hill Town Hall. The group will be discussing organ donation.

In honor of Women's History Month we asked a handful of the members of the Mint Hill Women's Club to name one woman in history who has inspired them in their everyday lives. Here are their answers:

- MHC member Toni Rollins has been inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt.

"She gave so much of herself to her community and to this nation," Rollins said. "She would always say 'Character is a never ending process'."

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of United States president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was active in the fight for human rights, civil rights and women's rights during her political life.

- MHC president Dixie Helms has been inspired by Elizabeth Dole.

Dole was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2002 to represent North Carolina for a term ending in 2009.

"To me she has done a great job in her political career," Helms said.

- MHC members Barbara Bannister and Ann Litaker have been inspired by Ruth Graham.

Graham is the wife of noted Christian evangelist Billy Graham. She is the author of many Christian books, and founded the Ruth and Billy Graham Children's Health Center in Asheville in 1966.

"Her contributions' behind Billy have been great," Litaker said.

"She is a great example of that famous phrase, 'Behind every good man there's a great woman'."

- Litaker and MHC member Bonnie Kramer also identified Erma Bombeck, an American humorist who achieved great popularity for a newspaper column that depicted suburban life in the second half of the 20th Century, as an inspirational woman in history.

"There was a lot of truth in what she said, but she said it in a funny way," Litaker said.

"She helped me get through raising my children alive," Kramer added.

- MHC member Nena Hartz identified Mother Theresa of Calcutta, one of the greatest humanitarians of the world, as a historical woman who has inspired her.

"She was such a wonderful, spiritual leader," Hartz said.