**HISTORY of the WESTFIELD SERVICE LEAGUE**

The Westfield Service League was born in the depths of the Great Depression, out of the desire of Westfield woman to serve their community. On November 7, 1932 a group of 19 young women met at the home of Mrs. J.H. Verlenden, an advisor from the District Nursing Association, for the purpose of forming an organization to render volunteer service to Westfield charities. For several years previously these young women had been aiding in the relief of suffering caused by the economic depression. Mention is found in the D.N.A. records of assistance given to the Thrift Shop by a local group called the “Girls’ Service League,” who in addition to knitting sweaters, preparing surgical dressings, and delivering holiday baskets to the needy, had also actively assisted in the Motor Corps and the Clothing Bureau run by the D.N.A.

By the second week in November 1932, the group had expanded to 26 charter members and a Board had been formally elected with Esther Nichols as the first President. By the end of the first week in December, the Service League had drawn up its first constitution and increased its membership to 35. A quote from the Westfield Leader’s “About Town with Sally” column said this about the new organization: “Certain young women of Westfield set a speed record when they formed the new Service League to assist the D.N.A. in welfare work. Non-existent a week ago, this organization now has an efficient Motor Corps, clerical services, and numerous other committees functioning as if they had been at it all their lives.” It soon became apparent to the people of the town that here was a group of capable young women ready to really work. Requests for aid of every description came pouring in. It was the task of the charter members to choose the most worthwhile projects - projects that would continue the League on the course originally set for it.

In March 1933, the young Service League was asked to take over the management of the Thrift Shop. The League also assumed the responsibility of collecting pennies for the Milk Fund, ran a lunch room at the YMCA for 100 undernourished school children, and began their long association with the Children’s Country Home (now known as Children’s Specialized Hospital) by transporting youngsters to and from the Orange Clinic.

In 1953, after years of renting space and moving when lease terms changed or more space was needed, the League bought a building on Westfield Avenue to house the Thrift Shop. On February 9, 1953 the Westfield Service League was formally incorporated in the state of New Jersey.

In 1962, the Associates had a dream of another shop and, through their efforts the Consignment Shop came into being. In 1964 the Westfield Avenue property was sold and the shops then move to 22 Elmer Street where, for the first time, both the Consignment and Thrift Shops were under the same roof. The most momentous move occurred in the spring of 1968 when the League purchased our present home at 114 Elmer Street. And after a summer of hard work redecorating the new shops, the grand opening was held in September.

Today, in addition to running both the Thrift and Consignment Shops, League members also deliver weekly Mobile Meals, as well as staff the Food Pantry at Holy Trinity bimonthly. During 85 years of community service the League has expanded and changed to meet the needs of both country and community. Yet, the stated purpose of the nonprofit organization in 2017 is still closely aligned with the purpose of the original group of women: to assist charitable, volunteer, civic and service organizations of Westfield and its environs by rendering efficient volunteer service and monetary contributions.

In its 85 years of service, the League has been proud of many outstanding achievements, including:

Volunteering in wartime, when some 20 members cleaned hospital rooms and performed other needed services at Muhlenberg Hospital where the staff was seriously depleted by the draft.

Purchasing needed items for the Westfield Rescue Squad: a Life-Pak 5 (a defibrillator monitor); pagers for communication between headquarters and squad members; four new radios for two of the ambulances; refurbishing and refurnishing the crew waiting room at the squad building; contributing funds toward a third ambulance; “Heartstart” defibrillators; in 1990, replacing the truck and chassis of one rig; and contributing $10,000 in 2016 toward new digital radios and receivers.

Presenting in 1955 a wall museum case to the Westfield Memorial Library in memory of Ann Abernethy, a former president of the League.

Endowing a private room at Overlook Hospital in 1949 and donating a room to Rahway Hospital in 1956 in memory of Carol Stapp.

Redecorating Children’s Specialized Hospital’s out-patient reception room in 1963, and in 1975 donating a medical control room, and assisting in the equipping of an audiological room.

Supplying every member of the Westfield Police Force with a bulletproof vest, purchasing a station wagon to be used by the Red Cross as a transportation van, and providing members with pagers to facilitate communications.

Conducting the first Historic Homes Tour of Westfield and sowing the seeds for the development of the Miller Cory Museum.

Commemorating the League’s 40th anniversary by presenting a flagpole and plaque honoring the Veterans of the Vietnam War to the town’s Memorial Pool.

Celebrating the League’s 50th anniversary on November 18, 1983 which included the reunion of nine of the original charter members who were, in turn, honored by the League for their foresight and dedication. The town of Westfield joined in by presenting the League with a certificate of appreciation, but the real surprise of the day was a congratulatory telegram from President Ronald Reagan…quoted here in part: “As we experience a renewal of the volunteer spirit in America, it is most fitting that we recognize those who have tended its flame. I send my congratulations and gratitude to all of your members, past and present, along with my best wishes for the future.”

Marking the League’s 60th anniversary by donating funds to the Westfield Recreation Commission to landscape the area surrounding the flagpole at the Memorial Pool.

Crowning 85 years of service with donations since 1941 of more than $2,743,000 to more than 40 organizations such as: the Rescue Squad; Red Cross; Youth and Family Counseling; Community Center; Neighborhood Council; Day Care Center; Westfield “Y”; Westfield Food Pantry; Department of Human Services; Contact-We-Care; N.J. Association for Retarded Citizens; Visiting Nurse and Health Services.