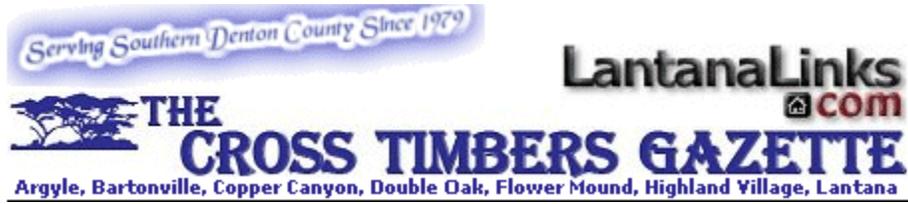


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Women help students cash in on education

Written by Noelle M. Hood

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Jamie White, president of the Women of Flower Mound, and Kelly Smith are active in the organization's mission to provide scholarships for graduating seniors. (Photo by Bill Castleman)

Here's a multiple choice question. What words best describe Jamie Augenstein White of Flower Mound?

- (a) Wife, mother, homemaker
- (b) Professional event planner
- (c) Philanthropist
- (d) Women's club president

The correct answer is "All of the above."

The bubbly Texas transplant arrived in town 25 years ago from Indiana with a terrific

sense of community, a busy husband and a small daughter. After her daughter graduated from high school, and cut the motherly apron strings, the big mid-life question stared Jamie in the face: Now what?

A graduate of Indiana University, she wanted a business network, wanted to repay the community that enriched her life, and wanted to be charitable.

The answer to her question came in the form of the Women of Flower Mound, a 501(c)3 non-political, nonprofit club with a two-fold mission. The group is dedicated to raising and distributing scholarship money to area college-bound students, and to supporting small local charities with donations and helping hands.

"And we have a lot of fun into the bargain," Jamie, now the club's president, said.

About 40 years ago, the Women of Flower Mound was started by the wives of Summit Club members, a Flower

Mound men's service organization that partners with just about every business in town to fund all kinds of worthy causes.

"Our founders," Jamie said, "felt Summit Club wives needed their own group."

The original members wanted to demonstrate that (1) women could lead, and (2) they could aid the cause of higher education in a tangible way.

"Service to others is leadership. Life improves for everyone when we give back to the community, and scholarships give back for years after the money is spent," she said.

Don't think you need to hide your volunteer candle or generous impulses under a bushel if you live outside Flower Mound.

"We don't discriminate on account of zip code," she said. "We welcome all women from the surrounding areas, and age is never a problem. Our members range from 20-somethings to 80-somethings."

The average annual Women of Flower Mound club membership is about 100. Regular monthly dinner meetings convene on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Bridlewood Golf Clubhouse.

"It's a terrific location," she said, "and every month we spotlight a local charity at our meetings. Members bring donations and sign up to help."

The club partners with Youth and Family Counseling of Lewisville, Santa Cops, Chin Refugee Ministry, Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children and PediPlace, among other nonprofits.

"We have a good time together," Jamie said.

Special presenters in 2014 included Jo Pearson, a judge on TLC Craft Wars; Highland Village chef Phillip Smithwick of Seven Loaves Catering & Events; and performing members of the Lake Cities Ballet.

The group provides the Summit Club with regular assistance at its Easter sunrise service on the Mound. That spring service is a good gauge of volunteer manpower needs since average attendance is 1,400.

If you've gone to the Flower Mound 4th of July children's festival and bicycle/floats parade, you've eaten those free Summit Club hotdogs - lovingly hand-wrapped by the Women of Flower Mound. The women's group also sells hot chocolate at the town Christmas parade.

All club proceeds go to the scholarship fund. The number of scholarships varies annually, and the average is about \$2,000 each.

In 2014, the Women of Flower Mound was pleased to award the year's cache to four graduating seniors: James Ding, Maria Perdomo, and Preston Biro, all of Flower Mound High School, and Mark Mehany of Marcus High.

"Our oldest scholarship fundraising event is the early spring fashion show and luncheon." Members model the latest fashions provided by local clothing merchants. Check the club website for updated details and ticket information.

“In the fall we have a wine tasting party, and at year end we organize a Holiday Parade of Homes and lunch in the Bridlewood neighborhood.”

“Our money is strictly for ordinary college bound seniors. We get about 50 applicants each year mainly from Marcus and Flower Mound high schools.” Students from other local schools are welcome to apply.

The awards committee consists of 4-5 club members, volunteers, and the process is blind. In 2014, Karen Smith, Liz Brannon, Peggy Mulcahy, Jodi Seay and Shelly Thompson were pleased to field the pile of applications.

Academic achievement is important, “but we’re looking for well-rounded students,” Jamie said, “kids with busy lives that demonstrate they can handle the demands of a successful college experience. We’re interested in university bound students, but students heading to junior colleges and trade schools are definitely in the running if they want to be.”

Financial need is a consideration, but doesn’t override academic performance, and school and extracurricular activities. Every graduating senior in the area is eligible to apply.

Since the club’s focus is on leadership through community service, it asks for a short essay about how a student’s expected major will have a positive influence in the community in which he/she will live.

Tell your student to sharpen his/her writing skills, and find the scholarship details and application online at www.womenofflowermound.org/scholarships.

“It’s important to answer all the questions, and just as important to follow the instructions,” Jamie said, “or risk disqualification.”

“So,” Jamie asks area women, “where are you in life? How do you spend your days? If you like a monthly girls’ night out, if you want to give back by volunteering and service, the Women of Flower Mound is the place to get involved. We are a diverse group with a common goal to further educational opportunity of local children. Your efforts and donations help improve life right in our own backyards.”

The spirit of the club is women plus community plus charity plus fun. It’s a great combination. Check out the website at www.womenofflowermound.org.

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