

The Early Days

The year was 1953. Dwight D. Eisenhower was president. A new 2 bedroom, ocean view home in La Jolla sold for \$35,000. A small group of women got together for coffee and chatted about the new Children's Hospital being built by the San Diego Society for Crippled Children. Out of their desire to provide service to the new hospital; the Women's Auxiliary was born. The first official meeting was held on June 10, 1953. These women moved quickly, under the direction of Mrs. Joseph E. Jessop, the first president of the Women's Auxiliary. The first fall board meeting proved that interest in serving the hospital was great. According to Mrs. Jessop, ideas for services to the little patients in the 59-bed hospital, dominated the entire first board meeting. A group of local clubwomen offered to form a stand-by "ready center" where routine and emergency sewing and mending jobs could be done for the hospital. Another group planned to arrange special favors and treats to appear on patients' trays on birthdays and holidays.

On December 29, 1953, the very first fundraiser was held. Tickets were sold to a "Robin Hood" matinee at the Egyptian Theater. In May

1954, it was reported that “A mutual interest in the new Children’s Hospital is the tie that binds together nearly 500 county women.” Mrs. Jessop was elected to serve a second term as President. The membership in the Auxiliary grew. Groups became known as units and Spanish names were chosen to represent our local history. We are proud to report that 7 of the original 12 units are still active.

Beginning a tradition that would last for more than 30 years, the first Children’s Fair was held on June 5, 1954 at the new Town and Country Hotel in Mission Valley. Many wondered why anyone would build a hotel in such an odd, out the way area! The highlight of this free fair, and of all the fairs to come, were the craft booths. Units worked tirelessly on items to be sold: garden smocks and knitting bags; medicine bottles melted into ashtrays, cigarette butt buckets and serving trays! You name it, and we designed it, sewed it, knitted it, crafted it and sold it! The fair raised more than \$13-thousand its first year and attracted more than 3-thousand people.

When the doors of the new hospital opened in August of 1954, the Women’s Auxiliary acted as hostesses, guides, clerical workers and

assistants in the occupational therapy department and playroom. We were an army of volunteers ready for action! Our chief activity was, as always, fundraising.

On July 18, 1956, the Auxiliary began a new fundraising adventure with the Thrift House. The Auxiliary purchased the house and lot for \$16,000. Mrs. Ronald Abernathy served as its first Chairperson. The house was painted “shopping pink” and every penny needed for the remodel, including labor and furnishings, was donated. Part of our membership requirements was to volunteer to work in the Thrift House at least once a year. It was the Auxiliary’s responsibility to keep the shelves stocked. What to wear to a “strip tea” or “strip and dip” party was no problem. These parties were social events where guests would wear their Thrift House donations, then disrobe down to bathing suits for a noontime luncheon and swim. Prizes would often be given for the “goofiest get-ups.” The first show, in 1956, began with the modeling of “tacky little messes of dresses,” but moved on to display some truly wonderful garments. The show got rave reviews! In subsequent years, the show spoofed the current high fashion trends and fads. Attendance

was always high and the cost of admission never changed; all you needed was a bag of goods to donate to the Thrift House.

In an effort to keep all Auxilians informed, a newsletter was created in July of 1954. The “Anonimo (A-NON-I-MO) Newsheet”, which means “No Name Newsheet”, began as three legal size, hand-typed pages. It was renamed *ChauxTalk* two years later after a contest was held to come up with something more appropriate. *ChauxTalk* became a monthly issue in 1993, and continues to be a vital communication tool for the Auxiliary.

The Remembrance Fund, which we know as the Honoring & Remembrance Fund today, began in January 1954. The fund allows for individuals to make a donation to Children’s Hospital in the name of another. The name of the person being honored or remembered is written in calligraphy in a special book displayed in the hospital. This fund raises an astounding amount of money each year.

The early years of the Auxiliary were truly amazing! The dedication and creativity of these mothers, grandmothers, wives and friends was admirable. These special women crafted for the Fair and

folded clothes in the Thrift House. They paid \$1.00 membership dues and volunteered their time in the hospital. Many of them crafted “sockie” puppets for every child who entered the hospital. Hospital nightgowns were hand-sewn. Several of the units held movie showings and many members worked as “Pink Ladies” at Walker Scott and Marston's department stores. Their salaries were donated to Children’s Hospital. Goodies were sold in our gift shop and pennies were dropped in Easter Seals wishing wells. All of these efforts were made in the name of the Women’s Auxiliary for service to Children’s Hospital.

“Movin and Groovin” during the 60’s

The 1960’s proved to be a decade of growth, not only for the hospital, but for the community of San Diego. In 1961, an area that was once farmland became Mission Valley Shopping Center, anchored by the May Company department store. It was the first major shopping mall in San Diego. A huge champagne premiere opening was held and more than 3-thousand guests attended. The Auxiliary mailed invitations

to the event and sold tickets for \$5.00 each. An elegant buffet was served, as well as more than 130 cases of champagne, bottled and labeled exclusively for the event. The entire \$15-thousand from the sale of tickets went to Children's Hospital. July 1967 saw a new addition to Mission Valley with the construction of Jack Murphy Stadium, a new home for the San Diego Padres and Chargers. The grand opening party was hosted by Jimmy Durante and drew more than 5-thousand people to benefit Children's Hospital. Auxilians helped decorate the stadium for the event with "pretty paper party posies." (Say that three times!)

The summer of 1969 brought another grand opening: Fashion Valley Center. The preview featured dancing to the great bands of Nelson Riddle & Stan Kenton, as well as entertainment from Mickey Finn. Hors d' oeuvres were brought down from Los Angeles because no local caterer was considered large enough to handle the demand.

Amidst all these ritzy affairs, we continued to sing and dance our way through many fabulous Thrift House shows. Strip and dip parties were still popular and kept the Thrift House well stocked. The Children's Fair continued to be a favorite and our crafts were still in

high demand. Auxilians collected unlikely items to make useful articles for the Fair. One of the most unusual had to be the “gold, bead trimmed lapel pins – made from cleaned and dried turkey neck bones”! We could truly sell just about anything!

Also in the 60s, the Auxiliary established a program that would become synonymous with young ladies and charity: Candy Strippers. The Candy Striper program was made up of young high school-age girls who would volunteer their summers at Children’s Hospital.

In 1967 the hospital officially changed its name from “San Diego Society for Crippled Children” to “Children’s Hospital and Health Center.” The Auxiliary did not want to lose its identity with the hospital and also changed its name from “Women’s Auxiliary” to “Children’s Hospital and Health Center Auxiliary.” Our membership was growing, and by the end of the decade we had well over 12-hundred members serving in 18 units all over the county.

“Doing Our Thing” in the 70’s

The Thrift House Show of 1970 set the tone for the decade. The show “Doing Our Thing” was a take off of “Laugh In,” the funniest and most popular television program of the time. We certainly “did our thing” that year-- it was our “million dollar year.” We had raised more than a million dollars in our 18 years of fundraising. We welcomed five new units during the 70’s, as membership continued to increase throughout the county.

We were all busy creating our specialty hand-made items for the Children’s Fair which had grown so large that the event moved to the Sports Arena. Many wonderful craft items were featured at the fairs during this decade, but the most treasured and desired had to be the hand made doll houses, colorful yarn pictures and (SHADES OF THE 70S!) fabulous macramé belts, purses and plant hangers! Each unit would create its own signature items. There was a competitive spirit to see which unit could raise the most money at the fair. More than 45-thousand people attended the fair in 1970. Along with the fair, we held many exciting celebrity golf tournaments, dinner dances, horse shows,

book and toy sales, wine tastings, and fashion shows. And in 1978 we were an official charity for the first annual San Diego Holiday Bowl.

But we were never too busy to decorate the hospital for the holidays, sell Christmas cards, run the Thrift House and Gift Shop, organize Candy Strippers, and produce and mail ChauxTalk. The Auxiliary members always looked forward to the semi-annual and annual meetings. In 1970 Mrs. Ronald Reagan, wife of the governor of California, was the keynote speaker.

Many changes were going on within the Auxiliary. The Thrift House moved into a new, modern building. The Auxiliary would get a new larger space with offices, storage and a meeting room. In 1975 a change was made that allowed the Auxiliary to designate the funds from unit events to a specific area of the hospital, unusual for hospital auxiliaries.

In 1978, the Auxiliary hit the 2 million dollar mark in cumulative dollars raised. It was also the year we celebrated our 25th Silver Anniversary. During this decade of “doing our thing,” we also grew in dedication and friendship. We attended many unit meetings where we

shared wonderful “covered dish dinners” and worked on fundraising projects. We always enjoyed the social events that included husbands, and we looked forward to the “after fair parties” as a way to unwind after lots of hard work!

“Changing & Growing” through the 80’s

The 1980’s were a decade of continuing change and growth. Our membership remained strong as we gained four new units and formed PALS, or “Past Auxiliary Leaders.” We were moving into the future and joined the computer age in 1984, when President Phyllis Snyder helped develop an accurate computer list of Auxiliary members. The Auxiliary welcomed a paid secretary into our offices in 1989. (Now where would we be without Ann Davidson today?!) The use of technology would bring a more professional and efficient approach to our fundraising activities. Many of our Auxiliary members were professional women and in the work force. One of the two Auxiliary-wide meetings was moved to the evening so the working members could more easily attend.

Our fundraisers began to have a new look. We hosted the 1981 United States Figure Skating Championships. Our long time relationship with Nordstrom began in 1981 with the grand opening of the Fashion Valley store. This was not only a decade of technology, but a decade of fashion for the Auxiliary. Begun in 1983, the annual spring fashion shows were an Auxiliary-wide event. Robinson's department store sponsored the first nine shows before Nordstrom took over in 1990.

In 1987, we were introduced to a new fundraising event; Fantasy of Trees or FOT. This event, patterned after similar events around the country, provided decorated Christmas trees, wreaths and table decorations for sale and auction. Over the years, the Fantasy of Trees event featured breakfast with Santa, luncheon fashion shows, afternoon tea, wine and beer tastings and formal evening dances. One of the most popular features of Fantasy of Trees was the gift boutique. Once again, Auxilians crafted some of the most sought after Christmas items.

Members came together from units all over the county to make this a special event.

The fair was moved in 1985 to the Del Mar Fairgrounds to alleviate the parking problems. Four years later, the fair got a new look—it was expanded to include sports. There was a Fun Run and Walk with Jackie Joyner-Kersey and a sports clinic for kids with such pro athletes as “Dr. J,” Julius Erving. But traditional crafts and children’s activities remained a part of the festivities.

Some of the other events of the 80’s included a screening of “Star Wars: Return of the Jedi” which netted more than \$28,000! Penny-a-Point began in 1981, where individuals pledged money for each point that the San Diego Chargers scored that season. It was a very good year, 526 points! The Simon and Garfunkel concert in August 1983 brought the Auxiliary 40% of the ticket price for 2,000 up front seats!

In 1985, the Auxiliary transitioned from coordinating the Easter Seals Campaign to providing volunteer support for the Miracle Network Telethon, a new event produced in partnership with other children’s hospitals across the country.

Also in the 80's, the Auxiliary started a tradition of providing birthday parties for the kids at the Convalescent Hospital. This tradition continues today.

A big change came in 1985 during the presidency of Linda Katz. Up until this time we were all addressed by our husband's names in the Auxiliary's written materials. No longer would we be known as Mrs. Mel Katz, but Mrs. Linda Katz. Thank you Linda! We'd come a long way, Baby!

“New Beginnings” in the 90's

During the 90's the Auxiliary saw many changes. The beloved fair came to an end in 1990. The fair served us well for so many years that it was hard to say good bye, but it still lives on in the hearts of many Auxilians.

In 1993 the Auxiliary Board turned over Thrift House operations to the Hospital. Keeping the Thrift House competitive took much more energy and commitment than we could provide. We nurtured the Thrift House for many years and today, under the management of the Hospital,

it has grown with many locations all over the county. Many of us still support the Thrift House by donating our gently used items. The “shopping pink” house, strip-teas and Thrift House variety shows will always hold warm memories for Auxilians!

But we were quick to come up with a new idea for raising funds. In 1990 the first Kids’ NewsDay, in partnership with the San Diego Union-Tribune, brought in more than \$36,000. The event involved more than 500 volunteers from Point Loma to El Cajon, Encinitas to Valley Center. That first year, President Sunny Golden sold papers with a recent “Miracle Child,” Jessica Esquivel. Together they sold 250 papers and made more than \$500. Kids’ NewsDay continues to be a special event that brings our community together selling papers for “one day” for “one dollar.” It truly encompasses our mission statement: increasing community awareness, advocating for children, and raising funds.

Total Auxiliary contributions to the Hospital surpassed \$8 million dollars by June 1991. We funded the opening of the Parent Center, where parents could take a break without having to leave the hospital and their child. A new component of the Honoring and Remembrance

Fund was added in 1994 when we announced the Celebration Fund.

That same year we introduced the Celebration Tiles, 8-inch tiles that are painted with any artwork that the donor chooses. These tiles are displayed in the Rose Pavilion and the unveilings are always memorable.

The Mabel Jessop Endowment Fund was created in 1995. This endowment is funded by bequests and outright donations.

By the mid 90's we had moved into the fast lane with a fax machine and computer integration. Our fundraisers included "Martha Stewart Live," Party in the Paddock and a "Tickle-Me-Elmo" televised auction! We had developed a strategic plan and held a "Day of Visioning." We began a series of Women's Financial Symposiums, sponsored by the Children's Foundation and dedicated to educating us about women's financial and estate planning needs.

Also during the 90's, Fantasy of Trees grew to be a favorite holiday tradition. It encompassed some of the elements that had made the Children's Fair so popular – hand-crafted items , children's activities and the opportunity for all units to work together.

During our 45th year, we surpassed the magic million dollar mark, raising more than \$1.5 million dollars in a single year! In 1999 the Auxiliary pledged \$5 million dollars to the Hospital's new Inspiration Campaign. One million dollars of that pledge has been committed to the construction of a new Convalescent Hospital, and in recognition of this, the first floor of the new facility will be named for the Auxiliary. Our 1999 designation of funds also included \$170,000 to refurbish a house in Clairemont as a group home for patients of the Convalescent Hospital. Aveley (A-vell-ee) Place became a loving home to six special children who had spent their entire lives at the Convalescent Hospital.

We had come a long way and were getting ready to enter the new Millennium. We wondered at Visioning Day in 1998, "what can we be like in 2003?"

A New Century

A new century, a new millennium—and we even survived Y2K! Our Auxiliary is now a well oiled machine. Along with the new century came a new fundraising event. Co-sponsored by SENTRE (SEN-TREE)

Partners and NBC 7/39, Fantasy on Ice brought an outdoor ice skating rink to Horton Square. From Thanksgiving through mid January, San Diegans can enjoy outdoor skating at our own Rockefeller Center West. We even have our own “Tree Lighting” ceremony with live television coverage. The first Fantasy on Ice raised \$45,000. Just three years later, revenue more than doubled to a record breaking \$100,000!

Kids’ NewsDay continues to be popular with the community. We now have participation from many schools, service groups, law enforcement officers and firefighters. Many Auxilians have their “corner” reserved year after year. It’s still “one day, one dollar.” Lots of dollars! This year we raised more than \$180,000.

We now have the latest technology assisting us in working towards our mission. We use our computers to keep track of membership, design invitations, send unit minutes, write letters, organize fundraisers and communicate with each other. We copy, scan, fax, email and download information in a fraction of the time that it used to take us to do the same task. We communicate by cell phone while we grocery shop and pick up kids from school. We can beam schedule information from one

hand-held palm pilot to another. We share photos using digital files and email. Amazingly, we still count each Kids' NewsDay dollar one at a time! Some things never change.

And neither has our mission. We are a powerful force in philanthropy. Our fundraising efforts over the past three years have surpassed our greatest expectations. Each year of the new millennium, we have raised more than \$2 million dollars, funded countless programs and purchased much needed equipment. Whether it's a formal gala event for 15-hundred or an afternoon tea for 1-hundred, each dollar is equally important and appreciated. Created in honor of our 50th Anniversary, Our Golden Legacy, will endow the Child Life Services Program, and be a lasting tribute of our commitment to Children's Hospital. It will be made up of large and small gifts alike, with each gift playing an important role.

There is a lot of power in this room today. We have the ability and tenacity to make a difference in the lives of San Diego's kids. We have proven ourselves over the last 50 years. We have what it takes to raise the money for the latest equipment and programs so that our doctors and

nurses can save a life, one child at a time. We are needed to fund programs that are vital to children, yet are not covered by insurance. We are in the community advocating for the health and well-being of children and increasing community awareness of Children's Hospital and Health Center. We have always been here, ever since the first day the doors opened. And we will continue to be here, making a difference in the lives of children. Congratulations to all of us for 50 years of caring and our commitment. Here's to the next 50 years!

(APPLAUSE)

Now for some exciting news. We're going to bring Betsy back for a special announcement concerning the endowment.