

National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Detroit Section – A Brief History

Janet Moses, Archive Co-Chair

Our Greater Detroit Section is celebrating its 118th year of empowering women, following the precepts set forth by the founder of our National Council of Jewish Women, Hannah G. Solomon. Here are just a few highlights from those 118 years.

During our first 18 years, from 1891 until 1909, our Section organized a committee to visit the sick, established the first scholarship fund which began what is now our Education Assistance Program, protested to the U.S. Congress against inhuman practices in the Congo, and prepared and served *Penny Lunches* to public school children in hardship areas (the impetus for the Detroit city-wide school lunch program).

In 1925, the Detroit Section officially joined the National Council of Jewish Women with Mildred (Mrs. Joseph M.) Welt as its first president. Highlights of the next 75 years include: the establishment of both a residence and summer camp for women (1933); the opening of the first Council Resale Shop (1934) (and 75 years later they are still going strong); local work with refugee children and service to foreign born (1946); the adoption of National resolutions urging an open door policy for Jewish immigration to the then Palestine (1947); the formation of Clubs for older adults (1948), (the “Golden Age” program); the formation of “Councilettes” (1952), a special branch for high school age girls (Mrs. Fred Keidan (Sarah Weiner z’l) was the first president); the first Angel Ball (1955); the opening of a program for convalescing mental illness patients, Operation Friendship (1960); the opening of The Orchards (1962), a residential treatment home for emotionally disturbed young boys; Meals on Wheels (1973) was established to provide Kosher meals to homebound adults; a workshop for single parents became the SPACE community service (1978); Children’s Advocates (formerly CASA) began in Oakland County Family Court (1980).

We continue many of those programs and projects to the present day as well as adding new, including tutoring in the schools, distributing backpacks with school supplies, facilitating teen dating abuse awareness, providing a safe house for victims of domestic violence, publishing the Teen Yellow Pages resource guide for teens, built All Kids Playground (the first barrier free playground in the area), and sponsored an Autism Symposium which provided experts and information to the community.

We continue to go from strength to strength with A FAITH IN THE FUTURE. A BELIEF IN ACTION.