

CWC

Education Friendship Social Action



Mrs. Margaret Dever, left, receives instructions on quilt-making from Mrs. Susan Miller.



Ed Gladding, left, and Harold Mundy, center, both of St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, accept some food from Mrs. Meg Buerkle. Once a month the club furnishes St. Joseph's with food for one day.



Mrs. Charles Crayton, president, left, looks over some instructional materials with Sister Serafine, School of the Holy Childhood. The club recently presented a check to the school.

By Dorothy C. Teall

For 57 years now, the Catholic Women's Club of Rochester has been a lively group dedicated to education and aid to education, activity in the community, friendship, pleasant times — as the membership brochure tells it, the club exists "to unite women of similar aims and ideals to work together for useful purposes," and to enjoy it!

There have been many "firsts" in the history of the CWC. Many of their pioneer efforts have become city or diocesan operations, and club members are glad to have had a part in many beginnings.

The oldest Catholic women's group in the diocese, the CWC was formed in 1919 by Mrs. Mary Nier, a young widow, who was housemother of St. Elizabeth's Guild house on Field St. Encouraged and supported by Bishop Thomas F. Hickey, a small number of interested women met at her home on Dec. 5 of that year. Bishop Hickey was their spiritual advisor and attended the regular meetings.

The first clubrooms were over the Clara Palmer Oliver hair-dressing shop at 47 Clinton Ave. North. By 1922 there were 1900 members and a new home was found in the

Convent of Old St. Mary's Church; in 1926 home became a house on Franklin Square. At age 10, the club purchased a lovely house at 215 Alexander St., culminating much fund-raising and a most generous gift from Mr. Thomas W. Finucane. This gracious home was headquarters for 40 years, until the upkeep became too formidable. Then the clubhouse was sold and an apartment on Manor Parkway became "home."

Aid to the education of Catholic young women was one of the original purposes of the club and has remained so. Today's aid takes the form of scholarships, awarded every year to several girls in Catholic high schools. In the early days these were given as the need arose, often at the request of a parish priest. Since 1931, however, the Scholarship Committee has annually selected recipients recommended by school principals. And the Scholarship Fund has received — and given out again — the proceeds from hundreds of social events since, as well as many individual gifts.

Conditions change and needs change. In the 1920s aid to education was often very active. For several years, the club set up and staffed centers for summer school classes at the request of

Bishop Hickey. They hired a leader who was assisted by volunteer members who were teachers. Recreation programs took place, often with the aid of seminarians. (To update this item: until St. Michael's parish school closed recently, members were doing one-to-one tutoring there and assisting in the library.)

The "released time" program to allow religious education for Catholic children in public schools, was pioneered when the Catholic Women's Club brought the first children (on foot, of course) from School #5 to the Old Cathedral for religious instructions. Later, under a plan worked out by then superintendent of schools Msgr. John M. Duffy, large numbers of CWC members were trained to give catechetical instructions to these children. Also, religious instructions were given at bedside to children at Iola Sanitarium every Sunday, and they were prepared to hear Mass, in the days before there was a resident chaplain. Happily, these needs gradually phased themselves out.

Community service has always been important to members, historically and now. They have taken part in all kinds of civic activities over the years. Strictly club, however, were the Friendly



From the left: Mrs. John Brongo; Mrs. J. B. Barron, co-chairman of the Marathon Bridge Tournament; Mrs. Barry Tyrrell; Mrs. Thomas Grodonia, tournament chairman.