



# Bits & Pieces

**GFWC Vernon Township Woman's Club**

**February 2026**

**Volume 17 Issue 2**

**Next Meeting: February 26, 2026**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Fran Gialanella**

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February is an important month even though it is our shortest. In addition to it being my birthday month, it is also Heart Health month and I would suggest that we might try and wear red at our upcoming meeting to commemorate that. Birthdays aren't what they used to be and now I'm happy to get out of bed in the morning, exercise, try not to eat too many sweets, try and do some good in the world (which is where our club comes in) and perhaps get a good night's sleep every once in a while. Enjoy the journey, give back and try to keep your heart healthy. Enough pontificating! Happy February; happy snowy winter.

Thanks to everyone who turned in their reports in a timely manner. We were able to get all of our reports in to the respective state chairs before the 2/1 deadline. It bears repeating that we all should be proud of the time and work we put into our Woman's Club to make it as successful as it has been. As I mentioned last month, we need to establish a Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of officers for the next 2 years and we have done that. Our committee is Maria Dorsey, Donna Maher and Karen Szeptietowski. Thanks to these ladies for stepping up. If anyone is willing and interested in being a part of the Board, please let the Nominating Committee know as soon as possible. I can vouch for the fact that our Board is so supportive and cooperative and we all help each other to keep this club running.

This month will be our annual cookie baking month as well as having a guest speaker from Soothing Paws, perhaps with a dog. I hope to see many of you there. For those of you at our January meeting, you know that we had discussions about specific budget expenditures to be approved, as well as an increase in our dues and a change in our by-laws to address some concerns.



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Because we did not have a quorum at our meeting (defined as 1/2 of our current membership), we were unable to vote. I sent out a subsequent email to address these questions and get a quorum majority but, at this point, I still do not have 1/2 of our membership responding to that email and its follow-up. We are trying to change the by-laws to reduce the quorum to allow us to properly do business but, in the meantime, we are at an impasse. Please try to vote if you have not already done so and, to those that have, thank you. We will try to bring up these things again at our meeting.

I hope to see many of you there. In the meantime, keep warm.

Fran



## 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

**\* Contact Maria Dorsey, Federation Secretary, if interested in any of the NJSFWC or District events**

February 26	VTWC Meeting—Heart Warming Presentation—Soothing Paws Therapy Dogs and Annual Cookie Baking and Gifting Project
March 5 *	Civic Engagement and Outreach Day
March 11 *	Highlands District Performing Arts Festival (snow date 3/18)
March 26	VTWC Meeting—The Weekend Bag Program—TBD Donations Gently Requested
April 8 *	Highlands District Spring Conference & Achievement Day, Hanover Manor, East Hanover, NJ
April 13 *	GCI Orientation, Roxbury Senior Center, 1:30 pm
April 23	VTWC Meeting—Rutgers Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners Presentation
April 27	Taste of Vernon 2026, Red Tail Lodge, Mountain Creek, NJ
May 3-6 *	NJSFWC 132nd Annual Convention, Hard Rock Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ—Theme: “When Friends Gather”
May 28	VTWC Meeting—Presentation related to Mental Health (May is national Mental Health Month)
June 1-4 *	Girls’ Career Institute, Douglass Residential College at Rutgers University
June 11 *	Highlands District Council Meeting—Vernon Township Woman’s Club, 21 Church Street, Vernon, New Jersey
June 25	VTWC Meeting—Summer Sendoff

## 2025-2026 VTWC Leadership

### Executive Board

President	Fran Gialanella
First Vice President	MJ Palmer (Programs)
Second Vice President	Fran Janusko (Fundraising)
Treasurer	Judy Phillips (Ways & Means)
Recording Secretary	Donna Maher
Corresponding Secretary	Linda Hibbert
Federation Secretary	Maria Dorsey (traditionally outgoing President)

### Committee Chairs

Communications	Maria Dorsey (Facebook and Media)
Internal Communications	Karen Breese (Newsletter “Bits & Pieces”)
Webmaster	Deborah Fagnan
Membership	Joan Danaher

### Department Chairs

Advocates for Children	Fran Gialanella
Birth Haven	Rosetta Peterson
Dulce Esperanza	Meg Gleason
Ginnie’s House	Donna Maher
Arts Performing & Arts & Culture	Dee Garbarino
Civic Engagement & Outreach	Debra Piccirillo
Veterans & Military Support	Debra Piccirillo
International Affairs	Lisa Mills
Birthday Bags	Lisa Thomas, Judy Phillips
Benny’s Bodega	Lisa Murphy
DASI	Lisa Murphy
Market Street Mission	Pat Berls, Joanne Matthes
Project Self-Sufficiency	Joan Danaher, Dee Garbarino
WAFO (Warwick Area Farmworkers Organization)	Meg Gleason
Education & Libraries	Valerie Seufert
Environment & Conservation	Maria Dorsey
Health & Wellness	Karen Szepietowski
Blankets with Care	Karen Szepietowski
Comfort Pillows	Reba Burrell
Vial of Life	Rosemarie Guidice
Special State Project (The NJ Children’s Alliance)	Fran Gialanella
President’s Scrapbook	Nancy Speruta and Maryann DiCola

**MONTHLY MEETING**  
**February 26, 2026 6:30 p.m.**  
**MJ Palmer, First Vice-President**  
**Programs**  
**Annual Cookie Baking and Gifting**



February is our **Cookie Project** month when we bake thousands of home-made cookies just to give them away! So ... pick out the recipe for your favorite **nut-free** cookies, bake six (6) dozen cookies and bring them to the meeting on February 26th. In previous years, Valerie Seufert has been baking sugar-free cookies as another option to bring. If anyone else can bake some sugar-free cookies, we would greatly appreciate it. Although store-bought cookies can be delicious, for this project, we only bake and deliver homemade cookies.

We will spend time together at the meeting packaging them in Ziploc bags with labels identifying our club. Our members will deliver them to The Homestead in Newton and to DASI. Feel free to bring a few extras to share at the meeting.

## FEBRUARY MEETING TOPIC

February 26, 2026 6:30 p.m.

MJ Palmer, First Vice-President

Programs

Carrie Plantamura, Program Manager

Soothing Paws Therapy Dogs



During our February meeting, in addition to our annual cookie baking and gifting, we will feature a heart-warming presentation from **Soothing Paws Therapy Dogs**. This beloved animal-assisted therapy program features trained dogs and volunteers who provide comfort, reduce stress and improve well-being for patients, families and staff across Atlantic Health System's hospitals.

As mentioned at the meeting in January, I enjoyed a visit from one of their dogs during my recent unexpected stay in Newton Hospital. If you are willing, there will be an opportunity for some firsthand, unconditional love from the dogs who will be at our meeting.

**UPCOMING MARCH MEETING**

**March 26, 2026 6:30 p.m.**

**MJ Palmer, First Vice-President**

**Programs**

**The Weekend Bag Program**



I recently had the pleasure of connecting with Dawn from **The Weekend Bag Program**. She is the mother of the young lady who started the program ten years ago. Dawn and her daughter, Magdalen, will be at our March meeting to tell us more about this program. There are currently seven schools in Vernon where weekend bags of meals, snacks and hygiene products are available.

I will know more about their immediate needs in March. I will publish the list in time for members, who are able, to bring donations to the meeting. In addition to donations of goods, there are opportunities to volunteer to help assemble the bags. If you would like to know more now about this organization, you can visit:

<https://weekendbagprogram.org/>

**UPCOMING APRIL MEETING**

**April 23, 2026 6:30 p.m.**

**MJ Palmer, First Vice-President  
Programs**

**Rutgers Cooperative Extension  
Master Gardeners**



I must admit I am not an outdoor person and am known in the family as the “black thumb” when it comes to taking care of plants. So it was helpful, when thinking about the April meeting, that Maria Dorsey mentioned during the month of April we observe two important “outdoorsy” days, Earth Day and Arbor Day.

Master Gardener Volunteer, Lynn Persico,, will speak at our April meeting to enlighten us about assorted topics related to soil and planting. One of our own members, Maureen Blandino, who is also a Master Gardener, will provide support to Lynn. Those of you who have been in the club for many years know we can always count on Maureen to share fun and interesting stories about her work with planting gardens, especially when children assist her.

If you are a gardener of any sort, you will not want to miss our April meeting.

**FUNDRAISING**  
**Fran Janusko**  
**Second Vice-President**

Taste of Vernon will be holding their event on Monday, April 27, 2026. Tickets are \$55 or two for \$100. This is a fun evening which benefits the Woman's Club. Tickets should be available at the March meeting, Please support this Chamber of Commerce event and enjoy a great variety of savory and sweet food choices. Committee members include Maria Dorsey, Linda Hibbert, Kathy VanderSluys and me.

Also, keep in mind the Heaven Hill Eggstravaganza will be held at the end of March and early April leading up to Easter. This is also a fundraiser for our organization. I am waiting for a call from Kathy at Heaven Hill to see if we will be needed.

We will also have our regular 50/50 for sale to members at 8 tickets for \$5.00 at the February meeting.

Thank you,  
Fran

**CORRESPONDING SECRETARY**  
**Linda Hibbert**

We received a beautiful thank you note from Marianne Sweller for the birthday bag we gave to Ray! I will read it at our meeting in February.

Thank you,  
Linda

**TREASURER'S NOTES**

**Judy Phillips**

Hi All:

I will not be attending the meeting in February.

During the March meeting, I will be collecting dues for the 2026-2027 year. Dues are due by April 15th and are currently set at \$40. The club is in the process of voting on an increase from \$40 to \$50 which is necessary to cover the operating costs associated with our growing membership and rising general expenses (insurance, post office box rental, membership pins). Unfortunately, we do not have the vote count necessary from our recent discussion held at the January meeting. I hope that this will be resolved at the February meeting.

If you are unable to attend the meeting, please mail your check made payable to VTWC, in the amount decided at the February meeting, to my **mailing address**:

**Judy Phillips**

**128 Lake Pochung Road**

**Sussex, NJ 07461**

Our club also accepts **VENMO**:

@VernonTownship-WomansClub (username)

Thank you,

Judy

**FEDERATION SECRETARY**

**Maria Dorsey**

**2026 HIGHLANDS DISTRICT SPRING CONFERENCE  
AND ACHIEVEMENT DAY**

I am attaching an invitation to our Highlands District Spring Conference and Achievement Day to be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at Hanover Manor in East Hanover, New Jersey. We encourage our members to participate in the categories for Achievement Day Entries and showcase their talents.

You don't have to attend the conference to enter the contests. Dee Garbarino, Arts & Culture Chairperson, will have entry forms available at the February meeting. If you cannot make the next meeting, the forms can be emailed to you.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Dee at [\*\*garbarino.dee@gmail.com\*\*](mailto:garbarino.dee@gmail.com).

**Main categories for Achievement Day Entries**

- |   |                          |                      |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Jewelry                                    | 2. Door Decoration       | 3. Glass Work        |
| 4. Paper Art                                  | 5. Holiday               | 6. Favors            |
| 7. Embroidery/Needlework                      | 8. Knitting              | 9. Crocheting        |
| 10. Sewing                                    | 11. Quilting             | 12. Cooking          |
| 13. Painting-Oil                              | 14. Painting-Watercolors | 15. Painting-Acrylic |
| 16. Painting on other material or mixed media |                          |                      |
| 17. Drawing                                   |                          |                      |

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

- |                                     |                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 18. Our World Up Close              | 19. Natural Wonders | 20. Reflections |
| 21. FWC Living the Volunteer Spirit |                     |                 |

**FEDERATION SECRETARY**  
**Maria Dorsey**

**2026 HIGHLANDS DISTRICT SPRING CONFERENCE  
AND ACHIEVEMENT DAY  
APRIL 8, 2026  
ENVIRONMENT**

**(continued from Page 11)**

Please note that the Achievement Day Entries in the Environment category are judged separately. As this club's Environment Chairperson, I will have entry forms available at the February meeting. If you cannot make the next meeting, the forms can be emailed to you.

If you have any questions or would like further information in the Environmental category, please contact me at [mariapls@aol.com](mailto:mariapls@aol.com).

The Environmental entries are divided into divisions:

1. Artistic Design Division
2. Houseplant Division
3. Upcycle

Any questions you may have, I am happy to guide you.

Thank you,  
Maria

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH**

### **BIRTHDAY BAGS**

**Lisa Thomas and Judy Phillips**

We have 1 Birthday Bag for February and 3 Birthday Bags for March. I delivered the 4 bags to The Homestead on February 10.

As always, thank you for your donations and contributions.

Lisa and Judy

### **Domestic Abuse & Sexual Assault Intervention Services (DASI)**

**Lisa Murphy**

It is that time of year again when we will be filling Easter baskets for the residents of the Safe House in Newton, New Jersey. Currently, there are ten women and one man at the facility as well as an eight-year old girl and a six-year old boy. If you are able to make a donation for the Easter baskets, please bring the item(s) to the February meeting. Suggestions provided by DASI include:

For the children, crafts, games (that they can play by themselves), activity books, candy and snacks.

For the adults, personal items which include shower gels, fragrant lotions, shower poufs (for the women) and men's hygiene items (for the man). Also, hot chocolate packets, teas, puzzle books, candy and snacks.

Thank you,  
Lisa

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

### PROJECT SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Joan Danaher and Dee Garbarino

Dee and I will be collecting prom gowns in both February and March for Project Self-Sufficiency. We will also be collecting wedding gowns and mother-of-the-bride gowns. All gowns **MUST** be clean and on hangers. In addition to gowns, shoes, purses and accessories that are appropriate for formal wear are also needed.

PSS has a shop open to all girls and women in the county to shop for a gown and accessories for their prom or wedding free of charge regardless of income. It is a wonderful program.

Thank you in advance,  
Joan and Dee



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

WAFO  
Warwick Area Farmworker Organization  
Meg Gleason

### HOMEWORK CLUB

The Homework Club is underway! This program takes place on Tuesday afternoons at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 70 Little York Avenue, Warwick, New York from 4:30—5:30. Tutors work one-on-one with students to complete homework, read together and then wrap up the hour with a board game or puzzle. If you are interested in volunteering your time to this program, please contact Kathy Brieger at [kbrieger@sunriver.org](mailto:kbrieger@sunriver.org) or JoBeth Leon at [jleon@sunriver.org](mailto:jleon@sunriver.org). You can also reach out to me for more information. You can email me at [mmgleason98@yahoo.com](mailto:mmgleason98@yahoo.com) or call/text me at 201-906-9814.



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

**WAFO**  
**Warwick Area Farmworker Organization**  
**Meg Gleason**

### **SAFETY BACKPACKS**

WAFO's next project is safety backpacks for the area farmworkers. These backpacks are purchased and filled with essential items such as bandanas, sunscreen, bug spray, etc. In the past, we have assisted with filling the backpacks and in-kind donations. More details to follow.





## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### BLANKETS WITH CARE Karen Szepietowski

Below are the measurements for the blankets we donate to local organizations:

Chemo & Dialysis	28 wide by 45 long	(maximum 30 wide by 50 long)
DASI	36 wide by 60 long	(for beds)
Lap Robes	26 wide by 26 long	
Baby Blankets	29 wide by 29 long	
Rectangles	7 inches by 9 inches	

\*\*\*\*\*

Hi All:

Just a brief reminder, I continue to collect blankets made by our members. The sizes of the blankets are set forth above. I am happy to collect the blankets from you at the club's monthly meetings. If you cannot attend the meetings, please contact me at [karen\\_szep@yahoo.com](mailto:karen_szep@yahoo.com) to make arrangements for pick-up or drop off.

Thank you,  
Karen Szepietowski  
Health & Wellness Chair

**Margaret Conti**

Margaret is our special friend and likes to receive cards and small “gifts” from us. Any time you would like, send her a card to say “HI”.

Margaret Conti  
PafaCom, Inc.  
543 East Garden Road  
Vineland, NJ 08360

\*\*Reminder: The cost for Margaret’s cards, gifts, etc. each month is the responsibility of the “friend” member. Our budget does not have any monies allocated to reimburse for postage, etc.



**Friendly Reminder**

*If you haven’t already done so, please be sure to review the NJSFWC Website at your leisure (information below). The Vernon Township Woman’s Club Website is now available. Please review at your leisure.*

**NJSFWC Website**

**The New Jersey State Federation of Woman’s Clubs’ website is packed full of information.**

**[www.njsfwc.org](http://www.njsfwc.org)**

**No log in is necessary.**

**VTWC Website**

**The Vernon Township Woman’s Club website is here for you.**

**[www.vtwc.org](http://www.vtwc.org)**

**No log in is necessary.**

**PLEASE KEEP SAVING**

**Ongoing Collections**

**POP TABS**—found on soda cans, pet food, soup cans, etc.

**CHILDREN'S DVDs FOR DASI**

**GREETING CARDS**—Valerie Seufert volunteers for the Senior Earth Angels in Sussex County. Each December, Valerie and her team put together packages of assorted greeting cards (except Christmas), puzzle books, calendars and note pads for each homebound senior for them to use throughout the year. We often get cards and note pads in the mail from organizations—these are great.

**JUST FOR YOU BAGS**—Items are needed for clients who come into one of the DASI programs and for clients who transition out of the programs. Some items requested are bath towel; body lotion; body wash; brush; ChapStick; comb; shampoo/conditioner; deodorant; face cloth; hand/kitchen towel; oven mitt; pillow case; pillows; potholder; sheet set (twin); soap; socks; sponge; toothbrush/toothpaste.

***Donations are collected through the year. These projects are ongoing.***

***Thank you all for your donations to these ongoing collections.***