

Inspirational Thought
A History of Wilmington Newcomers Club

Presented by Fran Baker

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Good Morning and welcome to the Wilmington Newcomers Club as we begin our sixty-fifth year. Yes, our sixty-fifth year! I was curious about our history and asked our historians if they had any information about the founding and history of the club . . . and they did.

Our Newcomers Club was formed in April 1952 by seventeen women, and by the first fall meeting it had grown to fifty members. It was originally co-sponsored by the *Welcome Wagon Service* and the YWCA, where the Club met for the first few years.

The original stated purpose of the club was “to promote interest in the civic, social and moral welfare of the community, and to promote and encourage good citizenship as well as good government.” However, in the 1960’s, the purpose was changed to simply “help the newcomer become better acquainted with each other and with the community.”

The nature of the group and format of meetings has changed many times through the years, reflecting changing interests and needs of the membership. Members were greatly involved in civic volunteer work in the 1960s and 70s, and held many fundraising events in the early years. Satellite Groups have come and gone and reappeared to meet the needs of the members.

The first meeting was a luncheon, much like ours and this was the pattern until sometime around 1975. Part of the general monthly meetings were card games, such as bridge and Canasta and “a Table for Happy Talk” as well as Mah Jong and even Bingo. In the early 1980’s the constitution was revised, calling for programs “every other month as time permitted,”

Wilmington and the Wilmington Newcomers Club saw tremendous growth in the 1990’s. By 1995 the membership had grown to 550 members. Groups began to form for those who completed their membership: *Act II Club*, *Encore Club* and the *FAN Club*.

Today, our Wilmington Newcomers Club is a non-profit social club dedicated to welcoming newcomers who have moved to New Hanover and Pender counties within the last four years. Our goal is to make the transition fun and easy by introducing newcomers to our rich Wilmington history, culture and civic opportunities with an overall emphasis of promoting new friendships.

So, Newcomers, as we look to the future in our new community, here are some thoughts:

- Be bold, embrace the future, respect the past.
- Remember the greater the challenge, the bigger the opportunity.
- Lead with grace.
- Invest in each other.
- Be inspired and inspiring.
- Go all in.
- We get one life. Let's live it to the fullest.