

C O P Y

OPEN LETTER TO FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE, WELLESLEY
on the occasion of their 12th birthday
April, 1961

Dear Friendship Circle:

As an old friend, I have been asked to review the early history of Friendship Circle, so here is an account of your first three (3) years of life.

Town of Wellesley begins to express concern for its 1700 Senior Citizens.

In 1948, the town of Wellesley, through its Community Council and Recreation Department, initiated a survey of the recreational needs of older people. This survey was conducted by a Wellesley College student under the direction of the Wellesley College Hygiene and Physical Education Departments. Twelve hundred questionnaires were issued and two hundred replies were received. Nearly all expressed a lively interest in new recreational facilities.

Interest of the Community is aroused - 1949

After the final report was presented to the Community Council, the Townsman gave support and a public meeting was held for the discussion of the Needs of Older People, starring Dr. Robert T. Monroe, noted geriatric specialist, as chief speaker.

Friendly Aid Association takes the first step - Recreation Department assists

The Friendly Aid Association took up the challenge under the direction of Miss Doris Sylvester, Executive Director of the agency. Each person who had expressed an interest in the questionnaire was contacted.

The first meeting was called April, 1949. Twenty-four ladies met on the homelike premises of the Friendly Aid for tray painting and sociability. The teacher was provided by the town Recreation Department.

Key-note is Fellowship - October, 1949

The Fall of 1949 found the group entering a new phase. The first need of the membership was recognized as companionship and the ladies partook of this offering in ample measure. Leadership was given by a committee of Friendly Aid Board members chaired the first year by Mrs. William Austill, and succeeded by Mrs. Harold J. Crockett, Jr., then Mrs. Edward L. Bowles, and in 1952 by Mrs. Brackett Parsons.

Backbone is transportation by Red Cross and Junior Service League

In the widely dispersed area of Wellesley and Wellesley Hills, the backbone was certainly transportation, for two-thirds of the membership had to be transported in order to attend. Willing helpers came from the Red Cross, Junior Service League and volunteers from the Friendly Aid Board.

Growing up and taking responsibility

As members became fast friends and gained assurance and security as valued members of a group, they were ready to assume more responsibility. They elected their own officers: secretary, treasurer, and sick committee; assumed the cost of refreshments, and by the Fall of 1951, members were participating in Program Planning.

Recognition in the Community

This circle of friends had now proved its usefulness to its own membership. Now it began to contribute actively to the Community. Contributions of money and work were made to the Red Cross. The group began to sew for nearby hospitals, constructed Easter and Thanksgiving baskets for the Children's Home and busily mended and sewed for the Children's Camp program run by the Friendly Aid. The Christmas bazaar contributed to the Camp Fund - an event which found its way very quickly into the Townsman newspaper.

Friendly Links

This monthly news sheet rapidly became popular with the members, linking the shut-ins with the active members.

Expanding Loyalty

Before long, Friendship Circle began to show interest in similar groups in neighboring communities and took pride in participation in the Sixty-Plus Activities Show in Boston. State level of recognition was finally achieved when Miss Mabel Rhoades, a charter member, was invited to take part in a panel discussion, "How to Enjoy Your Latter Years," at the Massachusetts Conference of Social Work in 1952.

Happy Birthday

I am grateful to have been associated with this wonderful circle during its formative years, serving as "an enabler", from the Family Service staff of the Friendly Aid Association. And, I wish to express my affectionate approval of a group that has gone on growing with the help of the Board and Community which stands so firmly behind.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the words of the Friendship Circle song, which summarizes the aim and achievement of the Friendship Circle:

"Make new friends, but keep the old;
One is Silver, the other Gold"

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Havelock

(Mrs.) Ellen Havelock
Director of Social Service