



Women's College Club of Princeton Celebrates 110 Years

*"To Foster Friendly Fellowship" and
Encourage Education for Women*

BY WENDY GREENBERG | PHOTOS COURTESY OF WOMEN'S COLLEGE CLUB OF PRINCETON

It has always been about higher education for women.

In 1916, four years before the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote, a group of women in Princeton made their own contribution to history. Interested in helping other women obtain college degrees, about two-thirds of the 97 women who held college degrees in Princeton at that time became charter members of the Women's College Club of Princeton (WCCP). The mission was threefold: to collect data about colleges open to women; to raise a fund for the benefit of Princeton senior girls unable to otherwise go on to higher education; and to foster fellowship among college-educated women in Princeton.

From the club's early activities — which included information about the colleges of the time that admitted women — to today, still presenting scholarships to women to encourage them to attend college, the Women's College Club has offered support to high school girls, camaraderie to members, and a general emphasis on lifelong learning by way of guest speakers.

In its 110th anniversary year, WCCP is looking back and looking forward — back through its expansive archives, and forward to continue to attract new members, provide more cultural enrichment and fellowship among members, and to continue raising money for college scholarships for women from Princeton's public and private secondary schools. Today the club welcomes women with or without college degrees.

Connie Loukatos, who has been club president, calls it “a club ahead of its time.” She adds, “There is a sense that I am part of something greater.”

THE FELLOWSHIP

The club today has 112 members, a decrease from a high of more than 500 in another era. Most are retirees, many have held positions of responsibility during notable careers.

Each member has their reasons why they joined, and stayed, but as member Marily Gonyo puts it, “We automatically have so much in common.” Gonyo, a retired professor from Georgian Court University, where she taught graduate courses and directed the graduate program in learning disabilities, says, “I like the

the membership chair and attended the gathering. “It was an instant like for me. I liked the size of the group, 60-plus, and the topics spoke to me. As a retiree, I needed to continue to feed my brain. But more than anything else, they were so welcoming. Not only did it feed my soul, but I enjoyed the activities.”

Although Restuccia likes the trips and art galleries, she is inspired by the scholarship recipients. “What always impresses me is the caliber of the people,” she says, “They are not just doing well in school, but they are part of their community. The young women who

return to speak show they are continuing to participate in their communities.”

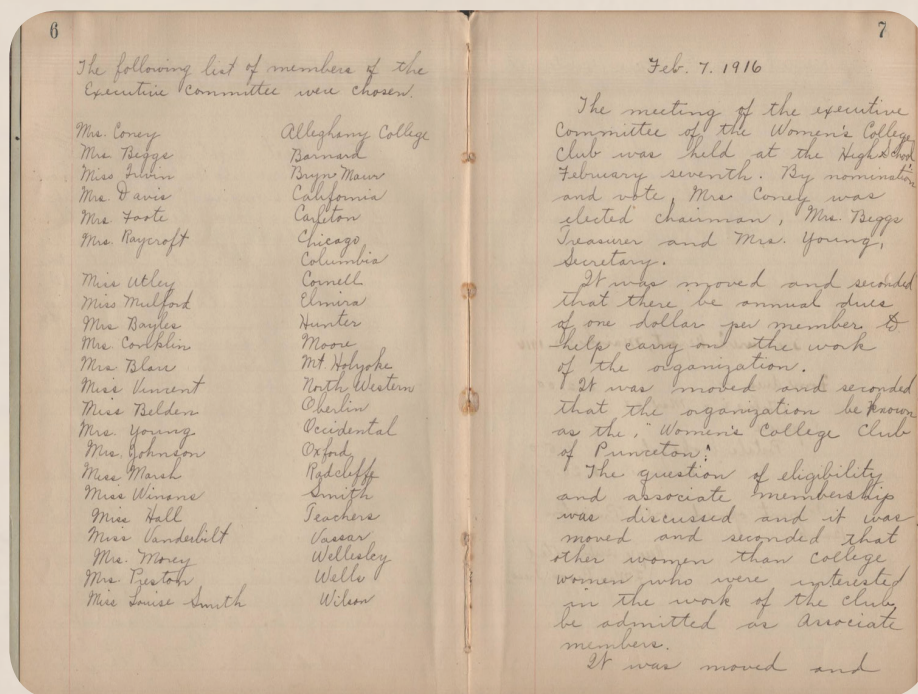
Current WCCP President Bonnie Larson appreciates the “camaraderie and friendship — You feel so comfortable.” She is gratified that quite a few of the members donated funds this year, but there are no hard asks. And the nonprofit club has no paid staff, she points out.

Members are not just from Princeton. Vice President Christine Greges, from Monroe Township, was introduced to the club by a neighbor. “I had just retired from 40 years of administrative

work in New York and moved to Monroe,” she says.

Finding time on her hands, she went to a barbecue and chatted with a woman who knew a lot about the area, and mentioned WCCP. Greges went to a meeting and says she was “hooked.”

“There were so many women who were so welcoming and all them were accomplished in so many things — they came from careers in law, government, business, and teaching and they loved to travel and go to the theater and had wonderful hobbies. I felt very much at home and threw myself in head first,” she says.



Women's College Club of Princeton member list and meeting minutes from 1916.

mission and camaraderie. I love the group of women. I enjoy their friendship and the programs are wonderful. I have fun and I'm learning something new. The women are so supportive of the mission. It's a caring group, supportive of each other.”

Mary Anne Restuccia of Hamilton joined the club in 2022, when she moved back to New Jersey to be closer to her family after retiring from a health care administration career in the Virginia-Washington, D.C. area.

“I saw a Women's Club event advertised in a local publication, and it sounded interesting,” she says. She called



Hospitality Chairman Rosemary Aiken, left, holds a carton of china in the 50-year skit in 1966.

Greges has held several positions in the club. The most rewarding, she notes, was as chair of the Scholarship Committee.

Trip and Hospitality Chair Barbara Rinaldo, also from Monroe, recounts how the WCCP membership “immediately embraced me with warm greetings and a sense of sisterhood. Their goal each year of awarding scholarships to young women who attend Princeton area high schools made my decision to join the organization an easy one.” She calls it, “the ‘best decision I ever made.’”

For \$75 a year dues, there is a mix of activities, speakers, and excursions. Speakers have been experts in the fields of art, health, history, law, literature, and more. Trips have been to galleries, historic sites, theater, nature reserves, events like the Philadelphia Flower Show, and other sites. A regular group eats lunch out, another group walks, and there is an active book group and other smaller interest groups.

THE HISTORY

Verna Bayles was the first club aid recipient in 1916. “If it hadn’t been for

the Women’s College Club of Princeton, I wouldn’t have been able to go to college,” she said in a *Princeton Packet* article dated March 4, 1981. She went on to Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pa., and worked for the Princeton University Library for 40 years, retiring in 1961 as department supervisor.



Models Mary Turnbull, Young-Hee Kahng, and Sheila Hart in the “Yesterday Today” fashion show in 1994.

Over the years, the club members have kept, it seems, almost everything: meeting minutes, handwritten notes, newsletters, histories, newspaper clippings, membership directories, committee reports, and annual reports. These were all in boxes, some overflowing, some scrapbooks too worn and fragile to handle.

Local archivist Helene van Rossum is digitizing it all. The oldest item is the minutes from January 1916, the first meeting.

The anniversary year has shone a light on the club’s history. Especially as it relates to the history of Princeton. In 1966, club members presented a skit at their 50-year anniversary that opened with this narrative:

“Princeton in the winter of 1916 had all the aspects of a small town, and its doings were reported weekly in the *Princeton Press*. President Wilson had just married Mrs. Edith Boling Galt. Billy Sunday was preaching several times each month, coming out from Trenton. Ida Tarbell spoke at the Present Day Club. A sketch of the proposed new borough hall enhanced the front page of a January issue. Eggs were selling at twenty cents a dozen and the Princeton Bank and Trust Company reported December 31, 1915, total assets of just over 2 million. Local women lent their efforts to the suffrage movement, and the Audubon Society campaigned for a ‘Feed the Birds’ program.”

The new club made its pitch to potential members by emphasizing “assisting the young women of Princeton who need some financial assistance in continuing their studies.”

In the beginning, interest-free loans were offered. When requests for loans started coming in, the club voted to start a \$300 campaign, asking each member to assume responsibility for a \$5 share. The club borrowed \$100 from the high school alumni association, but the treasury could not match all the loan requests. When two requests were withdrawn, grants of \$125 were given to the remaining two girls.

Later that summer a student asked for scholarship aid, and the club members patched together some donations. The club declared, “Seven months after organization the club had loaned \$350 of its \$352.50 balance.... Women’s College Club had met its first challenge successfully!”

Subsequent fundraising included serving lunch before the 1916 Yale-Princeton game. Tables and chairs were borrowed from the First Presbyterian Church and tableware from the Methodist Church.

During the summers of 1917 and 1918 members earned money by growing cabbage, saving tinfoil, and selling

newspapers. Sandwiches were sold at football games. WCCP prospered, and the club began to expand its activities in the next decade with trips, lectures, recitals, plays, teas and discussions. Postcards were sent to members announcing bi-monthly programs. The club was able to donate \$100 to the Princeton Public Library for the purchase of nonfiction books. Princeton University asked WCCP to handle the University's extension courses, which proved profitable.

Scholarships were awarded starting in 1928, when the scholarship total that year was \$250.

The club met in various locations through the years, from Palmer Square Auditorium (the second floor) to private homes, Nassau Elementary School, Avalon (former home of Henry van Dyck, and present site of the YMCA), Princeton High School, and the Unitarian Church. Meetings are now held in the Betsey Stockton Education Center at Morven Museum & Garden.

Money-making projects and astute investment policies, plus a growing membership, led to the presentation of four scholarships in 1944. Lecture meetings featured Princeton University professors.

After World War II, WCCP became more official with a new printed directory, and an outside audit. It bought its own silver tea service (for \$58) and held neighborhood teas for new members. In 1954 WCCP members helped initiate the first annual Fete and netted \$9,847 for Princeton Hospital.

During this time, the executive board voted to increase scholarship awards according to need, and in 1956 dues were raised to \$3.50, of which \$1.25 was specifically designated for scholarships.

In the period between 1928 and 2016, the year of the club's centennial, a total of \$564,600 was awarded in scholarships for Princeton's college-bound young women. In 2025, a total of \$51,700 was awarded to 20 outstanding young women. There is now an endowment, thanks to members' generosity.

As it approached its centenary in 2016, President Kathleen Hutchins pointed with pride to the club's continuing allegiance to its original purpose, saying, "In this 100th anniversary year, we continue, as a club, in our mission to celebrate the academic excellence and exceptional personal



Introducing the first Florence Bell Hillier award in 1993, J. Robert "Bob" Hillier, left, joins his father Dr. James Hillier, right, to present the award to Hun School graduate Katherine Bertone, center.



From left: Marcia Powell, Barbara Hillier, Dr. James Hillier, and Mary Hoffman award Alice Perłowski, center, with the Florence Bell Hillier Award in 1994.

achievement of the many talented young women of our community. These young women remind us of what challenging opportunities are ahead for them and, indeed, how fortunate we are in being able to bring these opportunities closer to them. It is a privilege to share in their adventure."

THE SCHOLARSHIPS

The culminating event of the club year is the Scholarship Tea, held each May, when awards are presented to scholarship

recipients who are students at Princeton High School, the Hun School, Stuart Country Day School, the Lewis School, and Princeton Day School. Working through school guidance counselors, the scholarship committee personally interviews each candidate.

The named scholarships have meaning to those who started them. Helen Ju and Doris Ju are sisters and active club members, Helen as the webmaster and Doris as historian. The Chow-Soon Chuang Ju Memorial Scholarship is named after their mother, Chow-Soon Ju, who died in 2021 at age



The 2025-2026 Women's College Club of Princeton board members.



One of many excursions to museums and historic sites.

98. She had been a club member herself for 20 years. She was born in China during a time when girls were not encouraged to get an education, according to the scholarship information. "She loved school and her grades were always better than her brothers. In 1946, right after Japan surrendered in World War II, as the only woman in her class, she finished college with a law degree. She took a steamship by herself, and left China for Manila, Philippines, where she obtained a master's degree in political science (the only woman in her class again), while she taught high school, raised four daughters, published essays in newspapers that were collected into books, and in 1968,

with her family, became an immigrant again, this time to the United States." She published five books of essays in Chinese and English, and "wanted everyone to take part in making the world a better place." The scholarship was established in 2022 by her four daughters, intended for a student with financial need, of Chinese descent, or who shows involvement in Chinese culture, and other attributes.

Since 1993, architect J. Robert Hillier (publisher of *Princeton Magazine*), has personally awarded the Florence Bell Hillier Memorial Scholarship, named after his mother, to recognize the special characteristics of his mother: intelligence,

entrepreneurship, artistic talent, and sense of humor. It is awarded based on financial need.

Hillier also personally awards the Barbara A. Hillier Memorial Scholarship in memory of his wife and partner in Studio Hillier, honoring her special characteristics of service, leadership, artistic abilities, and especially sophistication and passion for architecture and interior design.

Marilyn Gonyo has set up and contributed to the Dr. Marilyn E. Gonyo Aspiring Educator Scholarship. "I've been in education my whole life, and I like to support women going into the field of education," explains Gonyo, a college professor who also has scholarships at Rowan University, Rutgers University, and Georgian Court. In this way she is connected to her career, during which she served as a consultant to educational book companies and the Educational Testing Service, along with many school districts and schools in New Jersey.

The Kathleen Hutchins Memorial Scholarship, named after the club's former president, goes to a "friendly, enthusiastic, leader who is resourceful, a facilitator who empowers others and shows high promise of service and usefulness."

The Luna Kayser Memorial Scholarship is intended for a student with special needs as well as financial need, in memory of Franklin W. Herron.

Other scholarships include the Bartlett Family Scholarship, honoring the memory of the late attorney Marshall Bartlett; the Nancy Lifland Memorial Scholarship; the Mary Lincoln Memorial Scholarship; the Carol Stawski Memorial Scholarship; and the Marjory White Memorial Scholarship, all with some attributes or fields of interest cited. And, there are several Women's College Club of Princeton scholarship awards.

THE RECIPIENTS

The 2026 tea was held on May 18, "They are so impressive," says Greges of the scholarship recipients. "There are not enough hours in the day to do what they do. I don't know when they sleep."

Twenty-one area female high school students planning to pursue higher education at schools like the University of Pennsylvania, Colorado College, Wellesley College, Franklin & Marshall College, and Tulane University, were present to be introduced.

Among them, the Florence Bell Hillier Memorial Scholarship recipient is



The 2026 Women's College Club of Princeton scholarship recipients.

Arianna Malave, a Princeton High School senior. In addition to being an exceptional student and a varsity cheerleader who choreographed routines, she is the president of the Multi-cultural Student Achievement Network, a nationwide club whose mission is to improve access, opportunity, and achievement for people of color; and PULSE, a club that donates clothes and care kits to women in the Princeton area. She started her own business, and has been invited, when she attends Marymount University, to join its flag football team, as she plays for an all-girls team that participated in the ESPN Flag Football World Championships where they ranked sixth in the world.

This year's Chowsoon Chuang Ju Memorial Scholarship recipient, Princeton Day School senior April Kopacz, is a "strong student" who has deepened her interest in Chinese culture by studying Chinese since her freshman year. Interested in chemistry, she is a leader of the Science Club, and an actor, dancer, and choreographer for her school's theater community. Ballet and figure skating are her passions as well. She plans to study chemistry and dance at Franklin & Marshall College.

The Dr. Marilyn E. Gonyo Aspiring Educator Scholarship recipient, Stuart Country Day School's Leila Hernandez-Lewis, is "described by a counselor as someone who leads with empathy, encouragement, and the desire to take care of others." As a senior, she was selected for the Peer Leadership course, and took

honors courses in physics and English. She has written a published volume of poetry and was editor-in-chief of her school newspaper. She was captain of the varsity basketball team, and founded and led an Athletic Mental Health Group. She was a leader in student government and the Latin Hispanic Heritage Club, a volunteer teaching assistant in aftercare programs for

life since then to club members.

She wrote in an email, "I've often thought about the support I received from the club during my years at Princeton (Class of 2000), and I remain deeply grateful. Your scholarship made a difference in my ability to be there, and that sense of encouragement — of being seen and believed in — is something I've carried with me ever since, both professionally and personally."

Long is in her 13th year of living in Nairobi, where she works for a French research firm and is raising two children with special needs as a single, adoptive mother. Despite the challenges, she said she lives in a supportive community. She said she remains "committed to work that supports children, families, and communities in complex settings, and I continue to look for ways to contribute meaningfully in this part of the world where I've made my home."

"Thank you again for your kindness and support all those years ago," she wrote. "I carry it with me in the life I'm building with my children."

In the members' skit of 1966, the narrator states: "Princeton of 1966 has cause to be grateful for the foresight of a group of women who recognized the need to bring intelligent efforts to bear on the admission of young women to college, and to find the means to make their study possible."

After 110 years, it's still about higher education for women.

For more information, visit wccpnj.org. 



Arianna Malave, the 2026 recipient of the Florence Bell Hillier Memorial Scholarship, with J. Robert Hillier.

young children, a tutor at Stuart Country Day School, and an active member of the Black Student Union.

The scholarship recipients keep up with club members, sending reports of how they are doing. Alison Long was a scholarship winner in 2006, and has reported on her