

"Know Your Neighbor: The Women's Civic Club of Panama City Beach"

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Did you know that the Women's Civic Club provided the nice bench at the handicapped beach access entrance on the east end of town? And those swim lessons that your kids have taken through the Boys and Girls Club—the Women's Civic Club helped make those possible too. So, how much do you know about this local non-profit organization? Current (and past) President, Cheri Leistner, and club member Patty Rocco, shared more info with me when we met in the Study Room at the library—which, by the way, has the club's name in large letters above the room, since they helped with funding when the library was built.



The Civic Club has been operating continuously since 1965. This speaks volumes about the dedication and passion that these ladies have had for the past 60 years. Currently, they have just under 100 members and continue to grow. They meet monthly at area restaurants from September to May, with attendees bringing in a donation for that month's cause. Most meetings have a guest speaker, covering a range of informative topics. They're very proud of the fact that last year they were able to donate \$50,000 back to the community, and that all money raised stays right here. What are some of the things they've been a part of? They pay for field trips for kids who can't afford to go. Provide school supplies. Regularly assist with the Backpack Blessings program that sends kids home with basic food staples for the weekend. Support our local Law Enforcement and Fire Departments with training and a K9 facility. Spend time at the area Senior Living Centers doing arts and crafts with residents. They were instrumental in the new Splash Park located at Frank Brown Park on PCB Parkway. And they also have two endowed scholarships at Gulf Coast State College. One is in General Studies and the other is in the Culinary Program. Around the end of November, Aaron Bessant Park gets transformed into a winter wonderland for Home For The Holidays, complete with free family movies, thousands of sparkling lights, fire pits, and more. And the 4,000 S'mores that get consumed there? You can thank the ladies from the Women's Civic Club for those scrumptious treats. You can also find them helping with several of the food truck events around town, in addition to the popular Beach Ball Drop on New Year's Eve. That's a LOT of stuff these ladies have a hand in! "We're not a social club", says President Leistner. "We're a working club".

So, where does all the money come from to make all of these things happen? Through several fundraisers the club hosts during the year. They have a juried arts and crafts show twice a year, with the Fall show scheduled for November 8 at Frank Brown Park. They've added a Literary Café to the event, giving visitors the opportunity to purchase books from local authors. This has proven to be a popular addition. But their biggest fundraiser of the year is their annual dinner, dance, and silent auction. The next one will be the Hearts & Hands Celebration on February 13, 2026, with special entertainment by Todd Herendeen. Mark your calendars.

After hearing about all of these amazing things, aren't you inspired to get involved in the Women's Civic Club yourself? I asked Cheri what the most rewarding thing was for her as part of the civic club, and she stated simply, "Seeing our money go into action." What does Patty enjoy about it? "It's been very fulfilling to see all the people get this money, and to see it all stay here in the community", she says. Membership is open to anyone with a Panama City Beach address. You can contact the club with any questions or to make a donation by visiting their website at wccpcb.org, and also follow them on Facebook.