

# Century-old GCW disbands but its good works continue with endowment, Guild Inc.

BY JUDY WOODWARD

For 106 years, the Guild of Catholic Women (GCW) has prided itself on being a catalyst for improving the lives of people in need. "Our tradition was to get things up and running and then step back," said president and Merriam Park resident Alison Enestvedt, 67.

Now the organization that has spearheaded changes in everything from the promotion of mental health to the education of single mothers is taking one last step back—the GCW is disbanding.

That does not mean that its good work is ending. Guild Incorporated, a separate nonprofit corporation established by the GCW several years ago, will carry on its mission of caring for the long-term mentally ill. With a \$9 million budget, a paid staff of 130 and 1,600 clients, Guild Incorporated continues to thrive. The GCW has also established an endowment with the \$200,000 it raised from the sale of its properties. The endowment, which will be administered by the Catholic Community Foundation, will carry on the GCW's work with women, children, immigrants and veterans.

"We're honored to carry forth the legacy of the Guild of Catholic Women," said Guild Incorporated

president Grace Tangjerd Schmitt. She noted that many of her 220 volunteers have been members of the GCW.

Like other volunteer service organizations, the GCW has been affected by changes in society and in the role of women over the past 40 years. Active membership in the GCW had declined to fewer than 100 women in recent years. Younger women were not stepping forward to claim their mothers' seats on the GCW board as had been the custom. "If you're working," Enestvedt said, "you don't have time to go to a lot of volunteer meetings."

It was far different in 1906 when Caroline Beaumont and several other well-to-do women of St. Luke's Parish (now the Catholic Community of St. Thomas More) founded the GCW to relieve the poverty that had sprung up near their homes. St. Paul was barely half a century old at the time, and its social services had not kept pace with the thousands of immigrants who were arriving each year from distant shores. The immigrants had come with high hopes of prospering in the young state of Minnesota, but many had few resources to fall back on when unemployment, illness or disaster struck.

Beaumont was single—the only single woman among the GCW's founders. She would soon marry,



Guild Inc. president Grace Tangjerd Schmitt (second from left) receives the deed to the Guild South property from the Guild of Catholic Women's president Alison Enestvedt (left), treasurer Nancy Sloan and board member Kate Cole. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

however, and, like her colleagues in the guild, thereafter be known in the society columns by her husband's name, Mrs. Dr. H. J. O'Brien.

Beaumont and her friends began their charitable work by sewing for the poor and distributing food baskets. In 1908 they established a Travelers Aid Bureau to help new immigrants. In 1911 they founded a residence for young working women who were new to the city and unfamiliar with its dangers. In 1920 they helped establish the forerunner of Catholic Charities, the umbrella group for the social services offered by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Whether the cause was aiding orphans, establishing a new church for Mexican immigrants or easing the reintegration of soldiers following

their service in war, the GCW was always ready to take on a project. During World War I, for instance, the women promoted the sale of Liberty Bonds, assisted veterans housed in the old Aberdeen Hotel in Ramsey Hill, and met the trains bearing the coffins of dead servicemen. They also assisted the families of the bereaved and arranged burials for indigent soldiers.

In 1917 the GCW held the first of its annual debutante balls, establishing a formal introduction to society for young Catholic women as well as a major source of funds for the organization's work. The debutante ball at the St. Paul Hotel was the first charity ball ever held in Minnesota.

The GCW's last debutante ball was held in 1991, but other social traditions continued until the end.

"We'll all miss the Christmas dinner," Enestvedt said. GCW members and their husbands served as hosts and servers at the candlelight dinner held in early December for clients of the GCW and their families. The evening concluded with a visit from Santa and the distribution of presents to the children.

Even as the members contemplated the GCW's dissolution, their thoughts were on the future. "Our name will live on through the Guild of Catholic Women Endowment Fund," Enestvedt said. "It was hard (to disband), but we're really proud of our legacy. And the Guild of Catholic Women could come back in a different way, if it's needed."

"I've still got my long white gloves," she said. "Call me if the charity ball comes back."

## Religious Notes

**Temple of Aaron Synagogue**, 616 S. Mississippi River Blvd., will offer a Lunch and Learn program at 11:45 a.m. Saturday, November 26, and a Tot Shabbat at 6:00 p.m. Friday, December 2. Call 651-698-8874.

**Advent Vespers** will be presented by the Sisters of St. Joseph at 4:30 p.m. Sundays, November 27, December 4 and 18, in Our Lady of Victory Chapel at St. Catherine University. On December 11, it will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel of the Provincial House at 1880 Randolph Ave. Call 651-690-7000.

**A feast of candlelight and sacred music** will be presented by the Gregorian Singers at

4:00 p.m. Sunday, November 27, at St. Paul's Church on the Hill, 1524 Summit Ave.

**Vicki Kueppers**, a former Miss Minnesota, will share her story of conversion and sing music from her CD "Advent Reflections" at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 29, at Holy Spirit School, 515 S. Albert St. The suggested donation is \$5.00. Call 651-224-7102.

**Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality**, 1890 Randolph Ave., will offer a "Poetry of Loss and Renewal" workshop from 9:00 a.m.

to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, December 3 (\$75, includes lunch); and "Healing Touch Spiritual Ministry Reclaimed" from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, December 6 (\$20-\$30). Call 651-696-2798.

**A workshop on centering prayer** will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday, December 3, at St. Thomas More Catholic School, 1065 Summit Ave. The cost is \$20. A box lunch will be provided. Call 651-239-9424.

**Or Emet** will host Joel Kramer, CEO and

editor of MinnPost, from 10:00 a.m. to noon Sunday, December 4, at Friends School, 1365 Englewood Ave. Admission is free.

**The Church of Scientology** of Minnesota has opened an 82,000-square-foot facility in the former Science Museum of Minnesota, 505 N. Wabasha St. Sunday services are at 11:00 a.m. in the Omnitheater Chapel. Refreshments follow in the cafe. Call 651-298-8888.

**Established Heart Community Church**, 562 S. Snelling Ave., is offering a Healing School at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays. Each class begins with a short teaching, followed by a discussion period and prayer. Call 651-699-6068.

### The House of Hope Sunday Series

## David Baldwin and the Summit Hill Brass Sunday, December 11

David Baldwin is Professor of Trumpet at the University of Minnesota School of Music. He is an active soloist, ensemble player, composer, arranger and teacher. He has over 100 published arrangements and compositions.

The Summit Hill Brass Quintet has eight CDs including *Music for Al's Breakfast*, and *American as Apple Pie*, a lively collection of all-American music.

David Baldwin has performed with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Minnesota Orchestra and the Bach Chamber Players of St. Paul. This concert features seasonal favorites played by some of the finest brass players in the area.

**2 p.m. in the House of Hope Sanctuary.** All Sunday Series events are free and open to the public.

797 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105-3392 • 651-227-6311

[www.hohchurch.org](http://www.hohchurch.org)



## KidsPark

### Hourly Childcare

- Great Learning and Socialization Environment
- Professional Friendly Staff with Small Class Sizes
- Tight-Knit Community of Parents and Kids
- Convenient Location (Off I94 and Cretin)
- Flexible Hours at Affordable Rate
- For children 6 weeks to 5 years

**Call 651-603-0144 for a Tour!**

Sponsored by the Macalester-Groveland Community Council in cooperation with the St. Paul Division of Parks and Recreation.

We have served local families for over 20 years.



[www.kidsparkchildcare.org](http://www.kidsparkchildcare.org)  
525 Pelham Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55104