



THE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND = A TIMELINE

OUR MISSION:

*“To promote the natural and cultural beauty of the island,
to encourage projects which benefit the community
and to facilitate communication among the women of the island.”*

1961 - 1970

In 1960 a small group of women visiting on the front porch of Nancy McBride's home in Sea Pines decided to formalize their group and began a six decade long mission of benefitting the community of Hilton Head Island. The group grew to 23 members in 1961 and became the Hilton Head Island Garden Club. In the first five years of existence the group worked to create garden space at Coligny Circle and the Zion Chapel of Ease Cemetery.

By the mid 1960's the Hospitality Ambassadors began, membership in the Garden Club grew to 56 members, Billie Hack was elected President and The Island bulletin began publication. Interest Groups became a focus of the organization and the original groups included Floral Arrangement, Arts & Crafts, Literary Study, Bridge, Gardening, Cooking, Cultural Affairs, Civic Affairs and Welcoming Committee.

The Civic Affairs Interest Group, was instrumental in the formation of the Child and Youth Development Center (now the Children's Center), a childcare center for the children of working parents that charged fees based on the ability to pay. This group also played a role in advocating for children's health care and supported the War on Hunger.



Coligny Circle in 2021

A cornerstone of WAHHI has been the four luncheons a year. This tradition has been a staple of the organization and remains a cornerstone of the organization.

The Dancing Interest Group formed in the late 1960's and this meant that men participated in the organization. Evening interest groups were formed in recognition that women who were in the workplace and not able to attend meetings and events during the workday needed a place in the organization.

1971-1980

An early WAHHI interest group, “Starting Your Family Tree,” grew to become the “Genealogy Interest Group” and then grew to become an independent organization - The Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society. In 1997, the local genealogical and history societies merged to form The Heritage Library. The Library and WAHHI continue their strong bond today. This decade in our history also saw another interest group become independent and grow into the Hilton Head Island Herb Society.

In 1972 over 100 women attended the Spring Luncheon at the Plantation Club in Sea Pines. The meeting was delayed when someone spotted Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine and



*Bryson Simonson, Chairman, Garden Club Group (left)
and WAHHI President Mary Grimwade (1971-72) (right)*

South Carolina Governor John West teeing off on the Ocean Course outside the meeting room window.

In 1980 WAHHI's Youth Community Service Awards began as an idea of then President, Carol Wolfe. This program rewards local students who have provided outstanding volunteerism and community service. The first recipient was Peggy Carey a junior at May River High School, received a \$75 savings bond. This awards has grown to recognize hundreds of students resulting in thousands of dollars awarded in support of their hard work and dedication.

1981-1990

WAHHI has a strong tradition of working to protect our local environment and ecosystems. In 1982, we created the “Love the Beach” a brochure and distributed it to all hotels to encourage tourists to preserve the attractiveness of the beaches by protecting sea oats, loggerhead turtles and sand dollars. The project lasted well into the 1990s.

In 1983 more than 380 women took part in a Victorian Christmas Open House at the Rose Hill Mansion. A highlight of the event was the WAHHI Christmas Punch. Over the years there has been a question about the ingredients of the “WAHHI Christmas Punch” – does the sparkle in the punch come from Sprite or Champagne and we may never know what the original ingredients were! In 1984 WAHHI made the first \$1,000 contribution to the Hilton Head Cultural Center, an organization that ultimately became the Arts Center of Coastal Carolina. The money was used for a commemorative brick walkway that can be seen at the center.

This decade saw the organization’s 25th anniversary in

1986. The celebration kicked off with a special Happy Anniversary message live from The Today show and delivered by Willard Scott. The luncheon had 750 guests in attendance and then President, Allyson Hardin dressed as an alligator was certainly a highlight and much talked about topic. WAHHI also celebrated by donating \$1,000 to the Town of Hilton Head Island in support of the landscaping project for the planned Town Center.

WAHHI women have a history of being major contributors and Martha Baumberger was no exception to that rule. Martha was WAHHI President in 1981 and went on to be elected to Beaufort County Council. In 1987, she was elected Mayor of Hilton Head Island. Martha was also co-founded the Zonta Club of Hilton Head Island.

In 1988 WAHHI joined with the Junior League of Savannah to bring lifestyle diva Martha Stewart to the area to present the holiday program. She presented at the WAHHI luncheon on the first day and went to Savannah the second day.



*Martha Baumberger,
WAHHI President in 1981*

1991 - 2000

This decade kicked off with celebrating the organization's 30th anniversary. The celebration honored talented women in music the arts and volunteerism and also included one of the very popular fashion shows in our history. To commemorate the anniversary, WAHHI gave a gift of \$2,500 to Hilton Head Elementary School for a computer.

In 1993, we presented 10 Youth Community Service Awards to deserving local students – this represents the highest number of awards given.

The Hilton Head Island Recreation Playground Fund, Audubon Newhall Preserve, Hilton Head Dance Theatre and Habitat for Humanity shared more than \$5,000 in donations in 1994.

Our 35th Anniversary was celebrated in 1996 at a luncheon that honored Past Presidents and included a performance

by the Hallelujah Singers. WAHHI also donated \$5,000 to the Hilton Head Library in support of a study room in the newly built library building.

The work done by our organization received a special recognition in 1998 when we were named Organization of the Year by the Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. This award is given

annually to a community group for its “continuous dedication and exemplary service to the island community.” The WAHHI commendation document hangs in the study room at Hilton Head Branch of the Beaufort County Library Commission.

In 1999 The Pink Paper was founded and replaced The President's Letter and the world renowned pianist Lincoln Mayorga, a descendant of Beethoven, performed at the holiday luncheon.



Jackie Cordray, President 1999-2000 (left to right) with Past Presidents Nina Furner (1992-93), Peggy Diederich (1994-95), Jean Applegate (1993-94)

2001-2010

Another decade in our history and we celebrated another important milestone – our 40th Anniversary. In honor of this important year WAHHI commissioned a local sculptor, Walter Palmer, for a bronze sculpture of a pelican sitting on a bench and reading “Tales of Hilton Head” for \$5,000. The sculpture was donated to the Town of Hilton Head and was originally placed in Shelter Cove Community Park and later moved to the Coastal Discovery Museum where it is placed directly in front of the Hack-Armstrong House.

In 2003, WAHHI funded a \$500 Palmetto Award given to a selected South Carolina artist at Coastal Discovery Museum’s first Art Market.

Lois Wilson focused her term as President on higher education. Events that spotlighted this work included:



Walter Palmer statue

- The Concert Choir of the University of South Carolina performing at the WAHHI luncheon as part of its tour through Georgia and South Carolina; and
- A Style Show that featured designs by students of The Savannah College of Art and Design.

2007 is the year that WAHHI unveiled its new website and expanded member communication to include print and electronic media.

In 2005 the Camelia Garden at the Coastal Discovery Museum was donated by Fred and Donna Manske. (Donna was president of WAHHI 2014-2015). The garden is recognized for its collection of 131 historic and exotic Camelia plants, planted along a pathway under some beautiful oak trees. The bloom period starts in November and runs through mid-March. Every year the Difference Makers clean up the garden in preparation of the blooming season.

2011-2020

WAHHI's 50th anniversary celebrated 500 members and 31 Interest Groups with a High Tea/Garden Party at Coastal Discovery Museum. Stunningly beautiful spring hats were seen all around the museum grounds in support of the celebration and the sales of "Garnished with Gold," a compilation of member recipes. The sale of this book supported a \$15,000 donation to the Town to help with renovations of historic buildings on the museum grounds.

In 2012 WAHHI continued their support of Town projects and provided \$10,000 toward the Pathways Project and the building of map kiosks on the 64 miles of nature paths throughout the Island.

Billie Hack, WAHHI's first President (1965-1966), was inducted into the Hilton Head Island Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame recognizes residents that have made a lasting and extraordinary contribution to the quality of life on Hilton Head Island.

On May 5, 2016 WAHHI celebrated our 55th Anniversary with a "Madhatter's Birthday Party." It was a festive occasion with a Birthday Cake on every table and prizes awarded for categories of hats. This year also brought

Hurricane Matthew to our shores. The Island was blasted with 90 to 105 mile per hour winds and heavy rain. Over 120,000 trees were downed and 2 million cubic yards of debris covered the island. The cleanup took months. The most important lesson learned – we are a very resilient community and by working together we came back even stronger.

In 2016, WAHHI established the WAHHI Charitable Fund. This was a new program in which WAHHI awards competitive grants to 501c3 organizations that can demonstrate in their programs' support the WAHHI mission. The first grant recipients included: Bluffton Self Help, The Literacy Center, Neighborhood Outreach Connection, Second Helpings and Volunteers in Medicine. The Charitable Fund continues to grow and provide much needed support for our community.

In 2017 Hurricane Irma blew into our community. Once again, we stood strong and our community and organization continued to thrive.

In September 2018 WAHHI was welcomed as a member of the Hilton Head Bluffton Change of Commerce. President Darah Latourelle was proud of this relationship and the new opportunities afforded to our organization. In 2020, the COVID19 pandemic changed the way we do things as well as what we could do. The Spring luncheon was cancelled as interest groups closed amid our community's response. WAHHI still recognized five

local youth, awarded 12 charitable fund grants, delivered cookies for first responders, and supported a number of other community efforts.

The new normal has become social distancing, frequent hand washing, wearing masks, meeting outdoors and communicating through technologies such as ZOOM. WAHHI met the challenge and communicated with members with safety the number one expectation. We began our 60th Anniversary celebration this year and will continue to celebrate throughout 2021.



April 2018 luncheon celebration

As part of the celebration, WAHHI is honoring three community collaborators that uniquely support the WAHHI mission. Those collaborators are:

- The Heritage Library, for protecting the culture of the island,
- The Hilton Head Island Sea Turtle Protection Program for protecting the natural beauty of the island, and
- The Children's Center as a project that benefits the community.

In addition, WAHHI will soon announce its Youth Community Service Award winners, the Charitable Fund grantees and provide information on its traditional anniversary gift to the community.