

## NCJW Celebrates 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Distinguished guests, members of National Council of Jewish Women, friends, and supporters. Welcome to this once in a lifetime event! A special thank you to our small but mighty committee: Kelly Somberg, Judith Evnen (food and decorations) Mirra Klausner (video), Milisa Flekier, Amanda Palan (invitations) and Amy Hinrichs (for everything on top of that).

It is an incredible honor to stand before you today as we celebrate the 130th anniversary of The Greater Kansas City Section of National Council of Jewish Women. We were the second section after National to incorporate. Today, we not only reflect on the remarkable journey that has brought us to this milestone but also look ahead to the work that remains to be done in our ongoing pursuit of justice, equity, and compassion.

For 131 years, the NCJW has been a beacon of hope, a voice for the voiceless, and a force for change in communities across the country and around the world. Our founders, in 1893, envisioned an organization that would embody the Jewish values of tikkun olam—repairing the world—by advocating for the rights and well-being of women, children and families. Our section has grown from 17 women in 1894 to over 550 members today, but the mission is still the same. The Greater Kansas City Section was founded by Bertha Lieberman, the Section's first president. The organization was and remains "dedicated in the spirit of Judaism to advancing human welfare and a better way of life." By providing a coordinated program of education, services, advocacy and social action, NCJW attempts to achieve this goal and to fulfill unmet needs within the Jewish and the general communities. It aims to unite Jewish women interested in the works of religion, philanthropy, education, and social reform. NCJW has always been a forerunner in anticipating problems and preparing solutions in our community.

From the early days of aiding immigrants and the needy, to championing women's suffrage, to the ongoing fight for reproductive

rights, racial justice, and gender equality, NCJW has never wavered in its commitment to creating a more just and equitable society. Our organization has been at the forefront of **every** major social justice movement of the last century, and our impact has been profound. Our early programming included free baths to tenement dwellers, and a hot lunch program for Kansas City Missouri public school children. We opened schools for the multiply handicapped, and preschools for disadvantaged children. NCJW along with the Juvenile Division of the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit of Jackson County, started CASA in Kansas City in the early 1980s.

For over 70 years, we held Parties for the Blind, supported legislation and classes for the blind, formed and sponsored the rehabilitation unit at University of Kansas Medical Center, opened a day care center at Menorah medical center and have provided scholarships for graduating high school seniors for over 80 years. *On the tables you will find evidence of our history and the around the room you will see pictorial of our inventive and resourceful section. I also encourage you to review the History of Us for highlights of our section from 1937 to 1983.*

Currently, section programs include the Back to School Store, Baskets 4 Babies (and the knitting group), Birthday Books, Circle of Life, Honey For Rosh Hashanah, Julies Group, Lilith Group, Mother's Day Jewelry Store, Period Project, Suitcase to Start, Stacey's Closet, and ongoing community service projects.

But the work is far from finished. Today, as we mark this historic anniversary, we are reminded of the challenges that still lie ahead. We live in a time when the values we hold dear—justice, equality, freedom, and compassion—are under threat. The fight for reproductive rights is as urgent as ever, as we see attacks on women's autonomy and access to healthcare. The struggle for racial justice continues, as systemic inequality persists in our institutions and communities. And the battle

for gender equality is ongoing, as we work to dismantle the barriers that hold women back in every sphere of life.

In the face of these challenges, National Council remains resolute. Our commitment to advocacy, education, and service is stronger than ever. We will continue to raise our voices, to mobilize our communities, and to fight for the rights and dignity of all people in the areas of gun safety, abortion access, voting rights and providing free menstrual products for children in 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and removing the tax on menstrual products.

As we celebrate 130 years of progress, let us also celebrate the incredible women who have made this journey possible. The leaders, the volunteers, the advocates, and the supporters who have dedicated themselves to this cause. Let us honor their legacy by continuing their work with the same passion, dedication, and unwavering commitment to justice.

Let us also remember that the strength of the NCJW lies in our collective power. It is the power of women coming together, united by a shared vision of a better world, that has enabled us to achieve so much. And it is this collective power that will drive us forward as we enter the next chapter of our history.

So, as we celebrate this remarkable milestone, let us recommit ourselves to the mission that has guided us for 130 years: A grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

Let us continue to be the voice for those who cannot speak, the hands that lift-up those in need, and the force for change that our world so desperately needs.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Thank you for your dedication, your passion, and your unwavering support. Together, we

will continue to make a difference, and together, we will create a more just and compassionate world for all.

Now let's watch the Video "NCJW's 130th Anniversary-Featuring Past Presidents

The toast:

Thank you all so much for celebrating with us today. Congratulations and happy 130th anniversary, NCJW! Here's to the next 130 years of progress, justice, and hope.