

## Home : Feature

### Newcomers Clubs: Not just for newcomers anymore



January 2007 - Heather Darrow

Boxes await you in every room. Peering from your front window, you hope to catch a glimpse of another living soul, but the street is empty because your neighbors enter and leave their houses from alleys in the back. Or maybe you just quit your job or retired. You can't call your friends during the day because they are too busy working, and at night they are busy running errands. Whether your friends and family are thousands of miles away

or just around the corner, the good news is that new friends and loads of activities await you at two area newcomers clubs.

One of the best things about the Plano Newcomer Women's Club (PNWC) and the Newcomer Friends of Greater Plano (NFGP) is that they are open to all women; you don't have to be a newcomer to join.

#### **Newcomer Friends of Greater Plano**

Plano resident and NFGP publicity chair Joanne Buck has moved 11 times. This year, her children will be seniors in high school. Soon she will be entering into another phase in her life, a time when she will need a strong network of friends.

"Moving can be depressing, exhausting and stressful. These women are so resilient, and their stories help you make it through. I have gone in and out of women's groups and never felt that genuine receptive feeling I have felt here. There is a tremendous fear of isolation we all are dealing with, but when you walk in the door at a welcome coffee, all those women understand what you are going through," Buck said.

The NFGP has a variety of groups, activities and services ranging from Helping Hands – a listing of outstanding services for medical, home repair and personal needs – to Grape Escape, a wine tasting club. The 2006 programs included State Senator Florence Shapiro; Jacquielynn Floyd, *Dallas Morning News* columnist; Paula Lambert, founder of the Mozzarella Company; Mary Ellen England

speaking on women's healthcare; author and humorist Rose-Mary Rumbley, and the Rich-Tones female barbershop quartet.

According to Sharon DeFalco, president of the NFGP, the group currently has 190 members. She enjoys the Away We Go travel group, which will be heading to San Antonio in October.

"I have never encountered a more caring group of women. Someone once told me, 'This club has some kind of magic; don't change a thing.' That magic is its members," said DeFalco, a resident of Richardson.

DeFalco has moved 10 times, most recently from Cleveland, Ohio. This is her third time back in the Dallas area. DeFalco has belonged to four newcomers clubs across the country, and she says none of them were like the NFGP.

"It has been 12 years since I lived in this area, and I lost contact with people. The NFGP has been a lifesaver for me. It is a widely diverse and upbeat group," DeFalco said.

Plano resident Sharon Hogue is one of 13 founding members and the first president of the NFGP. She has moved 10 times and has resided in Plano since 1997. According to Hogue, the NFGP first met in May 2001 with 60 people. Hogue is a member of the quilting group, which auctions its products and offers scholarships for members' children in the name of deceased founding member Camille Klein.

"This is the longest we've been anywhere. It is nice to have the support system; you know you have people pulling for you. The focus of the NFGP is on the newest members and making sure they feel welcome and involved. I am proud of how far we have come," Hogue said.

Frisco resident and treasurer of the NFGP Sally Adams moved 11 times but lived in Alabama for 20 years. She says she felt isolated when her father died right after her move to the area but joining the NFGP changed that.

"I thought I was set for life when *surprise* we were moving to Texas. I spent 18 months running back to Birmingham, then I went by myself to one NFGP coffee. It made all of the difference in the world. Within five minutes, I felt like I'd known those women forever. It gave me a reason to quit going back to Birmingham," Adams said.

The NFGP meets at 9:15 a.m. on the second Tuesday of every month at SMU-in-Legacy, 5228 Tennyson Pkwy in Plano. For more information, visit the Web site at [www.newcomerfriends.org](http://www.newcomerfriends.org) or contact Sharon DeFalco at 972-231-1745 or [sharondetalco@comcast.net](mailto:sharondetalco@comcast.net).