

## HISTORY OF ASSISTEENS®

Assisteens are auxiliaries of Assistance League chapters that encourage and provide volunteer opportunities for young people in Grades 7 through 12. The goals are to develop a sense of community responsibility, self-reliance, personal responsibility, poise, public speaking and leadership skills. Assisteens raise money in a variety of ways to fund ongoing Assistance League philanthropic programs that benefit their community. Many chapters honor their senior Assisteens for their service at a festive recognition event. There are 122 Assistance League chapters and guilds (chapters in organization) in America. The national organization has more than 26,000 members, including 2,200 Assisteens members in 40 auxiliaries with 2 in formation.

Assistance League was founded by Anne (Mrs. Hancock) Banning and her friends, based on an informal charity in Los Angeles started in about 1894. In the 1890's, social events raised money for local charitable giving. Assistance League, with Anne Banning and Ada Edwards (Mrs. Homer II) Laughlin and friends, provided money and clothing for 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire victims. When the war started in Europe in 1914, Anne and her friends worked for the Red Cross, and in 1917, set up the Red Cross Shop that raised \$150,000 in one year. After the war ended in 1918, the ladies wanted to continue working together, helping people in need.

In 1919, Assistance League was formally organized, with Good Samaritan providing aid to returning veterans and their families and Film Location Bureau raising the needed funds by renting private properties to movie companies. Founding members were prominent women of Los Angeles of all faiths and political views. In 1923, Assistance League moved to DeLongpre Avenue in Hollywood where the campus of Founder Chapter (Assistance League of Southern California) remains today. Anne Banning felt that women worked best in like-minded groups, so auxiliaries were formed. Day Nursery was added in 1924, followed by Girls' Club, Theatre for Children, Toy Loan and Boys' Club. Junior Auxiliary was formed in 1929 for post-college-age young women.

Mrs. Banning was the mother of three children: Eleanor, Hancock, Jr., and George. She felt it was fine to serve youth, but better to let youth serve, so she called on the daughters and granddaughters of members of Founder Chapter to assist in different philanthropic projects. In 1924, the local newspaper reported that Mrs. Lyman Eldridge, age 95, was an instructor of a sewing unit at Assistance League of ten society debs making clothes for Day Nursery.

The Attic Tearoom and Trousseau Shop were formed to create more revenue. Members, as well as movie stars, served as waitresses to studio executives, actors, politicians, members and others visiting Los Angeles. Young girls were invited to serve at the tearoom. Shirley Temple and other girls modeled in fashion shows at Assistance League. Two informal teenage groups were called the Thrifties and Starlighters. In 1932, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote about the "Dumbwaiters" of Assistance League—a group of younger girls who volunteer to raise money for Assistance League. In 1934, a group called the Sub-Sub-Debs hosted a girls' fashion show and tea in Beverly Hills, where Shirley Temple was made an honorary member. Sub-Sub-Deb girls were age 8-16 and supported the reading room at Girls' Club. In 1939, Hollywood columnist Hedda Hopper reported that Shirley Temple was a member of the Sub Debs at Assistance League. These girls were age 10-14 and collected funds to send girls to summer camp.

In 1935, Anne Banning asked Ada Laughlin to write guidelines for other women's groups to join in the work of Assistance League. National Assistance League was formed to promote the growth of effective volunteerism through leadership training and education. A group of women in San Pedro became the second chapter of Assistance League. Santa Ana, Santa Monica, Long Beach,

Pasadena, Glendale, Pomona Valley, San Bernardino and Santa Barbara followed in the 1930's and 1940's.

In 1942, the Assistance League Board voted to consolidate and coordinate all the girl groups. The Beverly Thrifties were active in war work, as well as general welfare at Assistance League. "Cookies for Rookies" had the girls baking for the servicemen who visited the Hollywood USO. "Junior Mannequins" was begun in 1944 to teach service and self improvement. From the beginning, modeling was half of the program, and the other half was serving at the Girls' Club and Day Nursery. The Nip and Tuckers, college girls who were volunteer waitresses at the Attic Tearoom, became part of the Bib and Tuckers Auxiliary. By 1947, there were six project groups: Tearoom Juniors, Starlighters, Junior Mannequins, Cuisineers, Show Shop and Debonnaires, the Junior High Group. Anne Banning and Ada Laughlin were President and Vice President of Assistance League until they retired in 1948.

Soon other chapters followed with teenage auxiliaries. In 1952, Valley Debs was formed with the girls working with the Playroomers Auxiliary at Valley Child Center. Knick-Knackers was formed in 1957 at Assistance League of Flintridge. In 1958, the *NAL Reporter* reported on the "League of Tomorrow" and Junior Groups. Long Beach added groups for junior high and high school girls in 1959.

In 1961, all teenage auxiliaries were given the name "Assisteens," and special recognition was given to them at the National Assistance League Convention in Santa Monica. At that time, there were eight chapters (plus three in organization) with Assisteens Auxiliaries. Chaves County, NM, was the first chapter outside of California to have an Assisteens Auxiliary. The first Assisteens Assembly, attended by 16 auxiliaries, was held at the Beverly Hills Hotel in 1964, with the national officers serving as hostesses. The name "Assisteens" was registered in the United States Patent & Trademark Office in 1965, and at that time there were 22 auxiliaries. An Assisteens tour of Europe was held in 1966.

The first Assisteens Officers' Workshop was held at Founder Chapter in 1970. National Assistance League approved a ten-year honorary membership, called "Junior Member-at-Large," which was given to all graduating senior Assisteens to encourage them to join as chapter members. An Assisteens Conference for the teens, called Assisteens Assembly, was held in Long Beach in 1983, with 491 attending from 29 of the 33 auxiliaries. The first assembly outside of Southern California was held in Tucson, Arizona, in 1989. Young men first became Assisteens in 2000 at the Bay Area, Texas, chapter. Assisteens Conference is now held on an annual basis.

Assisteens Auxiliaries are now in California, New Mexico, Texas, North Carolina, Washington, Missouri, Nevada, Alabama, Oklahoma, Michigan, Utah and Arizona. Last year, Assisteens were an important part of members and volunteers who invested more than 2.6 million hours, returned \$36 million to local communities and touched the lives of more than 1.2 million children, seniors, families and others in need.

Young women and men have given service to Assistance League for 90 years, from 1919, when the motto was "All For Service and Service For All," to 2009, when all Assistance League members put "Caring and Commitment into Action."