

Just a few highlights of BNC's last 90 years:

In the 1940s, during World War II, Buffalo Club members volunteer in war activities ranging from serving in the U.S.O. and Red Cross; as airplane spotters, canteen workers, and nurses' aides; in home nursing and first aid, in the Motor Corps.; and with youth groups.

Buffalo BPW members start carrying red purses as a visible symbol of and to draw national attention to - wage disparity in 1988. In 2004, BPW/USA launches the Red Purse Society. The funds received are used to support Equal Pay Day events, public service announcements, and other advocacy disparities.

In 2004 the Amherst club (founded in 1963) merges with BPW Buffalo.

Held on April 21, 2005, Buffalo BPW brings attention to pay inequity with its first "Unhappy Hour" held at a local restaurant. The event publicizes the pay gap. Even now in 2024, for every \$1 that men make, women earn \$.83. This year, Equal Pay Day, which symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year, was Tuesday, March 12th.

BPW/USA merges with its national foundation in July 2009. State organizations across the country are given the option to continue an affiliation with the BPW Foundation, dissolve, or break out on their own. That year New York State Women, Inc. emerges to "build powerful women personally, professionally and politically" and "make a difference in the lives of working women." With this change the new Buffalo Niagara Chapter embraces opportunities to help women connect and succeed.

In 2014 BNC takes up the mantle of the Women in Leadership program from the local chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). This program honors Western New York's unsung heroines, those women who exhibit leadership, enterprise and excellence in their business career and give back to the community. Our recognition has showcased more than 110 local women since 2011!

During the pandemic, BNC innovates with Zoom meetings and online discussions.

Then, in 2021 BNC creates its "Women Helping Women" nonprofit collaboration, partnering with organizations whose mission is to help women, children, and families throughout WNY. Each year the chapter fundraises for its partner, culminating in a June presentation.

The first partner, UPward Design, furnishes homes and transforms lives for those in need by completely furnishing empty spaces with furniture donated by the community.

The following year, BNC committed fundraising to the Family Help Center, a community based, non-profit committed to the prevention of child abuse and assisting families experiencing various life challenges.

The most recent collaboration was with The Confident Girl Mentoring Program, a 12-week session built around five principles: advocacy, guidance, proper role models, social/emotional learning and self-confidence.

Since its inception in 1934, the Buffalo Niagara Chapter of NYS Women, Inc. has fostered the success and empowerment of all women across Western New York.

Our history of BNC started with the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of the United States of America which was founded in July 1919 after the end of World War I. During the war women entered the workforce in great numbers since so many American men were drafted to fight in Europe. When these soldiers came home and returned to their previous jobs, many women wanted to stay employed: BPW/USA became the first national organization created to concentrate on the issues of working women. Its original focus was simple, to promote equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, education, and information.

As part of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of New York State, our Buffalo Club was chartered in 1934. A *Buffalo Courier-Express* article, published January 13, 1934, described the first meeting of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Buffalo, at what is now Statler City, with more than 100 women in attendance:

"One of the outstanding tragedies of the day, Miss Kathryn H. Starbuck, president of the New York State Business and Professional Women's Clubs, told the Buffalo unit last evening at the Hotel Statler, is the lengthening procession of younger women who are trained to work, ready to work, and there is no work for them to do.

Miss Starbuck ... referred to the fields of stenography and nursing as examples of two fields once full of opportunity for women, and now overcrowded. She pointed out that there are new fields and modifications of old ones, where young women can find work.

She continued: "Life may begin at 40, but not if you lose your job. The greatest tragedy of all perhaps is the man or woman who has worked for years to attain a position and then has it taken away." These are the problems which Miss Starbuck urged the new group to study."