HEALTH AND WELLNESS

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

2026-2028 GFWC CLUB MANUAL

GFWC est. 1890 GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

2026-2028 HEALTH AND WELLNESS COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Health and Wellness Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at Programs@GFWC.org.

"THE POWER OF FOOD AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO PREVENT DISEASE, PROMOTE HEALTH, AND PROLONG LIFE IS FAR GREATER THAN ANY PILL OR PROCEDURE." — DR. DAVID L. KATZ

The American Heart Association's Healthy for Good platform is helping put a healthy life within reach. Committed to breaking down barriers and advancing opportunities to help create and apply the kind of healthy habits that stick with you at every life stage – for good. Eat smart, move more, and be well.

Healthy eating is about your habits over time, not just one meal. Over time, load up on fruits, veggies, and whole grains. Choose healthy proteins like beans, nuts, fish, lean meats, and low-fat dairy. Cook with heart-healthy oils like olive or canola, cut back on sugar and salt, keep alcohol to a minimum, and choose minimally processed foods whenever possible.

A walk isn't just good for your body, it's a simple, powerful way to care for your mind and soul. Physical activity, like walking, reduces stress, boosts mood, and promotes overall well-being. Yet, walking rates in the U.S. continue to decline, a trend that threatens both mental and physical health. www.heart.org/en/healthy-living

This Community Service Program aims to explore the various opportunities for awareness and advancement of disease prevention, nutrition, physical, and emotional well-being.

- Disease awareness and prevention involve understanding the causes, symptoms, and ways to prevent diseases, including social determinants and health inequity. This includes screenings, vaccinations, and sharing information.
- Nutrition is a key element in the quest for good health. Wise food choices, proper usage of vitamins and supplements, and food allergy awareness help maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Physical and emotional care encompass behaviors to manage a healthy body, mind, and spirit throughout life. This includes physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, environmental, and social well-being.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women at any age (CDC, American Heart Association):

- The risk of heart disease and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the United States, can be reduced with moderate-intensity aerobic activity.
- Over 60 million U.S. women (44%) have some form of heart disease, which caused 304,970 female deaths in 2023—about 1 in 5. Yet only 56% of women recognize it as their number one killer.

- In the United States, someone has a stroke every 40 seconds, and someone dies of a stroke every 3 minutes and 14 seconds.
- A regular fitness regimen can reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes and several cancers such as bladder, breast, colon, and lung, as well as heart disease and strokes.
- Regular physical activity helps to keep your thinking, learning, and judgment skills sharp, reduces your risk of depression and anxiety, and helps you sleep better.

2026-2028 UNITY PROJECT

MOVE FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

Research shows that exercise is vital for healthy brains and bodies. Regular physical activity can help prevent disease, disability, injury, cognitive decline, and premature death. Experts recommend adults get 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week, and moderate physical activity, such as walking, is generally safe for most people. Every minute counts and activity can be spread over several short periods of time. Encourage physical activity in your club and within the community. Below are some suggestions to encourage your club and community to move more.

CLUB ACTIVITIES:

- Challenge members to walk and track steps.
- Coordinate days to walk as a group, and incorporate seasonal/local events, such as holiday lights, town events, flower/garden tours, and festivals.
- Look for indoor walking tracks at parks and area gyms to use during inclement weather.
- Invite members to arrive at meetings 30 minutes early to walk.
- Create a team to participate in various walks/runs held to support other nonprofit organizations.
- Spend a few minutes at each meeting practicing chair yoga and balance exercises.
- Include exercise tips in newsletters.
- Recognize members who increase physical activity either in steps or minutes.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:

- Organize events such as walks, runs, swimming, tennis, golf, and more, to bring awareness of the benefits of physical activity. To increase participation, partner with other groups such as school teams/organizations, and other nonprofits.
- Create walking trails or paths around your area and document the path in half mile increments. Share with the community to encourage participation.
- Connect with local organizations that work with senior citizens and share chair yoga weekly or monthly.
- Publicize your healthy activities to encourage participation and recognize members and the community for supporting the initiative.

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FEATURED PROJECTS

GET FIT THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

GFWC Gainesville Phoenix Woman's Club (GA) places an emphasis on physical movement to help their members. Each member creates a walking map of 2 miles, marked in ½-mile increments. Logs are maintained each year and include any form of exercise such as walking, sports, fitness classes, yoga, Pilates, etc.

MAH JONGG GROUP

GFWC Woman's Club of Chevy Chase (MD) established a Mah Jongg group by training 53 members to play, and maintains a twice-weekly schedule for the game. Mah Jongg is known to boost social and emotional wellness, combat loneliness, and help preserve cognitive function. The group welcomes members of all ages, backgrounds, and physical abilities to join. A suggestion is for clubs to start their own Mah Jongg groups and open this activity to community members.

CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

GFWC Woman's Club of Cleveland (TX) club members provided baked breads, muffins, and other goodies to show their support for the twenty-five caregivers at a community facility who cover three shifts working with patients with dementia and physical disabilities. There, people are appreciated for their giving spirit as they take care of patients dealing with difficult conditions, such as incontinence, mobility issues, mood swings, suspicions of the elderly, and other conditions. The caregivers were grateful to be recipients of this act of kindness.

PERIOD POVERTY

GFWC Bitterroot Woman's Club (MT) responded to an immediate request from a low-income district school principal who lacked funds to purchase feminine products to stock their facility. Some students were unable to attend school because they could not afford the needed feminine products. The club immediately provided $200, then further, they applied for and received a grant that included direct shipments of supplies. Additional products are shipped quickly upon receipt of online orders placed by the school.

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PROJECT IDEAS

Be inspired by this list of ideas sharing how GFWC clubs can support the Health and Wellness Community Service Program. Find further information about organizations named here under Resources.

DISEASE PREVENTION

- Celebrate American Heart Month in February by planning programs on women's heart health and posting support for National Wear Red Day® (on the first Friday) with information from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.
- Promote local breast and cervical cancer screenings and diagnostic services for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured women. Find a screening program in your state on the CDC website.
- Provide care items for cancer patients, such as warm blankets and socks, moisturizers and lip balm, water and hard candy, and diversions such as books, magazines, crossword puzzles, and more.
- Post and/or share information on the safe disposal of unwanted medications and the location of local medication disposal drop boxes.
- Learn about and share information on social media about the many National Health Observances such as Save Your Vision Month (March) and Childhood Cancer Awareness Month (September).
- Share information about the early signs and symptoms of diabetes in children and adults. Engage a local diabetes educator to attend GFWC club, District, and State meetings. Encourage other local organizations, such as Lion's Club or Rotary, to jointly host meetings.
- Establish a Medical Loan Closet for your community, stocked with canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, personal care items, etc.
- Participate in or sponsor a local Wellness Fair. Include dentists and eye doctors for screenings and nurses for blood pressure readouts. Distribute coloring/activity books on dental care and eye care.
- Hold a BraHaHa or ARTragious Bra decorating contest to raise funds for breast cancer awareness.
- People with dementia often find comfort in having something to do with their hands. Consider providing Fidget Quilts or wristbands for dementia and Alzheimer patients. Visit seniorcarecorner.com/sensory-stimulation-seniors-dementia-4148
- Make attractive cloth bags and fill them with feminine hygiene products. Donate items to middle or high schools for the school nurse to discreetly distribute to young girls in need.
- Educate members on female reproductive issues such as endometriosis and gynecological cancers. Cervical cancer is the only gynecological cancer with a screening test. Additionally, have a Menopause Party with educational materials on the symptoms and treatment of menopause, fans as favors, creative refreshments, and menopause trivia games. See Pinterest or Etsy for party ideas.
- With the increasing use of computers for all age groups, observe Eye Care Month (January) or Save Your Vision Month (March).

NUTRITION

- Share information with club and community members about making wise food choices. Two sources of trusted information include Health.gov, coordinated by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, and Nutrition.gov, a resource of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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- Partner with a local food bank, clinic, and hospital to sponsor a Wellness Fair that provides healthy recipes and handouts on nutrition, such as those offered on Nutrition.gov or MedlinePlus.gov, a program of the U.S. National Library of Medicine.
- Celebrate National Nutrition Month in March with a healthy potluck dinner at your club's monthly meeting. Or organize a community event, such as a "Recipe Makeover Contest," which transforms a favorite dish by cutting calories and increasing its nutritional value.
- Invite a local nutritionist to provide a club program on eating healthy and vitamin/supplement use.
- Hold a "Healthy Food Drive," requesting donors contribute nutritious foods from Feeding America's Healthy Food Donation List. When choosing items, look for labels that note: low sodium, no added salt, no added sugar, unsweetened, or 100% fruit juice. Possible recipients include community food banks, pantries, soup kitchens, or programs coordinated by schools, shelters, and children's organizations.

- Donate healthy food items and/or funds to a college campus food bank, such as one affiliated with the College & University Food Bank Alliance. Monetary donations to food banks are an excellent way to take advantage of their large-scale negotiating and wholesale buying power.
- Volunteer with Meals on Wheels to provide nutritional support to seniors.
- Establish a school garden or expand an existing school garden to emphasize nutrition with strategies established by Growing Minds, a program of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project.
- Engage club and community members in a "Plant a Row for the Hungry Campaign" program sponsored by Garden Communicators International to provide fresh and nutritious produce for local soup kitchens and food pantries.
- Ensure a year-round supply of fresh produce in the community by establishing or supporting a local farmers market. Promote the market on social media and coordinate special events, such as a seasonal taste testing or children's poster contest.
- Put together a "Healthy Meal Basket" that includes items from nutritional food groups, and preparation instructions. A holiday or birthday provides an opportunity to make someone or a family smile.
- Participate in Backpack Buddies to provide nutritious foods for school children over the weekend. Donate nutritious food/snacks. Include a coloring/activity sheet for the backpack.
- Educate members and your community on the importance of food safety in a disaster or emergency. Resources available from FoodSafety.gov include Foodkeeper App, Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency and 4 Steps of Food Safety.
- Utilize Nutrition.gov/topics/nutrition-age for KidsCorner coloring & activity sheets and My Plate Grocery Store BINGO.
- Partner with the Legislation and Public Policy Committee to promote advocacy.

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- Every 3 minutes a food allergy sends someone to the emergency room. Bring awareness to food allergies by providing non-food items, such as plastic spider rings or Halloween themed pencils, for trick-or-treaters. Have your club participate in a local Trunk or Treat using FARE resources. Visit Food Allergy Research Education – Teal Pumpkin Project for information and resources.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CARE

- Integrate physical fitness activities during club meetings. Practice chair yoga, line dancing, balance training, or flexibility exercises. Start an exercise and/or walking group in your club using an app such as Charity Miles or FitBit Challenge.
- Partner with a local assisted living home to provide senior exercise equipment such as leg pedaling machines, resistance bands, and yoga mats, or to support their exercise program in other ways.
- Train and host Mah Jongg games for members and the community. Host frequently as Mah Jongg is known to boost social and emotional wellness, combat loneliness, and help preserve cognitive function.
- Sign up to receive the monthly newsletter from the National Institutes of Health, *News in Health*, to share new research with club and community members through club newsletters, social media, and other means.
- Promote physical activity in the community with a Move Your Way Campaign using materials and information from Health.gov. Sponsor a "Stepping On Program" – with a focus on fall risk prevention or a "Strong Body – Strong Minds Program" focusing on strength.
- Hit the mat with a workshop for club and community members on yoga and meditation, an alternative form of exercise to stay fit, healthy, and happy. Yoga improves balance, flexibility, endurance, and strength, while meditation releases stress and focuses the mind. Practiced together, they enhance the mind/body connection and provide confidence and a sense of well-being.
- Support Special Olympics (SpecialOlympics.org) and other athletic contests, therapeutic sports, and/or social programs and opportunities for the challenged and disabled.
- Learn about and share information from the Choose Love Movement (ChooseLoveMovement.org), a nonprofit organization founded after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, which teaches life skills and fosters a school culture that reduces violence. Now used across the U.S., the Choose Love Enrichment Program offers lessons in courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion to boost confidence, promote positive decision-making, and to create and enhance communication, connection, and relationships.
- Offer resources and/or promote programs that prevent bullying, so children and youth are safeguarded and supported at school, in the community, and online. Set up an anti-bullying booth at a parenting fair, health fair, or other community event and distribute brochures, articles, and posters to attendees.
- Join the Campaign to Change Direction (ChangeDirection.org) by pledging to learn the five signs that could mean that someone is in emotional pain and might need help: personality change, agitation, withdrawal, poor self-care, and hopelessness. Educate others with free posters and public service announcements from Change Direction, which works to change the culture surrounding mental illness. Help spread awareness by posting photos of club members on social media, hand up to pledge, and stand with #ChangeMentalHealth.
- Inform club and community members about the many issues surrounding substance abuse with information from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA.gov), which is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From opioids and meth to alcohol abuse, addiction changes the brain and alters decision making. The site offers brochures, information sheets, research reports, news about assistance

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programs, treatment locator services, and more.

- Work with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI.org) by educating, advocating, and/or donating during Mental Health Awareness Month in May, or any time of the year. Consider sponsoring a NAMI volunteer to bring an education class to your community, such as NAMI Basics for parents and caregivers of youth with mental health symptoms. Participate in NAMI's annual walk.
- Eating disorders are serious and often fatal illnesses. They are associated with severe disturbances in people's eating behaviors and related thoughts and emotions. Preoccupation with food, body weight, and shape may also signal an eating disorder. Common eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder. Get free brochures and shareable resources from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH.nih.gov).
- Learn and share the risk factors and signs and symptoms of someone in danger of suicide, as outlined by the NIMH. Consider holding a club or community program on the five action steps to help someone in emotional pain and/or distribute the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK).
- Plant a Hope Garden of yellow tulips to bring awareness to mental illness. Read about it at TheYellowTulipProject.org
- Check into a State or Local Public Health Department's Emergency Mental Health Training program, which brings together community representatives from hospitals, clinics, clergy, senior centers, schools, behavioral health providers, law enforcement, and first responders (fire and medical) personnel. Send notes or cards to residents of nursing homes to boost their emotional well-being.
- Paint "Encouragement Rocks" with images or sayings symbolizing a sense of hope and faith. Place them around your town, on the hospital grounds, outside cancer centers, and at schools.
- Youth need a minimum of sixty minutes per day of physical activity for good health. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program helps schools achieve excellence in physical education through quality fitness education. Work with your local elementary schools to implement the program and assessment process. Provide funding for PYFP awards – medals, certificates, patches, or t-shirts. Visit PYFP.org for information.
- November is National Family Caregivers Month. Host a community thank you reception for caregivers. Donate a food delivery, your time, or gift cards to a caregiver in your club. Distribute free care guides, legal checklists, and information on care options as found at aarp.org.

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NATIONAL HEALTH OBSERVANCES CALENDAR

JANUARY

Cervical Health Awareness Month
National Birth Defects Prevention Month
National Blood Donor Month
National Glaucoma Awareness Month
Eye Care Month

FEBRUARY

American Heart Month
Shingles Awareness Month
National Cancer Prevention Month

MARCH

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month
Brain Injury Awareness Month
National Nutrition Month
National Kidney Month
Save Your Vision Month
World Sleep Day
American Diabetes Alert Day

APRIL

Oral Cancer Awareness Month
Stress Awareness Month
World Autism Awareness Day: April 2
World Health Day: April 7

MAY

Mental Health Awareness Month
Skin Cancer Prevention and Awareness Month
National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
National Stroke Awareness Month
National Senior Health and Fitness Day

JUNE

Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month
PTSD Awareness Month

JULY

UV Safety Month
Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month
Sarcoma Awareness Month
National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

AUGUST

National Immunization Awareness Month
Psoriasis Action Month

SEPTEMBER

Blood Cancer Awareness Month
Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month
Prostate Cancer Awareness Month
Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

OCTOBER

Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Health Literacy Month
National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month
Domestic Violence Awareness Month

NOVEMBER

American Diabetes Month
Lung Cancer Awareness Month
Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month
National Family Caregivers Month

DECEMBER

World AIDS Day: December 1
International Day of Persons with Disabilities

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CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

- Start or join a GFWC Walk to End Alzheimer's National Team
- Create a "Do What You Love to End ALZ" fundraising event
- Become an advocate
- Raise awareness throughout the year
  - June (alz.org/abam) – Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month
  - November (alz.org/events/nadam) – National Family Caregivers Month

CANINE COMPANIONS

- Work on the Veteran's Initiative. canine.org/service-dogs/our-dogs/veterans-initiative/
- Support the "Give A Dog A Job" program.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- To address global hunger, create a Heifer International "farm." At each monthly meeting, choose a farm animal and decorate featuring the animal (chickens, rabbits, etc.).
- Support Heifer International by donating funds to purchase animals, bees, or to empower women.

MARCH OF DIMES

- Participate in the March for Babies by organizing a team to walk, joining a team, and/or donating to a team. https://marchforbabies.org/

OPERATION SMILE

- Donate quilts, blankets, and afghans to comfort a child in a hospital after surgery.
- Donate new or gently used toys to distract patients before surgery.
- Create Smile Sprints, Smile Bags, or Hospital Gowns to support children having surgery.
- Directions are at OperationSmile.org, Service Projects www.operationsmile.org/make-an-impact/ways-to-give/service-projects/

SAFE SURFIN'

- Utilize resources from Safe Surfin' Foundation, Inc. including Cyber S.W.A.T., a peer-to-peer program designed to educate youth about online safety. Program facilitators use the provided curriculum and activities to help facilitate tough conversations about bullying, online predators, and other online risks. Donations should be marked as GFWC for tracking purposes. Safesurfin.org

ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL

- To share information at club meetings or to learn more, please visit www.stjude.org/aboutus or www.stjude.org/waystogive You may also visit www.stjude.org/getinvolved to find great activity ideas for your club to connect to the St. Jude mission.
- Rally friends, family, and community members and register for St. Jude Walk/Run to End Childhood Cancer. Visit www.stjude.org/walkrun to find an event near you.

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UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION SHOT@LIFE CAMPAIGN

- Support Shot@Life with a "Pop a Shot" fundraiser, with shooting baskets for prizes.
- Become a Shot@Life advocate.

UNICEF USA

- Hold a Halloween-themed cornhole tournament for UNICEF for a "hole" lotta fun.
- Share UNICEF USA Kid Power with Juniorettes as a project. Participate as a group and/or engage their local schools and organizations such as Girl Scouts. Kids wear activity bands that measure their steps and physical movement for points to unlock funding from UNICEF partners to provide ready-to-use-therapeutic food (RUTF) to severely malnourished children around the globe. www.gokidpower.org/about-us
- Promote Trick or Treat for UNICEF. Details are at www.unicefusa.org/trick-or-treat

GFWC RESOURCES

AARP Financial Support for Caregivers & Dementia Support www.aarp.org/caregiving

Alzheimer's Association www.alzheimers.gov

A Place for Mom www.aplaceformom.com

Campaign to Change Direction: A Wise Mind www.changedirection.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov
Paul Coverdell Stroke Program
Wise Woman Program

Charity Miles www.charitymiles.org

College & University Food Bank Alliance www.cufba.org

Family Caregiver Alliance www.caregiver.org

Feeding America www.feedingamerica.org
For information on food allergies and the Teal Projects visit FoodAllergy.org

Foodkeeper App; 4 Steps of Food Safety; Food Safety in a Disaster or Emergency FoodSafety.gov

Growing Minds www.growing-minds.org
For information on school gardens, go to www.growing-minds.org/school-gardens

Health.gov, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion www.health.gov

Mouth Healthy, American Dental Association www.mouthhealthy.org

For children's coloring and activity sheets go to www.mouthhealthy.org/resources

Meals on Wheels www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

Medline Plus, U.S. National Library of Medicine www.medlineplus.gov
For information on recipes, go to www.medlinep lus.gov/recipes

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) www.nami.org

NIH News in Health newsinhealth.nih.gov

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National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov

Nutrition.gov, U.S. Department of Agriculture www.nutrition.gov
For information on recipes, go to www.nutrition.gov/recipes

Prevent Child Abuse America preventchildabuse.org (and local chapters)

Presidential Youth Fitness Program odphp.health.gov/pcsfn/programs-awards/presidential-youth-fitness-program

Plant a Row for the Hungry Campaign community.gardencomm.org

Society for Women's Health Research swhr.org

Special Olympics www.specialolympics.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.samhsa.gov

U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Office of Women's Health
www.fda.gov/about-fda/office-commissioner/office-womens-health

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Vaccines www.vaccines.gov

AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State/District of Columbia Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Health and Wellness Community Service projects and Affiliate Organization projects as follows:

- **Certificate to one State/District of Columbia Federations in each membership category**
- **$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity**

Award winners will be determined by entries into the Award Program. Each State/District of Columbia Federations may submit one State/District of Columbia Federation Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Health and Wellness Community Service projects. **Entries should be submitted to the State/District of Columbia Federation Health and Wellness Chairman.** Forms are accessible to the State/District of Columbia Federation Presidents in the Member Portal.

Note: Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC or GFWC Chairmen.

Refer to the Deadlines for GFWC Awards and Contests sections of the Club Manual for more information.

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RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions adopted by GFWC are the foundation of our organization. They guide our call to action and are the basis of all programming and advocacy. Current Resolutions for the **Health and Wellness Community Service Program** are listed here by number and title. Refer to the complete text in the GFWC Resolutions document, filed under "Governance" in the Digital Library on the Member Portal. Resolutions are an important and integral part of GFWC Programs.

170-010	Autism Spectrum Disorder 170-020 Breast Cancer
170-030	Cancer
170-040	Cardiovascular Disease in Women
170-050	Child Survival in Developing Countries
170-060	Dementia
170-070	Diabetes
170-080	Extreme Heat Emergencies
170-090	Family Caregivers
170-100	Food, Drug, Cosmetic, and Medical Product Regulation and Safety
170-110	Freedom of Access to Health Clinics
170-120	Healthcare and Research
170-130	Lead Poison Prevention
170-140	Long-Term Care
170-150	Mental Health Parity
170-160	Nursing Shortage Crisis
170-170	Nutrition and Obesity
170-180	Organ and Tissue Transplantation
170-190	Preventable Disease
170-200	Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare
170-210	Stem Cell Research
170-220	Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation
170-230	Support for Emergency Services Personnel
170-240	Tobacco and E-Cigarettes

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