

## FROM THE FIELD



**TEA TIME**  
C&M members  
at last year's sale  
include Leslie  
Wortmann, Lindsay  
Keller, Adele Talty,  
and Jan Pinkney.

## Litter Day Saints

CHOWDER & MARCHING MARKS 50 YEARS OF DOING WHATEVER IT IS THEY DO

BY RICHARD FARRELL

IT'S A MAY MORNING at the Bedford Village dump, and Judy Bowman and Clare Powers stand guard over some valuable items. In fact, they have been at the dump with others since dawn. Don't call them crazy. You see, Bowman, Powers, and other volunteers are part of Chowder & Marching, a philanthropic group of 20 Bedford couples that has been raising funds to support youth activities for 50 years now. On this

morning, dozens of them have been stocking, arranging, and pricing their mismatched merchandise that they collect at the town dump and sell to support the club's charitable activities. Soon a horde will descend on this makeshift shop and begin pawing through the bargains during the two-day sale.

Founded in 1956, the Chowder & Marching Club (a name chosen for no reason other than it had a Colonial heritage

and sounded just right) had success in raising modest funds for the village's youth programs and college scholarships for Fox Lane students. Then, in 1977, Jack Hambley suggested a novel idea that put the club on a path to being a major benefactor for Bedford youth activities. Hambley reasoned that if volunteers picked up litter along the town's roads, residents would appreciate watching the trash disappear

and just might contribute to the club's fundraising campaign. The result was a \$1,000 profit that was used to build Little League dugouts at Memorial Field. Soon the local do-gooders were picking up items from people's homes—by no means junk—and bringing them to the now-popular early-May tag sale.

"We really didn't have a plan for that first sale," says Bowman. "Nancy Reed, Bobbie Hambley, and I were helping unload

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trucks when we thought, hey, for a little fun, let's set up a real living room. So, we put down a rug, sofa, tables, and books. Pretty soon, a woman came by and asked if a table was for sale. We said, sure, and we were on our way."

Now the sale attracts some 300 buyers a day—many of whom arrive with a loaded SUV, then depart a few hours later with the SUV packed with purchased items. "There's stuff tied to the roof," says Bowman. Remarks Bob Blacker: "We've picked up and sold some great things, with a donated VW bug near the top of the list. We've even picked up a complete chicken coop." Always looking for new revenue, C&M's Linda deMenocal established the Dump Dog Bistro, featuring

cold drinks, coffee, and her famous Dump Dogs, soon to be joined by bacon-egg-and-cheese specials. The bistro is not yet Zagat-rated but achieves raves anyway.

Last year, Chowder & Marching gave \$95,000 to Bedford youth activities. This year the club plans to top the \$1-million level for total gifts. "We admire C&M for its major philanthropic impact in town and the enormous effort the club gives to Clean Up Days as well as dozens of youth programs," says Town Supervisor Lee Roberts.

When Treasurer Dan deMenocal starts to tick off C&M projects, it seems almost impossible that 20 couples could fund so many groups. "This year we're giving a total of about \$85,000 to the schools, plus we provide another

\$6,000 a year in college scholarships." In years past, C&M money has built the covered picnic pavilion at Memorial Field, a new entrance to the pool, and a shelter near the soccer field. Adds deMenocal: "We also bankroll children's concerts, reading programs, summer tutoring, middle-school hockey, Fox Lane lacrosse, and scouting."

The club limits membership to 20 couples—no more, no less. Explains Debbie Gourd, C&M's co-president with husband Will: "The practical reason for just 20 couples is that that's a good number to fit in everyone's living room. Sometimes, we wish for more hands to lighten the load, but this way every member has a specific task and it's impossible to slack off." New co-presidents are

elected each year. Elect, however, is not really an apt description. Names are picked from a hat—the last names out win. The club assesses its members for all administrative and entertainment expenses, to guarantee that *all* fundraising proceeds are directed to programs designed to benefit Bedford youth.

An addition to the dump sale is C&M's annual black-tie dinner-dance, which this past year raised enough dough to fund major support for the school district's performing and visual arts programs. At recent dances, C&M has involved Fox Lane students in the evening's program, and the result was a better understanding of Fox Lane activities and increased community pride in what the school is doing for its young people.

It's not all work at C&M, though. At the end of Sunday on dump weekend, after the pickup trucks, Dump Dog Bistro, and Bowman's Boutique have been put to bed, the exhausted 40 members gather at Jim and Judy Bowman's, as they have for 25 years, for their ritual Litter Day Saints party. It's a potluck, BYOB affair, accompanied by stories of the best and worst pickups. They wait for the treasurer to total up the take, which every year amounts to a new record, deserving of hugs, cheers, and a promise to break the record again next year. ■

this is **the new** that

IT'S PRACTICALLY SEINFELDIAN, the phrase "It's the new ..." The roots are in the fashion world with its seasonal declarations of couture dicta. In 2005 when designer and former Gucci guru Tom Ford decreed "blue is the new black," he was talking about the soft baby-blue hues found more in nurseries than as pantsuits. Last year in a pique of Christo mania perhaps, Tina Brown announced "orange is the new black." Soon enough black was once again the new black. Jargonistas describing a surging trend now lavish the metaphor on everything from days of the week to aging. I have even seen pink is the new black but that was sooo last month. —P.E. Logan



**PALE** is the new **TAN**. **THURSDAY** is the new **FRIDAY**. **FIFTY** is the new **THIRTY**. **EIGHTY** is the new **SIXTY**. **STUPID** is the new **SMART**. **BILLION** is the new **MILLION**.