P.E.O. Sisterhood at Lantern Hill

Empowering women through education

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Photo courtesy of Chris Stoddard

(Clockwise, from top left): P.E.O. members June Carver, Kathey Coombs, Chris Stoddard, Becky Gibby, Irene Cash, and Mindo Swartz all live at Lantern Hill in New Providence, N.J.

A group of six women who live at Lantern Hill are making a difference in the lives of women around the world.

June Carver, Kathey Coombs, Chris Stoddard, Mindo Swartz, Irene Cash, and Becky Gibby belong to P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization), a nationwide, 150-year-old philanthropic organization committed to helping women pursue higher education.

"We consider ourselves a sisterhood devoted to empowering women through education," says Chris, who transferred membership from her chapter in Pennsylvania to the Short Hills, N.J., chapter when she moved to Lantern Hill in New Providence.

The Short Hills chapter comprises about 50 members; the organization as a whole has over a half million members in the U.S. and Canada. By raising and contributing funds, they seek to empower women through grants, loans, scholarships, and financial aid.

"Basically, we raise funds to fund these projects," says Chris, who has been part of the P.E.O. Sisterhood for ten years.

Strong camaraderie

For Chris, who moved from Pennsylvania, having not only a local chapter but also a local subgroup within her own community was a warm welcome to her new home when she moved to Lantern Hill.

"I've developed friendships with the other women who live at Lantern Hill. It makes for more fun being involved with more people," she says.

Kathey agrees that the camaraderie of the group overall is the reason she has enjoyed it for many years. However, her story is different. As a Short Hills native, she's known most of the women for years.

"I have such good friends in P.E.O.," she says, adding that her top priority is helping other women by contributing toward their education.

Convenient meeting space

In addition to sharing their cause with neighbors and peers, the Lantern Hill P.E.O. women are also able to host their large chapter meetings two to three times a year right on campus in one of Lantern Hill's two catering rooms, the Metropolitan Room.

"Lantern Hill is very accommodating when we hold our meetings here. They provide coffee and water and set up tables and chairs," says Kathey.

In addition to larger events like the P.E.O. meetings, Lantern Hill residents can utilize community spaces and catering services so they can continue entertaining their family and friends—whether it's on a small or large scale.

This unique amenity recently came in handy for the Short Hills P.E.O. Every year, the chapter hosts a cocktail party for members and their spouses. However, Kathey says, "Our chapter has grown so big that nobody wants to host in their house, so Lantern Hill agreed to accommodate us here."

Lantern Hill
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