

POINTING WOMEN TO FRIENDSHIPS

Compass Club leads women through moves to the city and life's transitions



Shari Russell and Dona Farsdahl catch up before Compass Club meeting at Das Stein Haus in Spokane earlier this month.



Spokane Compass Club members, from left, Deb Mallion, Kathy Cousineau and Carol Hannah share a laugh during a meeting at Das Stein Haus in Spokane earlier this month. The club welcomes newcomers to the area who are in transition, such as recently retired and any woman wanting to make new friends.

BY CINDY HVAL FOR THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Since 1948, members of the Spokane Compass Club have been offering connection and community to women of all ages.

On the first Tuesday of the month, the group gathers for lunch at various local restaurants.

The club's original mission was to cultivate friendship among new arrivals to the Spokane area and to introduce them to what the region has to offer. For many years, their information was included

in the Welcome Wagon basket given to new homebuyers.

While still a great way for newcomers to meet people, Spokane Compass Club also welcomes longtime residents.

For instance, Maureen Boutz was born and raised in Spokane.

“I’ve never been a newcomer,” she said.

“But I had some friends who attended the luncheons, and they encouraged me to join.”

She found the group to be a great way to meet new people.

“One connection frequently leads to more, and it’s nice to have a place to start,” Boutz said.

Kathy Cousineau also appreciated that starting point.

“We moved here from Colorado 10 years ago to be near our daughter and two grandchildren,” she said. “I was newly retired, and the for first few years I was busy helping my daughter with her little ones.”

That didn’t leave much time for exploring the area or making new friends.

But later she saw an article about Compass Club in The Spokesman-Review. By then, her grandkids were older, and she was ready to forge new connections in the community.

Before long, she was serving as second vice chair of the club, and heading up one of the group’s two book clubs. She even learned to play mahjong.

“I love the camaraderie,” she said. “Sometimes you just have to put yourself out there.”

In addition to book clubs, Spokane Compass Club offers affinity groups for those who enjoy bridge, quilting, hiking, theater and wine and spirit tasting. The smaller groups offer even more connection opportunities.

Over time, the mission of the club has evolved to include helping women as they transition through various life changes like, retirement, empty nest, divorce or widowhood.

That was the case for Maggie Crawford. After her husband died last year,

friends urged her to attend a Compass Club luncheon.

“I’ve lived here for 40 years, but (the club) wasn’t on my radar,” she said.

When she felt ready to venture out after her loss, she found a warm welcome. A former teacher and lifelong reader, the book groups were right up her alley.

“I felt at home right away,” Crawford said. “I love meeting new people.”

An added perk is the club’s record of annual gifts to a charity.

Each year, the Compass Club chooses a local nonprofit to support.

Raffle tickets are sold at the monthly luncheons to raise funds for that organization. This year’s charity is Maddie’s Place, a nonprofit, free-standing recovery nursery for babies experiencing withdrawal due to prenatal substance exposure.

“We are having a ball and doing some good,” Crawford said.

Those small affinity groups paved the way for club president Pat Partovi to forge new friendships when she moved here almost 30 years ago.

“That’s how I really got to know people,” she said. “It broadened my horizons.”

Though the club was named because members come from all points of the compass, its 95 members share the same goal.

“Any woman who wants to make new friends is welcome,” Partovi said. “Compass Club is all about the people, the friendships and the connections made with other women.”

Cindy Hval can be reached at dchval@juno.com.

Special Interest Groups

In this series, we celebrate special interest groups. Whether you get together to play tennis, board games, take long walks, eat lunch, create art, connect with your neighbors or gather with friends, nothing is too small to celebrate. Please share your story with us by emailing Cindy Hval at dchval@juno.com or calling Kimberly Lusk at (509) 459-5457.

IF YOU GO

Spokane Compass Club Lunch and Bingo

WHEN: 11 a.m. Nov. 7

WHERE: Airport Ramada, 8909 W. Airport Drive

COST: \$30 for lunch (cash or check only), \$5 for a pack of bingo cards.

INFO: Reservations must be made by Nov. 2. To reserve a spot, email Sheryl Krauser at skrauser@comcast.net or call (509) 435- 2535. For more information about Spokane Compass Club visit spokanecompassclub.org.