Youth Focus of South Pasadena Community Organizations

*Featured at WISPPA Meeting*

By [**South Pasadena Review Online**](http://southpasadenareview.com/author/south-pasadena-revew/) – Sally Kilby

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Representatives of four community organizations recently shared how they make a difference in the city. Some or all of their efforts are directed toward South Pasadena’s youth.

A Community Connections program was featured as part of the monthly meeting of Women Involved in South Pasadena Political Action (WISPPA). The meeting was scheduled for 8:45 a.m. last Saturday at Calvary Presbyterian Church.

This was the group’s third annual event to highlight the contributions of local nonprofit groups and to stimulate inter-organizational networking and cooperation. The session was open to the public.

Approximately 30 attendees heard from representatives of D.U.D.E.S. (Dads Uniting Dads in Education and Service), the South Pasadena Preservation Foundation, the Oneonta Club and the five public schools’ Council P.T.A.

Ed Donnelly said he began D.U.D.E.S. several years ago with five other South Pasadena fathers whose young children were around the same age. The dads were spending quite a bit of time together attending their children’s sports and school activities.

“We realized we were probably the luckiest six men on the planet,” he said, to be living in South Pasadena and rearing their families. “We felt an obligation to give back.”

To involve men, Donnelly said, they make the projects enjoyable. “If we’re digging a garden at school, it’s fun. It might be a fundraiser, but if it’s a poker night, guys will show up.”

At the Octoberfest event, he said, “everything you eat and drink is handmade by members.”

The group has grown from six to almost 300.

They began with small PTA-related service projects. The founders’ wives were involved in the PTA, and Donnelly is the current president of the South Pasadena Middle School’s PTA.

Since then, according to an information card Donnelly distributed, D.U.D.E.S. members have since undertaken numerous projects. They provided equipment for South Pasadena High School’s TEDx event. They also produced a promotional video for the school district.

Another organization featured was the 47-year-old South Pasadena Preservation Foundation. Spokesman Steven Lawrence said the city’s small historical museum, an 1887 Landmark Building, is its current focus. This is at 913 Meridian Avenue, adjacent to the South Pasadena Gold Line station.

Lawrence said that years ago elementary school classes were routinely taken on tours of the building. The organization wants the visits reinstated, he said.

“The connection of the museum to the community is critical to the fabric of the city’s history for our children and families,” he said.

The building is currently undergoing renovation and repair, he said. The structure has been repainted its original color, white. Major work on the interior is now necessary because of rain damage from a recent storm, he explained.

“When we get this museum put back together,” he said, “and they see those ostrich eggs and ostrich feathers, and they learn about the Cawston Ostrich Farm, you can’t tell what might inspire them.”

“When an eight-year-old sees a city municipal pipe made out of wood,” he said, “that will blow his mind. He will start thinking about other ways to do things.”

The 80-member Oneonta Club began in the early 1920s, said speaker Bill Cullinane. He said they realized that “we would have a better community if we would have a place to sit down and have a meal.” The club has no other purpose, other than to have dinner together and to enjoy music, he said.

The group meets at Oneonta Congregational Church, but is not affiliated with any religious organization, he said.

Cullinane is also president of the associated Oneonta Foundation. This is an endowment that began in 1975 with nothing, he said. It has grown to $675,000 through donations. The group gives three $10,000 scholarships each year to South Pasadena High School graduates.

These are for “truly remarkable students,” Cullinane said. “One student did more by the time she was 17 than most of us will do in a lifetime.”

Last year, awardees had been admitted to Stanford, Berkeley and San Diego State,” he said. “None had other scholarship offers. And we’re talking brilliant.”

He said he didn’t realize the impact of the scholarship. Until one recipient’s father told club members, “You have no idea how life-altering the $10,000 was for us.”

Council PTA is a group whose members represent the five schools in the South Pasadena Unified School District, said Grace Liu Kung. Its activities include sponsoring a special needs conference, a track meet, and a visual and performing arts program, according to the Council PTA website.

Kung is the current PTA president of Monterey Hills Elementary School, serving a second term. She will become Council PTA president in July 2017. “PTA is the largest advocacy group for children nationally,” Kung said. “It is 120 years old.”

Leslie Lehman, corresponding secretary of the Monterey Hills PTA and an incoming Council PTA executive vice president, said each school organization supports unfunded projects and cultural programs.

“We put the playground in at Monterey Hills,” she said. “We purchased a needed principal’s computer. We purchased standing desks. We do parent education and cultural experiences.”

She said that with the current reduction of $900,000 in the school district’s budget, the group will look at where it can fill the gaps. One approach is to conduct a “wish night” for classes, she said.

After the presentations, WISPPA member Bianca Richards said that Community Connections is one of her favorite yearly events. She said she has learned much about organizations in town in the three WISPPA programs.

“For example, I’ve lived here all my life,” she said, “and I knew about the Oneonta Club because my Dad was in it, but I didn’t really know about it.”

For more information about these groups, go to

 [www.southpasdudes.com](http://www.southpasdudes.com)

 [www.sppreservation.org](http://www.sppreservation.org)

 [www.oneontaclub.org](http://www.oneontaclub.org)

www.southpasadenacouncilpta.org