

## History of Rick Rackers Auxiliary of Assistance League® of Long Beach

Rick Rackers, an auxiliary of Assistance League® of Long Beach, is a non-profit volunteer organization whose purpose is to carry on a program of philanthropic work to improve the lives of children in the community.

Founded by Winifred Campbell, Rick Rackers' commitment to community service dates back to the early days of World War II. After selecting 25 energetic, civic-minded young women to be the charter members of her organization, Mrs. Campbell and her new volunteers rolled bandages and staffed the Servicemen's Canteen and Library on Terminal Island. The organization became known as Rick Rackers, which was a nickname used by the soldiers to describe the volunteers who wore white pinafore aprons trimmed in red rick rack braiding. Rick Rackers was chartered as the first auxiliary of Assistance League of Long Beach on June 15, 1942, and Mrs. McConkey (Virginia) was elected the first Chairman of Rick Rackers that same year.

After World War II, the members of Rick Rackers began to staff and support the Boy's Club and the local blood bank, as well as to prepare layettes for babies in need in their community. Their philanthropic programs continued to evolve over the years to meet the changing needs of the community. In 1974, Rick Rackers' primary philanthropic program, Operation School Bell®, began as a pilot project called "Klothes for Kids." In the 35 years that have passed since the doors to Operation School Bell first opened, nearly 35,000 elementary school students in need have been provided with school uniforms.

Operation School Bell is the only community program providing the "safety-net" of new, free mandatory school uniforms. During the 2008-2009 school year, in a visit to Operation School Bell or following a delivery made to their campus by a member of Rick Rackers, at least 5,000 elementary school students will receive a school backpack filled with two polo shirts, one pair of pants, one pair of shorts or a skort, four pairs of socks, three pairs of underwear, a warm jacket, a toothbrush, a book, and basic school supplies. During the 2009-2010 school year, Rick Rackers will again commit to meeting the challenging goal of supplying school uniforms to 5,000 elementary school students in need. The cost to provide one child with these basic necessities for school is approximately \$60.

It is the generosity of loyal community donors and corporate partners that enables Rick Rackers to continue serving the youth of Long Beach. They provide support for Rick Rackers' philanthropic programs through grants and donations, as well as with gifts in response to an annual direct mail fundraising campaign called *Clothe a Child*. In addition, support for Rick Rackers' philanthropic programs is provided through the community's attendance at an annual fundraising event.

Since 1955, Rick Rackers has annually honored one outstanding woman who has dedicated herself to supporting local philanthropic projects that have made a difference in the lives of the children in our community. Nominations for the prestigious *Woman of the Year* award are submitted by philanthropic organizations throughout the city. Rick Rackers honors the recipient of this award at a luncheon held in October.

In honor of their founder and her early years of community service, Rick Rackers awards *Winifred Campbell Nursing Scholarships* to four deserving students enrolled in the nursing program at Long Beach City College. These scholarships have been awarded annually since 1976.