

History of Las Hermanas Auxiliary of Assistance League[®] of Long Beach

Las Hermanas has existed as an auxiliary of Assistance League of Long Beach since 1960. At that time the chapter had only 120 members and needed more service hours than its limited membership could provide. This auxiliary was formed not to raise money, but to help with the existing philanthropic programs of Assistance League of Long Beach.

Charter members of Las Hermanas consisted of twenty-four women, mostly strangers to each other, who were proposed by members of the chapter. On February 18, 1960, they were invited to attend a luncheon at the "League House". On March 4, 1960 they were informed of the "purpose and requirements" of membership in this proposed auxiliary. The twenty-four women were given only four days to decide whether to become charter members. On March 8, 1960, the first meeting was held at the home of Marion Ritner (then President of Assistance League). Temporary officers were chosen, and Las Hermanas, Spanish for "The Sisters," became a reality!

That year, all members of Las Hermanas were "provisionals." As a group they took the community volunteer organization tours and individually they gave hours to the Thrift Shop, the League House and especially to Girls' Club West. There they started a Girls' Club newspaper, planned and staffed craft classes, gave dance lessons, sewing lessons, piano lessons and planned and directed classes in cooking. Twenty-four members gave 1,896½ hours during the first year. That was almost 700 hours more than required.

At the end of the first year, Las Hermanas had complied with the probationary requirements of National Assistance League[®] and Assistance League of Long Beach. On March 20, 1961, at an impressive ceremony included in the regular meeting of the general membership of the chapter, the probationary period ended. Las Hermanas was granted auxiliary status and presented with its Charter, which now hangs in the Philanthropic Center along with the other auxiliaries' charters.

During its second year, twenty-two members of Las Hermanas gave 2,221 hours to Assistance League of Long Beach. That was more than 100 hours for each member. The young auxiliary supported the parent chapter by attendance of 120% of its membership at the Kaffee Klatch, the opening of Buffums' Tea Room, and the Presentation Ball, where two Debs were from Las Hermanas families.

As the years have followed, Las Hermanas has staunchly supported the chapter in every way, changing its efforts to meet changing needs. This help, in addition to service hours for the philanthropies, has included representation on the Board of Directors of Assistance League of Long Beach, on National Assistance League committees, and on committees of the chapter.

Originally founded as a support group for chapter with no philanthropic program of its own, Las Hermanas has overseen the Assault Survivor Kits[®] philanthropic program since 1994. This program provides "wear home" clothing and hygiene kits to adult and child survivors of sexual assault whose clothes are kept as evidence by the police. Assault Survivor Kits offer dignity in the face of vulnerability and fear and is dedicated to helping ensure that its recipients are not victims, but survivors. The auxiliary's goal is to continue to provide kits as needed to Community Hospital of Long Beach. There the forensic nurses conduct the examinations in a room brightened by a ceiling mural, which was installed with financial help from Las Hermanas. In 2008, 108 kits were provided to victims of assault. The Assault Survivor Kit committee currently consists of 26 members.

Las Hermanas now has approximately 100 members, both voting and non-voting, who provide their talents in support of all of Long Beach Assistance League's philanthropic programs and the Thrift Shop. Although the auxiliary is smaller in number and is obligated to serve fewer hours, it is a vital part of Assistance League of Long Beach. On any given day, its members can be seen working at the reception desk of the Philanthropic Center or clothing students at Operation School Bell[®]. Las Hermanas members are active as docents for the Howard Collection and work at the Thrift Shop every Monday. Truly, the parent chapter, Assistance League of Long Beach, and its unique auxiliary, Las Hermanas, work together as sisters and bring joy and satisfaction to members as well as those who benefit from their philanthropic work.