

The Newcomer Club of the Foothills

By Glen Warren President, and Kim Warne, Public Relations Chairperson

Anyone who has ever moved to a new place, often without knowing anyone, has had that same overwhelming feeling—trying to make friends and become an integral part of the community. Luckily, The Newcomer Club of the Foothills is here to help people form new friendships and put down roots in the community.

Our Club had its origin in “The Clemson Welcome Wagon Club,” which was organized on August 3, 1971. Started by Arbuna Wiggins, the club initially had 22 members. The first dues were \$3.00. The group attended a state convention and their charter committed them to “undertake worthy and charitable projects.” At that time, they held their monthly meetings at the Clemson Savings and Loan Bank. The Club continued through the 1970s, and then in October 1979 it dropped its affiliation with the Welcome Wagon and became the “Clemson-Seneca Newcomers’ Club.” In 1981 the meeting location was changed to the Fort Hill Presbyterian Church. Throughout the 1980s the Club prospered, with membership increasing dramatically from the initial 22 people to several hundred. Interestingly, because of growth in the upstate during the late 1980s due to development around Lake Keowee, there was concern at one point that the club would become too large to serve its members! Fortunately, the club has prospered as its membership has grown.

On June 14, 2010, the club was formally incorporated as the “Newcomer Club of The Foothills,” a nonprofit 501(c)(7). After more than 40 years, the club continues to thrive with a membership of more than 400 people from Oconee County and the Central, Clemson, Liberty, Pendleton, and Six Mile areas of Pickens County. Meetings are now held at St. Mark United Methodist in Seneca. The club continues its original objective of welcoming those who are new to the Upstate, acquainting them with the area and its opportunities, and linking them with new friends and neighbors.

Activities are the heart of our club. Here are just some of the ways our members have fun exploring the new place they call home:

- 1) meet new people in the area and make new friends, via ~20-person social groups and wider club social events (includes monthly dinner opportunities and 3 times/year larger club socials);
- 2) attend monthly membership meetings in Seneca and followed by lunches in the surrounding area;
- 3) join special interest groups/clubs/activities, including Clemson Sports, Adopt-a-Highway, Book Club, card games, hiking, etc.; and
- 4) take advantage of volunteer opportunities in Oconee County via community partners who attend monthly membership meetings, as well as our monthly meeting speakers.

COVID-19 has thrown the proverbial monkey wrench into the club’s activities. We are currently unable to hold our monthly meetings, our scheduled parties, etc. However, the board of

directors has continued to meet to come up with ideas to cope with this problem. We have stressed the importance of our social groups (which are the heart and soul of the club) to continue their gatherings in outdoor settings (all the while adhering to CDC guidelines) so as not to lose contact with their friends. We continue to welcome new members to the club and are assigning them to new, smaller social groups, if they are interested in responsible and socially distanced activities with ~12 new friends. We have also started work on next year’s 50th year anniversary and celebration.

Our plans for reopening are quite simple: Once we have our meeting place opened up for use, we will go slowly, and have a general meeting to see how many members feel safe enough to come out. We will clean the meeting area both before and after the meeting. Basically, we have to play everything by ear and just see what unfolds. Probably the first meeting will not include Community/Volunteer Tables.

The Newcomer Club of the Foothills is still alive, even in this dark period of time, and just like the rest of the world, we will survive. We welcome anyone living in the area who wishes to participate in the groups and events that the Newcomer Club of the Foothills offers. Membership costs \$40/person for a 3-year membership. If you would like to join Newcomer Club of the Foothills, you can print out the Member Registration form (available at <https://newcomerclub.com/cgi-bin/index.pl>, under the “Join” tab) and mail it, or register online. When your payment is received, your membership will be activated. You will receive an email with login information, and you will have full access to the site.

Welcome to Newcomer Club of the Foothills! ❖

