

Katy's *Daughters* of the American Revolution

Star of Destiny Chapter helps preserve the past, while giving back to future generations

Written by Noreen Stavinoha | Photography by Lara Massey, Sassy Massey Photography

The Star of Destiny Chapter of the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is anything but stuffy. Trish Thomlinson, the chapter's recording secretary, was pleasantly surprised to find that her once-held notion of the organization being "a lot of old ladies sitting around talking about the war" was wrong. While having a connection with a Revolutionary War patriot is still a requirement for membership, the DAR's projects and concerns are very much rooted in modern times.

The chapter's name even has romantic roots, linking to one of the most influential leaders of the nation's early days. When Joanne Zumbrun founded the local chapter on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 1993, she chose the name from a phrase in the book *Star of Destiny* by Madge Thornall Roberts. The book described the meeting of statesman Sam Houston and his future wife Margaret Lea: "There was a lone star shining in the sky. Houston pointed to it and called it a 'star of destiny.' He asked Margaret to gaze at it after he was gone and let it remind her of him and the lone star emblem of Texas."

Historical Roots

It would be hard to find a better combination of history and romance for the chapter's name. Membership in DAR is open to any woman 18 years or older who can prove her descent from a patriot in the American Revolution. For anyone who wishes to join but hasn't found all of the links that far back, the DAR is more than willing to help in her genealogical search.

"I think I have the best job," says chapter vice president Lucia McDaniel, who helps develop membership. "If your mother or grandmother is already a member, the job has already been done. Otherwise, it takes a whole lot of work. The Internet is a

big help, but sometimes you have to contact the clerk in some little county in Arkansas and ask her to dig around in the basement [of the courthouse] to find some document, copy it, and send it to you. It's a great journey if you like that sort of thing, which I do."

It's also helpful that the parent organization's national headquarters in Washington, D.C. has one of the largest genealogical research centers in the U.S., which is available for free online.

Promoting Patriotism

Once that connection is proven, members can give back in a variety of ways, supporting the chapter's mission of promoting historic preservation, education, and patriotism. Libraries are very important to the DAR, because it's through them that many of the organization's achievements occur. Recently, the Star of Destiny chapter donated American history books to three area libraries. "We promote literacy by going the historic route," says chapter regent Kendy Stone.

During Constitution Week, the chapter partners with the Katy mayor, who issues a proclamation. Then, the DAR hears from a Constitution expert at their meeting and decorates area libraries with festive patriotic displays.

Reaching out to Soldiers and Students

As they look to the nation's military past for inspiration, Star of Destiny members also set their sights on supporting current service men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces. Many times, they involve local students in their service projects, like when they partnered with Fielder Elementary for Operation Shoebox. DAR members collected shoeboxes and covered them with art paper. Art students decorated each box with colorful pictures and patriotic sayings, before



Jane McManus proudly displays her DAR membership certificate

Star of Destiny Chapter members, including (back row, from left) corresponding secretary Trish Thomlinson, counselor Rebecca Miller, (front row, from left) regent Kendy Stone, Jane McManus, and assistant treasurer Bonnie Peplaski



Star of Destiny service projects have included American history book donations and sending care packages to U.S. soldiers through Operation Shoebox.

older students filled each box with little luxuries like lip balm, beef jerkey, and shampoo that had been donated by parents.

“By the time it was over, we sent 12 gigantic cartons full of shoeboxes filled with items for the troops,” says Rebecca Miller, chapter historian. “All the recipients were connected to Fielder - somebody’s dad, uncle, brother, etc., so they didn’t all go to one unit. It was a lot of work. We sold dog tags with ‘Operation Shoebox’ written on them to cover the cost of the postage on those boxes.”

Shaping Future Leaders

They made it a learning experience for the students by inviting the VFW members and Betty Edmondson, the curator of the VFW museum, to talk to them after the boxes were filled. The veterans told stories about their war experiences, and Edmondson brought artifacts from World War I and World War II for the kids to see. “The kids were fascinated,” shares Thomlinson. With a passion for keeping our nation’s proud history alive, Star of Destiny members also play an important role in shaping tomorrow’s leaders. **KM**

NOREEN STAVINOHA lives in Katy with her husband and miniature schnauzer and loves to tell the stories of interesting people.

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