

New Neighbors Club welcomes strangers from all over the U.S.

By LISA ROGERS

When Janet Cousins lived in Pennsylvania, someone told her about a town in Rhode Island known for its very active new-comers. When she had to relocate to southeast New England, she chose East Greenwich because of the reputation of the New Neighbors Club.

When Brenda Whicker was informed she and her family had to move to Rhode Island because of her husband's business, someone from another local new-comers group in Greensboro, North Carolina, told her about an active new neighbor club in East Greenwich. Today she lives in Stoneridge and she is the president of the New Neighbors Club.

The East Greenwich-Cowesett New Neighbors club is purely a social organization designed to welcome new families into the East Greenwich-Cowesett area. Social functions are organized so members can get to know one another. Local guest speakers are invited to lecture so members will become more familiar with the area. The club hopes that by sponsoring these programs the new residents will feel welcome as quickly as possible.

To acquaint members with Rhode Island, the club

organizes day trips to Newport and Providence and other areas. Other social programs revolve around members' special interests; bridge, tennis, gourmet luncheons and wine and cheese parties are the usual favorites.

Each program offered by New Neighbors is financially self-sufficient so membership dues are kept inexpensive. When each activity is planned the price is set by how many members are expected to participate. This prevents any member from being overcharged.

New Neighbors was started eight years ago as a local, independent group. Today, its reputation of being an extremely active organization has spread as far as North Carolina. Companies tell their relocating families, realtors tell prospective buyers and members tell their friends about the East Greenwich organization.

"I've belonged to several new-comers groups, but none of them made me feel as welcome or part of the town as fast as the East Greenwich New Neighbors did," explained Mrs. Whicker.

The New Neighbors club is not for everyone. Prospective members must live in East Greenwich or

south of Cowesett Road, have an 02818 zip code, and be a new area resident. Once New Neighbors is aware of a new family in town, a New Neighbor representative will visit the family and invite them to the next club or activity meeting.

Mrs. Whicker explained that New Neighbors is successful because everyone shares common concerns about moving into a new area. "We all stick together and help each other," she said.

If a member is interested in taking a more responsible role in the club, she is encouraged to run for an office (most members are women). The New Neighbors board of directors consists of, president, vice-president of membership, vice-president of hospitality, recording and corresponding secretaries, treasurer and committee chairwomen. Nominations are scheduled for this spring.

Although new residents can only be members of New Neighbors for three years, they are not forgotten. Many of them go on to Neighbors II.

Neighbors II does not have as many members and it is not as active and structured. Neighbors II sponsors annual luncheons, brunches, tennis parties and pot-luck dinners. There is no limit to how long a person can be a member of Neighbors II.

The New Neighbors club meets every second Wednesday at the St. Luke's Church on Peirce Street. New residents are always welcome. For more information about membership, call Mrs. Cousins, 885-4151.

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