

The HP Community House a 'hidden gem' in Highland Park

NICKI KOETTING, Assistant Editor

Sometimes, residents of a community don't know about the hidden gems in their own backyard.

The historic Highland Park landmark, the Highland Park Community House, 1991 Sheridan Road, is one of those gems.

The Community House looks just like its name — a house — but it's much more than that. At 90 years old, it's played a large part in Highland Park residents' lives.

The Highland Park Community House was once the building for the Highland Park Woman's Club, which was founded in 1899. The Woman's Club opened the doors to the Community House in 1924 and used the facility for their meetings and programs. The Woman's Club established the

first public library in Highland Park, conducted blood drives during World War II, supported civic improvements and social agencies, and built a strong tradition of community philanthropy, according to the Highland Park Community House's website and Wendy Horwitch, event coordinator for the Community House.

However, by 1985, the Woman's Club could no longer financially support the building, and the Community House as it exists today was born.

Now, the Highland Park Community House hosts events of any type for the Highland Park community. They host baptisms, weddings, reunions, quinceañeras, bar and bat mitzvah parties, and non-profit events. The Com-



The Highland Park Community House has been a Highland Park landmark for 90 years. JAMIE BRADLEY/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

munity House also serves as a voting facility during elections and a place where classes and performances

can be held, Horwitch said. It's a multi-purpose facility that has held a Montessori school and Music Institute of Chicago classes in the past and currently hosts Pilgrim Chamber Players concerts and Improv Playhouse classes. The Highland Park Woman's Club still holds their meetings and functions there, as well.

They have affordable rates for any event or class that wants to use the Community House, Horwitch said.

However, not all Highland Park residents know that the Community House can be used for so many different events and functions.

"Highland Parkers are

confused about the building — they don't know it's an events space; they don't know that we have this beautiful space. People don't realize that they have this beautiful place right in their backyard," Horwitch said. "It's a very special landmark. We provide a unique space for community functions. We've survived, that's what so amazing, for so many years."

Horwitch said that one of the best parts about the Highland Park Community House is that it's there for every stage of Highland Parkers' lives. Highland Park residents have grown up in the Community House.

"It's a sentimental building for a lot of people," Horwitch said. "People have grown up with the Community House. People have reunions there, they were there when their baby was getting named or baptized, and now their daughter is getting married there. People can just imagine the possibilities for it. It's much more than a community house, we're central [to the] cultural arts in Highland Park."

For more information about the Highland Park Community House and the events they hold, call (847) 432-1515 or visit www.highlandparkcommunityhouse.org.