



Assistance League® of Southern California  
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## OUR HISTORY

In 1894, a new charitable organization named the Assistance League was formed by prominent society women of Los Angeles. Anne Banning, the wife of Hancock Banning (son of Los Angeles pioneer Phineas Banning), was a member of the small group that did local charitable work in an informal way.

In April 1906, the Assistance League responded to the San Francisco earthquake and fire by organizing a relief unit. The next year, the newspaper reported the Assistance League “wished to be a permanent organization and be of assistance to everyone who needs it.” They continued raising money through balls and theatrical evenings.

As America entered the war in Europe, Anne Banning organized the Los Angeles Red Cross unit in 1917 and served as Director. Their fundraising project was the Red Cross Shop, which became the model for shops across the country using Anne Banning’s printed guidelines.

In 1919, Anne Banning and a group of 12 friends organized Assistance League of Southern California (ALSC) to provide food and clothing for local families severely affected by World War I. ALSC’s first community service “Good Samaritan” was established, which evolved into today’s Family Service Agency.

In 1920, Mrs. Banning borrowed \$15,000 from local bankers to purchase a frame house in Hollywood where the Learning Center for Young Children stands today. This would be the League’s headquarters until 1964 when it moved into the newly constructed Anne Banning Community House that was designed by noted architect Paul R. Williams. In 1923, ALSC was granted nonprofit charitable corporation status by the State of California.

The Attic Tearoom of Hollywood began in the attic of League headquarters. Meals were prepared for executives and actors who worked at the nearby studios. Such rising stars such as Anne Miller, Shirley Temple, Norma Shearer and Mary Pickford served as volunteer waitresses who donated their tips to the League.



*Community leader Anne Banning founded Assistance League of Southern California in 1919 to help families deprived due to World War I. Mrs. Banning retired from the League’s presidency in 1948 after serving 29 years.*



*Recently arrived family seeks employment and housing aid from Assistance League during the Great Depression.*

Assistance League's second service, Day Nursery, began in 1924 when Mrs. Banning recognized that working mothers needed care for their pre-school children. It is now known as Learning Center for Young Children.

Assistance League's Consignment & Gift Shop was also started in 1924 as a Women's Exchange. Skilled needle workers, knitters and crafters contributed articles that were sold to customers visiting the tearoom.

In 1929, the Nine O'Clock Players Auxiliary was formed, and in 1938, the Assistance League Playhouse was built. Plays for adults and children were produced as a means of raising funds for the day nursery. Today, Theatre for Children brings live theatre to the children of Los Angeles.

Assistance League Girls Club was also founded in 1929, and in 1986 it became the Children's Club. The 22,000 sq. ft. Children's Club was built in 1996 as an exchange agreement between Assistance League and The Home Depot. The former Children's Club was at the corner of DeLongpre and North St. Andrews Place where The Home Depot now stands.

In 1951, the Hilltoppers Auxiliary founded the Volunteer Center in an effort to connect volunteers with nonprofit agencies that needed their help. Volunteer Center of Los Angeles – Assistance League of Southern California is located in Panorama City.

In 1966, Anne Banning Auxiliary began Operation School Bell. This service provides clothing to children from impoverished families who are referred by LAUSD school personnel.

In 1978, the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department asked Assistance League to reach out to seniors looking for recreational activities and companionship, and the project began as part of Family Service Agency. In 1988, Hollywood Senior Multipurpose Center was established as a separate ALSC service to offer nutrition, transportation, educational, recreational and support programs.

In 1990, Hilltoppers Auxiliary started Foster Children's Resource Center in Northridge to provide new clothing and basic necessities for foster children and impoverished families who have been referred by the Department of Children and Family Services.

In response to the need for additional space for the League's expanding services, a capital campaign was launched to raise \$8 million for a new building. On September 22, 1994, the 22,000 sq. ft. Dorothy E. Leavey Resource Center opened. Today the building houses Family Service Agency, Operation School Bell and Hollywood Senior Multipurpose Center.



*ALSC Community House from 1920 to 1964.*



*Young Assistance League docents pose outside the entrance to the Film Location Bureau.*

