

PCOA Club Recommendation Form

PLATINUM CLUBS® OF AMERICA 2023 -2024

Please choose one:

ADD A CLUB TO THE BALLOT

Club Name

Fortnightly of Chicago

Website

<https://fortnightlychicago.org>

General Manager Name

Allison Johnson

Address

120 East Bellevue Place, Chicago, Illinois 60611

General Manager Email

allison@fortnightlychicago.org

Phone

(312) 944-1330



Please explain how *your* club meets the
Seven Selection Criteria

1. UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION

Dating back to June 4, 1873, the Fortnightly of Chicago is the oldest women’s club in the United States (even though several others, which were founded later, claim the title). In 1912 a Chicago Tribune article declared “Chicago’s Fortnightly is the Most Exclusive Woman’s Club in America.” The Fortnightly is an inclusive group of inquisitive and accomplished women founded to enrich their intellectual and social lives. It celebrates its 150th season in 2023. However, the club did not then and does not now seek publicity.

2. EXCELLENCE IN AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

The Helen and Bryan Lathrop House, designed by Charles Follen McKim and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been the home of The Fortnightly of Chicago since 1922. It is a welcoming clubhouse in the midst of a bustling city, serving members and guests ten months a year. The private mansion was recently renovated to provide exceptional elegant meeting and banquet facilities, intellectual programming as well as private entertaining and social events.

3. CALIBER OF STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE LEVELS

The small staff (only seven full-time staff members) works harmoniously and effectively to support 400+ engaged members—at least 100 scheduled club events, more than 100 committee meetings, private

member events, meetings of associated organizations, and more. General Manager Allison Johnson leads the operation, CCM, CCE, one of the youngest women to earn certification in 2008 at 28 years old. They work as a team, anticipating members' needs, communicating well with each other and with members, solving problems, and running a smooth operation.

4. ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT OF MEMBERSHIP

The small staff (only seven full-time staff members) works harmoniously and effectively to support 400+ engaged members—at least 100 scheduled club events, more than 100 committee meetings, private member events, meetings of associated organizations, and more. General Manager Allison Johnson leads the operation, CCM, CCE, one of the youngest women to earn certification in 2008 at 28 years old. They work as a team, anticipating members' needs, communicating well with each other and with members, solving problems, and running a smooth operation.

5. GOVERNANCE AND PRUDENT FISCAL MANAGEMENT

The Fortnightly was one of the first private clubs in the nation to establish a separate 501(c)(3) organization to support preservation of its historic clubhouse. The organizations are completely separate, but the foundation has raised and made grants of more than \$5 million over the past 25 years, which has reduced pressure on annual Fortnightly budgets. Over the past four years, the Fortnightly has increased its reserve funds by almost 25%. The club has not assessed its members since the 1960s and has not ended a fiscal year with an operating deficit in more than three decades. Successful financial planning has also been aided by the club's formal strategic planning process that has identified long-range expenditures and innovative programs and activities to attract and retain members.

6. ADAPTING TO CHANGING TIMES

Like many traditional organizations, the Fortnightly has been slow to change but has evolved as needed. The use of technology has increased exponentially. In 2020 the Fortnightly was one of the first clubs in Chicago to convert programming to the Zoom virtual platform; when in-person meetings were permitted, the Fortnightly was one of the first to engage in "hybrid" programming. The Fortnightly adds special interest groups and club events as new interests become apparent.

7. OVERALL EXPERIENCE

The Fortnightly has provided intellectual and cultural enrichment from its beginning. The first programs, then called "literary exercises," covered literature, history, and music. Over the years, interests broadened. The Club now offers thought- and discussion-provoking talks, seminars, lectures, dinners, performances, and workshops by an impressive array of presenters. The Fortnightly is a warm and charming venue where members may entertain large and small groups in beautifully appointed rooms. A permanent chef and gracious staff exceed expectations.

Clubs are encouraged to provide a brief presentation on how their Club meets or exceeds the Seven Selection Criteria outlined on this form. For example, Clubs in previous years have utilized fast-loading platforms such as Adobe Spark, Microsoft Sway, a flipbook presentation, or a dedicated webpage on their website.

Upload files or email to: Cyndie.Heap@ClubLeadersForum.com

Please upload your optional presentation here.