



The first Attic Angel Association charity ball was held in 1898 in the University Armory, known today as the UW's Red Gym. It brought in almost \$500 to benefit the poor – the equivalent of \$15,000 in today's dollars. The formal dance photo from UW's Prom in 1911 shows what the inside might have looked like.

130 YEARS OLD *and Still Playing*

BY KELLY CHERAMY

The year was 1898 and Madison's Attic Angels were planning a charity ball in the castle-like University Armory, which had been built just four years earlier. The event was the talk of the town. Elva and Mary Bryant's plan was to entice the citizens of the growing city to have fun while uniting in a common cause—raising money to help build Madison's first hospital. The young women's resourcefulness and goodness had earlier led their father to name them his "attic angels" after he watched them descend

from their attic with armloads of goods to share with the poor.

Fast forward to 2019 and the 130th anniversary of Attic Angel Association. Today's Attic Angels—now numbering more than 500 service-oriented women—are once again inviting the public to have fun in the name of charity. Their public celebration, Life is a Playground!, will be held on the Attic Angel Community campus on Sunday afternoon, July 28. Like the charity ball more than a century earlier, they are rais-

ing money to help the poor, but this time to build a playground that will serve homeless children and others who attend The Playing Field early learning center in Madison (playingfieldmadison.org).

Unlike the charity ball in 1898, the 2019 event will have free admission and couldn't be more casual: out with the formal gloves and tails and in with a youthful spirit, no matter one's age. Children from 1 to 101 are welcome to enjoy everything from

magic shows, technology exploration, and remote-control boating to trishaw bike rides, zoo animals, and traditional playground fun.

The fundraising approach for the Life is a Playground! event has a modern twist as well, relying heavily on the internet and social media to reach people who may not be able to attend in person. "We hope that extending the offer to participate in such a broad and accessible way will attract a lot of extra passion that people have for making a difference in our own community," says Judy Brannstrom, Attic Angel Association's development officer.

The fundraising goal is \$50,000 to assure that children experiencing challenges, such as homelessness and autism, will have appropriate sensory resources for healthy, emotional, and cognitive development. Donors of any amount will be automatically entered into a drawing to win ice cream for a year from Chocolate Shoppe Ice Cream.

Attic Angel Association has a long history of serving children and

seniors with a focus on health and well-being. In addition to helping fund Madison's first hospital in 1903, the Angels were instrumental in other early-Madison healthcare initiatives that were handed off to the public health department and what is now SSM Health at Home.

In 1908, Attic Angel Association purchased playground equipment for the City of Madison's Burr Jones Field on East Washington Avenue, and in 1998, they helped build Warner Park's community center. In the 1950s, they pioneered high-quality senior care and later added various living options. "In retirement, even when many face health challenges, we believe life is still a playground," says Judy.

Each year, the Association's signature fundraising sales, including the huge Attic Sale, provide grants to support nonprofit organizations that serve children and the elderly. In spring 2018, they gave more than \$200,000 back to the community. Since their grants program began, they've given more than \$7 million, and even more in time and resources.

The 130th birthday party will be held on the Attic Angel campus, which holds both the Association headquarters and the senior living community. "Our shared campus honors our history of caring—for seniors as well as the greater community," explains President Mary Ann Drescher. "As we display 130 years of deep Madison roots, we hope that people will appreciate that Life is a Playground! and that our fundraising event will be the talk of the town."

Photographs provided by
UW Archives.

Kelly Cheramly is the outreach
coordinator for Attic Angel
Community.



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130

You're invited
to the 130th birthday party.

**Life is a
Playground!**

Sunday, July 28, 1–4pm
Attic Angel Community Campus
(Intersection of Old Sauk and Junction Roads)

FREE!

Parting and shuttles from Junction Road
lot at Summit Credit Union, Discount Tire
and Johnson Bank/TDS

Donations to playground project and
event info: AtticAngel.org/130