

Club gives to community for 50 years

Fortuna Tierra marks anniversary, adjusts Log Hill Hustle

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What started out as a humble women's organization 50 years ago is now celebrated as a nonprofit that supports numerous causes in the Ridgway area.

The Fortuna Tierra Club started with the simple goal of socializing and establishing a fire station in the then-remote area of northern Log Hill Mesa in 1970. Though the group has evolved over the years, its mission "to promote neighbors coming together to give aid and support when needed and raise funds for local philanthropic endeavors" has remained the same. Today, the group is most well-known perhaps for its generous scholarships to Ridgway graduates.

Fortuna Tierra means "fortunate earth" and was named after the La Tierra ditch that waters fields on Log Hill Mesa. Irene Stith is Fortuna Tierra Club's longest-serv-

ing member and has been with the club for 21 years.

She said back when the group was first formed, the ladies were so isolated that they couldn't use technology to organize events. The ladies communicated via CB radios as there was no phone service on the mesa in those days.

Dues were originally optional, but were set to be 1 cent for each year of age and 1 cent for each year they were married.

While the club fulfilled the members' need for socialization, the primary reason it started was to raise funds for a fire department. The original 15 members got together at each other's homes to make crafts to sell and organized fundraiser dinners until they were able to open Fire Station 1 on County Road 22, which took six years.

Stith has served as every club officer since joining the club in 1999 when two founding members, Mildred Moon and Jenny Logan, were still active members. It



Fortuna Tierra Club members pictured on a trip to McBride Cabin at Blue Mesa Lakes in the 1970s. Back: Grandma McBride, Iona Sims, Hettie McLaughlin, Cordie Tobin, Jeanne Logan. Front: Nancy Brown, Billie Calloway, Mina Voss, Bea Frenze.

Courtesy photo