



2026 Press Kit



Welcome

Dear Member of the Media:

The Red Hat Society began as a result of a few women deciding to greet middle age with verve, humor, and élan. The RHS passion is to promote just that.

Initially started as a social organization for women age 50 and over, The Red Hat Society now attracts women in all age demographics through both the “Red Hat” (those over 50) and the “Pink Hat” designations (those under 50). Queens and Members believe having fun is not only the comedy relief of life, it has been proven to have a multitude of health benefits as well! Research has shown that having fun on a regular basis promotes a happy life! And, since we are all growing older day by day, we might as well join red-gloved hands and go for the gusto together.

Women join the RHS for a multitude of reasons, but the one common denominator is to connect with kindred spirits who want to experience fun and friendship on a more fulfilling level. This celebration of women of all ages results in activities designed to pamper, indulge, and entertain; all while creating authentic relationships that support and encourage women to get the most out of life. The team at Hatquarters is passionate about connecting, empowering, and transforming the lives of women through the power of fun and friendship.

Our official website, RedHatSociety.com, is the center point of communication between Chapters, Members, and the Red Hat Society Hatquarters.

If you need more information or would like to schedule an interview with me or a local Member of the Red Hat Society, please contact me at (385) 545-HATS or Michelle@RedHatSociety.com.

Michelle Lee
President
The Red Hat Society



Red Hatters Matter!

– The RHS is dedicated to reshaping the way women approaching 50 and beyond are viewed in today's culture.

The Red Hat Society's Membership is largely composed of women from the baby boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964). Not only do boomer women have tremendous economic clout, but they know how to live life to the fullest. Our Members are powerhouse consumers and are passionate about the Society's official sport—shopping! While dedicated to having fun together, they take care of themselves and, in many cases, their loved ones.

RHS has been the subject of many studies, including a Pennsylvania State University intensive study* that showed:

- Red Hat Society membership, and its freedom from role obligations, provides an opportunity for self-expression and loss of inhibitions.
- Masking, through wearing our signature regalia of red hats and purple outfits, plays a central role in being able to “let your hair down.”
 - Wearing the regalia has been called the ‘equalizer, allowing women of all shapes and sizes to put those insecurities aside and focus on the fun of play while expressing their purest form of having fun.
 - In public spaces, these women who traditionally would feel invisible to others, as a group purposefully display themselves in ways that bring about positive attention, and enable them to be playful in ways that bring about pleasure.
- There is a profound need for “play” in older women's lives.
- Contrary to the belief that women should “age gracefully,” the study shows that many older women have no intention of aging the way society dictates.

*“I Did Not Have Time to Play Growing Up... So This is My Play Time. It's the Best Thing I Have Ever Done for Myself”: What is Play to Older Women?
Careen Mackay Yarnal; Garry Chick; Deborah L. Kerstetter; Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, The Pennsylvania State University, USA
Online Publication Date: 01 May 2008



The Red Hat Society is a playgroup for women created to connect like-minded women, make new friends, and enrich lives through the power of fun and friendship.

Why a play group for women?

Most women give their all to family, career, and community. And they enjoy it. But, along the way, sometimes our existing bonds of friendship gradually diminish. Membership in the Red Hat Society is a rewarding vehicle for reconnecting old friends, making new friends, and rediscovering the joy of getting together with other women for the express purpose of... having FUN! We wholeheartedly promote periods of “recess” from the cares and duties of everyday life in which Hatters gather for no other purpose than to play.

Who are the women of The Red Hat Society?

Our Queens & Members are from all walks of life and have varied interests. As a result, each Chapter is unique. Unlike traditional clubs, RHS may have multiple Chapters in a given town. If a woman wants to be Queen of her own Chapter, then by all means... self-appoint! Members who have attained the fabulous age of 50 wear red hats and purple clothing, while those under 50 wear pink hats and lavender clothing.

What do Red Hat Society Members do?

Our Queens & Members make friends online through our Members-only website, RedHatSociety.com, and gather locally in groups, known as Chapters, simply for fun. The RHS website provides Members with an Event Calendar for posting and viewing local Chapter events, an online discussion forum where Sisters are up 24/7 ready to chat and a Chapter connection tool that allows any Member to communicate with Queens of local Chapters anywhere in the world! Some of our favorite activities include going to lunch, shopping, seeing movies and theater productions, taking weekend trips, and attending RHS Conventions.

The Benefits of Being a Part of The Red Hat Society

Yes, we are all about ‘play,’ but we cannot discount the deeper, more meaningful benefits of RHS Membership: powerful interpersonal connections and emotional support systems built among Sisters both online and offline. We support one another in every life stage from all corners of the globe! We are reshaping the way women are viewed in today’s culture by promoting not only fun and friendship, but also freedom from stereotypes and fulfillment of goals and dreams. Fitness is the foundation on which we base healthy, rewarding lives. Red Hat Society naturally promotes positive Hattitudes!



Our Passion

We are a global society of women that supports and encourages women in their pursuit of fun, friendship, freedom, fulfillment, and fitness.

Fun – we celebrate life at every age

Friendship – we solidify and expand the bonds of sisterhood

Freedom – we discover and explore new interests

Fulfillment – we realize our personal potential

Fitness – we embrace healthy, life-lengthening lifestyles

Red Hat Society offers a community for women to connect through experiences, services, and social events, and instills in them a renewed sense of pride, confidence, and optimism. We are refining the traditional notions of aging.



Fun Facts

- RHS is a dynamic, member-based women's organization connecting more than 50,000 women around the world.
- RHS Members wear full regalia that includes distinctive red hats and purple outfits if they are 50 or older, and pink hats and lavender outfits if they are under 50.
- Red Hat Society Day is celebrated on April 25 by official Chapters worldwide.
- The Red Hat Society is made up of a diverse network of women, including working women and retirees, grandmothers, golfers, aerospace engineers, attorneys, teachers, Olympians, and entertainers.
- 2028 will mark the 30th Anniversary of The Red Hat Society! Hatquarters will mark this monumental year with the launch of celebratory events around the world.
- In July 2025, Michelle Lee became President of The Red Hat Society, beginning a new chapter focused on building upon the Society's legacy while expanding opportunities for Members to participate in its leadership and future direction.
- In April 2023, The Red Hat Society celebrated its 25th Anniversary, marking a quarter century of fun, friendship, and sisterhood among women around the world.
- In January 2022, RHS was featured on the CBS game show *Let's Make a Deal*.
- In November 2017, The Red Hat Society hosted a Hatter's Retreat in Tucson, Arizona, USA, home of the first red hat found in a thrift store there. This convergence of Hatters marked the beginning of RHS's anniversary celebration.
- In 2014, The Red Hat Society partnered with Procter & Gamble to launch its new product, Always Discreet. The brand kicked off the partnership at RHS's International Convention in San Francisco, California, by providing the event's entertainment, which included the "Empress of Soul," Gladys Knight, and comedian Dana Carvey (*Saturday Night Live*).
- In January 2011, CBS Evening News spotlighted the Red Hat Society in a segment.
- In April 2011, the first red hat and purple boa went on display at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.
- In May 2011, RHS's first book was published in Korea.
- In May 2011, RHS was the focus of the season finale of the hit CBS show *Rules of Engagement*. The episode ranked #2 in the ratings, behind only *American Idol*!
- In May 2010, actor and comedian Damon Wayans released his first novel, *Red Hats*, in which the Red Hat Society was featured. In his acknowledgments, he writes, "Sue Ellen Cooper and the Red Hats, I salute you for being such a wonderful worldwide sisterhood. You have brought much joy to many lives. I've witnessed it firsthand, through my mother."
- In 2008, The Red Hat Society received the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association's national award for the significant influence the organization has had on the world.
- *HATS! The Musical* premiered October 11, 2006. It was inspired by the Red Hat Society.
- The Red Hat Society truly reached pop culture status when it was the focus of an episode of America's longest-running animated series, *The Simpsons*, in November 2005.
- In November 2004, The Red Hat Society appeared as the focal point of an episode of the television sitcom *Still Standing*.
- From 2003 to 2006, The Red Hat Society was the focus of a comprehensive study by Pennsylvania State University that revealed the organization's positive impact on women in today's society.



The “Red Hat Revolution”

The Red Hat Society, based in Fullerton, CA, began with the gift of a red hat and has grown into a universal symbol for women around the globe as they victoriously celebrate turning 50 and entering the next phase of their lives.

The social message behind the first red hat has resonated with millions of women around the globe, regardless of race, creed, occupation, age, or socioeconomic status. Today, it is commonplace to see Red Hat Society Members out frolicking and embracing life to the fullest in their now-famous symbol, the “red hat.”

How it Started

In the fall of 1997, on a trip to Tucson, AZ, Sue Ellen Cooper impulsively paid \$7.50 for an old red fedora in a thrift shop. When a good friend was nearing a “fifty-ish” birthday, Sue Ellen searched for an idea for an original gift. Inspired by the well-known poem Warning, she wanted to encourage her friend to grow older in a playful manner. She gave her friend a red hat of her own, suggesting that she keep it as a reminder to grow older playfully, on her terms.

The symbolism behind the red hat had a profound impact on women Sue Ellen encountered. Those women responded by donning their own red hats and entering a new women’s movement, embracing a renewed outlook on life filled with fun, friendship, and the fulfillment of lifelong dreams.

The Red Hat Society was born. No longer would maturing women be invisible to society. They simply are not done yet!

The Growth Explosion

The Red Hat Society Membership exploded through word of mouth, the purest form of viral marketing, growing from just two Chapters in 1999 to tens of thousands of Chapters worldwide within five years. Women everywhere resonated with the positive ideas of fun and friendship promoted by the Red Hat Society, and they were not about to be left out!

The Society quickly became the focus of major publications, ten books (one of which reached the New York Times Best Seller list), television, and other media, in addition to having the Red Hat Society brand appear on a myriad of products. From Macy’s to Walmart, the Red Hat Society’s world-famous brand was everywhere.

The Society was the focal point of the musical HATS!, which launched in 2006. The Red Hat Society was recognized with an award by the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association in 2008. Pop culture status was truly achieved when the Red Hat Society was the focus of an episode of America’s longest-running animated series, The Simpsons, in which Marge Simpson joins a local Red Hat Society Chapter.



The Red Hat Society Moving Forward

With Chapters around the globe, the Red Hat Society brings women together through the shared experiences of friendship, fun, and navigating life at every age. With red-gloved hands extended, Red Hatters welcome women everywhere to join them on their tongue-in-cheek mission to take over the world!

At the heart of RHS is the belief that friendship, sisterhood, and play are important at every stage of life. Members celebrate one another, embrace new experiences and create meaningful connections built on good humor, respect and a shared enthusiasm for living life to the fullest.

While the Red Hat Society began as a celebration of women 50 and beyond, women of all ages are welcome. Members 50 and over proudly wear red hats and purple, while those under 50 wear pink hats and lavender. This tradition creates opportunities for cross-generational friendships, with mothers, daughters, and granddaughters often sharing the experience and creating their own “Red Hat Legacy.”

More than 25 years after the first red hat inspired a gathering of friends, the Red Hat Society continues to connect women around the world. From local Chapter gatherings to international events, the red hat remains a joyful symbol of friendship, fun and embracing life at every age.



The Hat that Started the Revolution



Red Hat Society Founder

Exalted Queen Mother Sue Ellen Cooper Red Hat Society Founder

Sue Ellen Cooper was born in Sioux City, Iowa, and spent much of her childhood in New York and Massachusetts before her family settled in California. She earned a B.A. in English from California State University, Fullerton, married Allen Cooper, and raised two children. While raising her family, she continued to pursue her interest in art, taking college art classes and eventually working as a freelance illustrator. She later joined two other artists in forming Altered Interiors, a decorative painting business that specialized in faux finishes and murals.

In 1998, Sue Ellen gave a close friend a vintage red hat and a copy of the poem "Warning" for her 55th birthday. Over the next several months, she gave similar gifts to other friends, and soon the women were gathering in purple outfits and red hats for tea, lunch and other outings. As the group attracted attention, women began contacting Sue Ellen to ask how they could join the fun.

Sue Ellen recognized that her own desire for play, friendship, and renewal as she grew older resonated with women from many different backgrounds. She sought help creating a structure for what she named the Red Hat Society, transforming a gathering of friends into a grassroots movement that would eventually

connect women around the world. Her simple gift of a red hat helped inspire a community built around friendship, fun and the belief that women remain vibrant and significant at every age.

In 2004, Sue Ellen received Cal State Fullerton's distinguished alumni "Visions & Visionaries Award" in recognition of her accomplishments and worldwide impact. That same year, she was named one of Fullerton's 25 Most Influential People. In 2008, she was recognized by the *National Organization of Women Business Owners* for entrepreneurship. She is also the author of two best-selling books, *The Red Hat Society: Fun and Friendship After Fifty* and *Laugh Lines: Stories of Inspiration and Hattitude*.

As founder of the Red Hat Society, Sue Ellen's influence remains woven into the organization she created and the friendships it has inspired around the world. Her original spirit of humor, playfulness, and embracing life at every age continues to be part of the Society's identity. And the sentiment she helped make famous still captures the Hattitude at its heart: Red Hatters are not dead and not done!





Red Hat Society President

Michelle Lee President, Red Hat Society

Michelle Lee brings a diverse background in business ownership, management, and leadership to her role as President of the Red Hat Society. Throughout her career, she has owned and managed companies across a variety of industries, developing a reputation as a skilled problem-solver. Often called upon to take over challenging projects and bring them to successful completion, she became known professionally as “the closer” and “the fixer.”

Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, Michelle spent much of her childhood moving between the East and West Coasts while her father served in the U.S. Navy. The experience of frequently adapting to new places and new communities helped shape the resilience and resourcefulness she brings to her leadership today. She later attended high school in Illinois and studied accounting and art at Brigham Young University. She holds a bachelor’s degree in accountancy and an MBA in finance.

Michelle’s connection to the Red Hat Society began long before she became a Member. Her grandmother, Betty, was a Red Hatter in southern Illinois, and Michelle remembers wishing she could join her grandmother at Chapter gatherings. After turning 50, Michelle joined RHS herself and later named her Chapter, the Red Hot Betty Boopers, in honor of her grandmother and her love of Betty Boop.

After participating in RHS events and becoming increasingly involved with the organization, Michelle stepped into the role of President in the summer of 2025. Her focus is on building upon the Society’s legacy while expanding opportunities for Members to participate in its leadership and future direction. Under her leadership, RHS is evolving toward a more Member-led organization designed to strengthen connections, encourage participation, and help introduce the Red Hat experience to a new generation of women.

Known in the Red Hat world as Queen Plumerix, Michelle created her royal name by combining the plumeria, a flower closely associated with her Hawaiian birthplace and symbolic of new beginnings, with the phoenix, a symbol of renewal and resilience. Together, they reflect both Michelle’s personal story and the new chapter she is helping shape for the Red Hat Society.

As a speaker, Michelle draws on her experiences in business, leadership, entrepreneurship, and the Red Hat Society to explore themes of resilience, reinvention, connection, and finding joy at every stage of life. With a practical perspective shaped by decades of solving problems and leading through change, she brings warmth, humor, and real-world experience to conversations about navigating transitions, building meaningful communities, and embracing what comes next.



Michelle is available for speaking engagements, conferences, retreats, and special events.

Outside of RHS, Michelle enjoys cooking and baking, dancing, traveling, creating art, and exploring her family history. Her personal philosophy is captured in one of her favorite sayings, “Everything is better with sprinkles.” Inspired in part by childhood memories of her grandfather turning a simple bowl of ice cream into a “party,” Michelle looks for the little “sprinkles” in life that make it more joyful.



Founder, Sue Ellen Cooper purchases an old red Fedora from a Thrift Shop in Arizona.

November 11 1997



First article on RHS appears in Romantic Homes Magazine
July 2000



Sue Ellen Cooper appears on Today Show with Florence Henderson
September 2001



Canadian documentary regarding RHS is released and receives Gracie Allen Award
June 2003

First RHS book published, "Fun and Friendship After Fifty" by Sue Ellen Cooper, which reaches #1 on NY Times Best Seller List

April 2004



RHS appears as the focal point of an episode of the television sitcom, Still Standing
November 15 2004



RHS reaches pop culture status when an episode of the longest animated show, The Simpsons, airs an episode about Marge joining the Red Hat Society

November 27 2005



RHS receives Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association National Award for our impact on the world
2008



RHS appears on QVC offering RHS merchandise
2005



RHS appears for second time on Today Show
2008

Damon Wayans releases his first novel entitled "Red Hats" featuring the RHS

May 2010



David Spade in The Rules of Engagement: "The Last of the Red Hat Lovers"

May 2011



January 2022

RHS' CEO appears on Let's Make a Deal
CBS



April 2023

Red Hat Society's 25th Anniversary featured in Pickles comics



The First RHS Chapter formed
April 25 1998



Pink Hatters lovingly introduced to the RHS
2000

RHS Online Store launched
January 2001



RHS grows to 40,000 chapters worldwide
2002



The first RHS convention, "Paint the Town Red" takes place in Chicago, IL
April 2002

Penn State conducts a comprehensive study on RHS and the positive impact on women in today's society
2003-2006 PENNSTATE



RHS launches Platinum Mastercard Program
April 2005



RHS launches "Lifestyle" magazine available for purchase through subscription and at Wal Mart Stores nationwide
January 2005



HATS! The RHS musical debuts
January 2006



Documentary airs on PBS entitled, The Remarkable Red Hat Society
June 2006

RHS partners with River City Productions to launch a film and television production company
June 2010

The first Red Hat goes on display at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History
April 2011



April 2021

RHS featured on NBC special "Roll Up Your Sleeves"



July 2025

Michele Lee becomes president of the RedHat society





Contact

Hatquarters – RHS Main Office

Red Hat Society
4956 W 6200 S #104
Salt Lake City, UT 84118
(385) 545-HATS

Discover the Online World of Red Hat Society

Website: RedHatSociety.com
Podcast: youtube.com/@RHSfridayPodcast
Facebook: facebook.com/OfficialRedHatSociety
YouTube: youtube.com/user/RubyRedhat
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