As GFWC Maryland President, I have chosen **“Soaring to Safer Futures for Children: Stop Child Abuse and Sex Trafficking”** as my President’s Special Project for the 2026–2028 administration.

Every child deserves to grow up feeling safe, protected and valued. Yet child abuse and sex trafficking continue to affect children and families in communities throughout Maryland. These are difficult subjects to discuss, but they are too important for us to look away. As volunteers committed to improving the lives of others, we have an opportunity to educate ourselves, raise awareness and take meaningful action to help protect Maryland’s children.

My vision for this project is to approach the issue from several directions. We will learn more about Maryland laws and legislation affecting child abuse and sex trafficking and explore ways we can advocate for stronger protections for children. We will increase awareness of the role Maryland highways and transportation corridors can play in trafficking and help our members recognize warning signs and understand how concerns should be reported.

We will also focus on Internet and social media safety. Technology has become an important part of children's lives, but it can also provide predators with access to young people. By educating ourselves, parents, grandparents and others in our communities, we can help children develop safer online habits and increase awareness of the dangers they may encounter.

Just as importantly, I hope our clubs will reach into their own communities and support the organizations already doing this critical work. Child Advocacy Centers, victim assistance programs and other community organizations provide essential services to children and families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives. Our clubs can make a difference through donations, collections, volunteer service, educational programs and partnerships that respond to the specific needs of these organizations.

No single club or volunteer can solve the problems of child abuse and sex trafficking alone. But each of us can do something. One club may host an educational program. Another may collect needed supplies for a Child

Advocacy Center. Members may learn about pending legislation, share Internet safety information with families or support an organization serving victims. Each effort becomes part of something larger when we work together.

I chose hot air balloons as the symbol of my administration because they represent hope, possibility and rising above difficult circumstances. A hot air balloon does not soar because of one element working alone. The balloon, basket, burner and crew all work together to help it rise and safely reach its destination.I see GFWC Maryland in much the same way. Our individual members, clubs and Districts each bring something different, but together our collective strength can lift our communities.

Throughout the next two years, I hope we will educate, advocate, support and serve. Most importantly, I hope we will give a voice to children who may not yet have the ability or opportunity to speak for themselves.

Together, we can raise awareness. Together, we can strengthen our communities. Together, we can help protect Maryland's children.

Let us soar together toward safer futures for children.

Jeanne Pim
GFWC Maryland President
2026–2028