

# City of Chino ❖ Hall of Fame

presented on April 6, 2010 honoring

## *Frances Eleanor Smith*

Frances Eleanor Smith was co-founder and executive director of Casa Colina Convalescent Home for Crippled Children in Chino. At first, the rehabilitation center was devoted mainly to polio victims. Mrs. Smith was a polio victim herself, spending her teen years in a wheel chair. She worked tirelessly for 14 years, even in poor health, to help her young patients. She devoted her life as chief-fundraiser, manager, and mother to the children she cared for with the help of a small staff and volunteers. When medical advances reduced the numbers needing polio treatment, the home cared for children and adults disabled by birth defects, spinal cord injuries, and similar conditions.

Mrs. Smith was born in Virginia on March 21, 1882. She came to California at the age of 8 with her parents, and to this area in 1901.

After the Golden Rule Foundation in New York named her the American Mother of the Year in 1936, the title became a part of her name. It was important to Mother Smith to use the national publicity to help others. Mother Smith and a group of civic leaders joined to create Casa Colina Convalescent Home in a Spanish-style mansion of that name that was bequeathed by the founder of the Boys Republic. When its first patient was admitted on October 1, 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt, himself a polio victim, wrote Mother Smith expressing his hope that the center would become the "Warm Springs of the West."

Frances Eleanor Smith was married to James Richard Smith, a valley orange grower. During her lifetime, she was also a Girl Scout counselor and church worker.

Even toward the end of her life, Mother Smith worked eight hours a day, despite ill health. She was stricken just after recording a radio pitch for a benefit arranged for the home, and died December 12, 1952.

In 1961, a new, ultra-modern rehabilitation center was built in Pomona, taking the name Casa Colina; and with it, the memory of its humanitarian leader, who was devoted to the children she served.