

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ZONTA CLUB OF BUFFALO

### FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS

Marian de Forest gathered 200 like-minded women together in March 1919 in Buffalo, NY to form the Zonta Club. A journalist, playwright, and activist, Marian de Forest was the guiding light in Zonta's formation. The Zonta Club of Buffalo, designated as the #001 club, also established the guidelines for membership and classification, and the Zonta Code. By July 1919 clubs were organized in eight more cities—Rochester, Binghamton, Elmira, Syracuse, Erie, Ithaca, Utica, and Detroit. The Confederation of Zonta Clubs was founded Nov. 8, 1919 in Buffalo at the Statler Hotel, where a plaque commemorates the event. Marian de Forest became president of the confederation (1924), as later did Louise C. Gerry, both from the Buffalo Club. With the founding of the Zonta Club of Toronto in 1927, Zonta became an international organization.

The Zonta Club of Buffalo continued to advance the status of women and by 1927 actively supported one of its members, Helen Z M Rogers, who became the first woman to argue an appeal before the New York State Court of Appeals. Buffalo Zontians worked hard to improve the status of women by furthering education and aiding the unemployed. At this time Louise C. Gerry was in charge of personnel at the Larkin Co. in Buffalo, and it was the Larkin Co. President's generosity which allowed Louise and her secretary to devote all of their time to Zonta. Their office functioned as a headquarters office for the Zonta Confederation.

### 1930-1960

November 8, 1934 was the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in Buffalo. Marian de Forest broadcast the following message over her own radio program, "The Global Village", across the nation and to Europe: "Far reaching is our plan to assemble in Zonta International the women executives of the world, an army of experts who through friendships, understanding, cooperation and good will, will become an irresistible force of peace." Marian de Forest was toasted as "Our Founder" and the Buffalo Club was hailed as "Mother of us all."

In 1931, 30,000 Romance Maps of the Niagara Frontier were designed by author Josephine Wickser and artist Margaret Green. The \$3,000 proceeds were used for the Girls' Welfare Fund. The maps were sent to state governors and provincial primers as well as to the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada.

In the 1940s, the Buffalo Club's Ways and Means Committee held a carnival. In 1944, more than 300 Zontians gathered in Buffalo to celebrate Zonta's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In 1945, Zontian delegates attended the inauguration of the United Nations, and were the first women's organization involved with the UN. In 1951, Zontians wrote their own play "When Women Rule the World".

### 1960-2000

The statue "The Spirit of Womanhood" in Delaware Park was commissioned in 1961. It was inspired by Marian de Forest. In the 1980s, the Club supported women through Everywoman Opportunity Center, Simple Gifts for Battered Women, and the Junior League's Program against Rape and Assault. Fashion shows provided the most money for service projects during the 1980's and 1990's. \$10,000 went to YWCA Project Hope and \$10,000 to Mercy Flight, a medical rescue helicopter service. In 1990 the Zonta Club of Buffalo Foundation was established under the guidance of Caroline Buerk, a member lawyer. In the 1990's the Carolyn Gallivan scholarship for high school girls was established.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1994, chaired by Anna Parenti Conn, featured a revue of Zonta through fashions, music and slides of the past eight decades. International President Folake of Nigeria attended. \$13,000 was raised for service projects.

In May 1998 co-chairs Irene Majchrzak and Sylvia Wright chartered the first Z Club in Buffalo at Lafayette High School. On March 17, 1998, Marian de Forest was inducted into the Western New York Hall of Fame. In 1999, Dorothy Richmond chaired the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration with an international flavor. \$8,000 was raised for Haven House.

## 2000-PRESENT

In 2001, Marian de Forest was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. The Zonta Club of Buffalo established the Marian de Forest Award, to be awarded to women in the community who exemplify the spirit of Marian de Forest. This award is given out every two years. The recipient in 2014 was Dr. Donna Fernandez, Director of the Buffalo Zoo.

Two of the Buffalo Club members were elected as Governor of District 4, Dr. Vivian Cody (2000-2002), and Anna Parenti Conn (2002-2004). Dr. Vivian Cody served as International Director (2003-2005). Irene Majchrzak was Area 4 Director (2002-2004), and Mary Jane Wajmer will be Area 4 Director 2014-2016.

The Zonta Club of Buffalo hosted a Spring Workshop in 2008 with Caroline Buerk, Terri Guzinski, and Mariann Magiera as chairs. The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration took place at the Saturn Club November 7, 2009 and was chaired by Dr. Vivian Cody and Reggie Grogan. At the same event the Marian de Forest Award was presented to Joan Bozer. The Zonta Club of Buffalo hosted the District 4 Conference at the Adams Mark Hotel in 2011. Dr. Vivian Cody and Irene Majchrzak were co-chairs.

On March 24, 2012, the Advocacy Committee hosted a Refugee Needs Forum, bringing together refugee service groups and women's groups to exchange information and educate each other. This was held at Hauptman Woodward Institute with Dr. Vivian Cody and Irene Majchrzak as co-chairs.

Our most recent fundraisers were the sale of calendars, chaired by Bonnie Botsford, and a Luncheon Gala on January 25, 2014, chaired by Cheryl Baker and Anna Isom. The monies raised will help Cornerstone Manor, Women's Respite, International Institute, Kiva, Teaching and Restoring Youth (TRY), SANES (clothes for rape victims), Theater of Youth School 18, Dianah at Crossroad Springs Kenya, and Zonta International Service Projects.

The Zonta Club of Buffalo has a long and illustrious history. We continue to further the ideals of Zonta through service projects helping women and children both locally and internationally.

We meet every third Tuesday of the month at the Saturn Club, 977 Delaware, Buffalo, NY 14209.

The Zonta Club of Buffalo documents are housed at the State University of New York at Buffalo Archives.

Submitted by: Dorothy Wiswall, Vivian Cody, and Caren Shapiro

Sources: The State University of New York at Buffalo Archives  
[library.buffalo.edu/archives](http://library.buffalo.edu/archives)  
Histories of the 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries.  
Highlights from Orientation 3/31/2005

March 6, 2014