

Brief History of the Zonta Club of Cheektowaga Lancaster

District 4 Area 4 Club Number 0618

The date was January 20, 1969 when a women's service organization dedicated to the advancement of women and service to the community was chartered, having been formed and mentored by the Zonta Club of Buffalo as a 50th anniversary gift to Zonta International. PIP Dora Neun, attending the 50th anniversary celebration of Zonta International, presided at the chartering. The charter president was Thresa Dempsey. This club became known as the Zonta Club of Cheektowaga-Lancaster. After 2 years of guidance and mentoring by the Buffalo Club, the apron strings were cut and we were on our own. This club had 23 charter members. One of these charter members, Mildred Whittaker, is still a very active and respected member who contributes ideas and suggestions at each meeting. As Milly wrote "I am proud to be a charter member of the Cheektowaga-Lancaster Zonta Club and find it very fulfilling to continue to participate in the goals of Zonta. One of the first goals of our new club was to form a Z Club at Lancaster High School which was accomplished in 1972. I can proudly say this club still exists and works closely with our Zonta Club."

As the Zonta Club of Cheektowaga-Lancaster developed it grew to 44 members in the 80's; fluctuated to 30+ members in the 90's and currently has 29 members. We were one of the first clubs to have a male member.

The club originally met on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month, but currently we are meeting on the 3rd Thursday combining the business and program meetings. The programs are dedicated to informing members of service opportunities our club can support either by hands-on service or financial awards or both.

Through these program speakers we were introduced to many of our current service projects such as the Family Justice Center of Erie County (for victims of domestic violence) , Habitat for Humanity, Response to Love Center, Boys & Girls Club of Lancaster/Depew, YMCA and YES programs for youth, Relay for Life (Cancer), Canine Helpers for the Handicapped, St. Monica's (a private middle school for girls from poverty areas), The Summer Institute for

Human Rights, and monthly game nights with the ladies at an assisted living facility. Over the years our club has participated in these projects and more; these service projects have created a community awareness of Zonta.

The club has participated in the District service project of making Birthing Kits by hosting this project and being joined by members of the East Aurora and Hamburg-Orchard Park Zonta Clubs. Together we have made and distributed over 2000 kits; this is a project we will continue to do as the request for them has continued. Currently District 4 is discussing Zonta's involvement with domestic violence (ZONTA SAYS NO). Since our club has been on board with this since 2000 with financial donations (\$6000) and hands on service (volunteering at the Family Justice Center and distributing posters). We are looking forward to a district plan of involvement.

The club's Scholarship Program began in 1989 with two \$350 scholarships being awarded to high school seniors going on to college. Currently these 2 scholarships are \$1000 each; sometimes a member of our Z Club at Lancaster High School has been the recipient of one. Even though this student is a "Z Clubber" she/he still has to meet the standards of our application. The club also awards a \$1000 Educational scholarship to assist a woman returning to school to complete her education.

Some of the past fundraisers were a Fashion Show, a Day at the Races, and a spaghetti dinner. Since 1983 we have found the Lucky Numbers Luncheon to be our best fundraiser with over 300 persons attending, giving the club a great opportunity to present Zonta's mission and goals. The club donates one-third of the profits to the Zonta International Fund. Other current fundraisers have been a February Lottery, a Comedy Night, and a Vendors' Night.