

## **History of the Zonta Club of Jamestown**

The Zonta Club of Jamestown traces its beginnings to 1921 when a Zontian from Albany, New York, visited the City Clerk's office, which was staffed by Mary Bargar. Together with Marjorie Allen, a reporter for the Jamestown Morning Post, they discussed the possibility of establishing a club in Jamestown. On November 17, 1921, four women from Buffalo, including Marian de Forest, completed the final arrangements. On November 21, two years after the original nine clubs united, 19 women signed the Charter #12 and, before the year ended, 25 new members had joined. Marjorie Allen was elected the first president.

The club quickly embarked on its first service project. Betty Bealer, a physical education teacher and Zontian, told the club about her work with high school girls at her home on Saturdays. She suggested Girl Scouting as a possible answer to providing more support to the girls. Zonta joined the local Players Club in sponsoring a play, which generated a profit of \$300. The club was able to send two women to a Girl Scout leader's training school and began a close relationship with scouting in Jamestown.

Weekly meetings featured well-known guest speakers, including Edith Ainge, one of the women jailed for picketing the White House for Women's Suffrage. Actively involved in the Confederation of Zonta Clubs, within two years, the Jamestown club organized Zonta Clubs in Warren, Pennsylvania, and Olean and Dunkirk-Fredonia, New York.

The 1930s was a decade of political causes, including the tightening of tax exemptions, approving jury duty for women, and equal rights for women. Mary Barger was involved in the establishment of Alfred University Extension, which led to the establishment of Jamestown Community College, the first community college in New York State.

In the 1940s patriotism, war and peace efforts were the main themes in service. During this decade, the club was active in the establishment of the Girls Club of Jamestown. The first director was a Zontian and Zonta paid her first year's salary.

In the 1950s the club established three annual permanent scholarships and hosted the District Conference for 200 Zontians. The Girl's Club continued to be the major service project while Girl Scouting was also supported.

By the 1960s, the club gained a reputation as the "Traveling Club". Many members held district offices and the club supported them by attending all District and Inter-city events. Anne Crowe served as Governor of District IV for the 1963-65 biennium. Following a visit by the Mayor of Jakobstad, Finland (Jamestown's sister city) and his wife, the Zonta Club of Jakobstad was founded. In 1966, the club sponsored and paid for the organization of a Zonta Club in Athens, Greece. A Z-Club was organized at Southwestern Central School and a Golden Z Club was organized at Jamestown Community College (JCC). This was the first Golden Z Club in NY State and District IV.

After two years of study, the Public Affairs and Status of Women Committee created a Women's Information Center at the YWCA, which provided counseling relating to job and education opportunities. The primary focus was on school drop outs, high school graduates, the disadvantaged, and women who had been out of the workforce for a period of time.

By its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1971, the club's membership had grown to 85 members and peaked at 95 Zontians by the end of the decade. The Women's Information Center continued for five more years and began sponsoring noncredit short programs for working women through JCC. A scholarship for a student pursuing a business career was established in memory of Nell Newton, the last active charter member. In 1975 the club hosted the District IV Fall Conference at Peek 'n Peak.

In the 1980s the club began selling sweatshirts with the Zonta emblem and continues selling Zonta apparel and items as a fundraiser today. The Girls Club remained a key project with members helping with everything from redecorating to program assistance. In 1989, the club adopted the YWCA as its three year service project, pledging \$7,000 and 3,000 hours of service.

In 1993, the club began its annual fundraiser "Calendar of Cash". The funds raised are used locally to advance the status of women, including various projects at the YWCA and Salvation Army's Domestic Violence Program and Shelter (Agnes Home). Zonta Day at Chautauqua Institution was initiated and became an annual event.

In 2004, the club began giving Women in Leadership awards to nonmembers who, through their work or volunteer activities, further Zonta's objectives. Members remodeled the dining room at the Agnes Home (ANEW Center) and, in 2007, hosted a very successful Fall Conference at the Athenaeum Hotel on the grounds of Chautauqua Institution.

A key project for the current decade is Lily's Hope, a resource for women in Chautauqua County who are experiencing hair loss due treatment for cancer or other medical issues. Women are eligible to receive a new wig and other items (caps, scarves, pillows) free of charge. Since opening in late 2010, Lily's Hope has served more than 300 women.

Members have also supported the Birthing Kit Project and have sent over 2,000 kits to Haiti, Honduras, Africa, Nepal, and Afghanistan. The club was awarded the Certificate of Excellence in Public Relations at Zonta's International District 4 Conference. In addition to extensive publicity in print, radio, and television about its programs and service projects, the club has a website and is listed on Facebook.

In 2011, the Tour de Zonta Bike Rally was established. Over the past four years, the Tour de Zonta has raised nearly \$14,000 to advance the status of women at both the local and Zonta International level. Proceeds in 2013 went toward the Mary Lou Costanzo Scholarship fund. In memory of Mary Lou, a longtime Zontia member, the scholarship is awarded to a female student with financial need who is returning to school a year or more after high school.

In 2014, the club sponsored Lunafest, a traveling film festival of award winning short films by, for and about women. Established in 2000 by LUNA, maker of nutrition bars, Lunafest connects women, their stories and their causes through film. 100% of the profit is donated to the sponsoring club and The Breast Cancer Fund. It is expected that this will become an annual event.

The Zonta Club of Jamestown is excited about its long history and is looking forward to our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021.

