

Zonta Club of Niagara Falls, Canada; District 4, Zonta International

On November 1, 1967, 24 members were chartered to form the Zonta Club of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, with the Zonta Club of Niagara Falls, NY, USA, as their sponsor, and Marion Woodruff was the first President. Since then, the club has remained very active in Zonta with outstanding contributions of service, time, finances and projects to further the status of women worldwide.

The Zonta Club of Niagara Falls, Canada, has always been a small but powerful group of women. The largest membership was 28 members, and its smallest was 8. It has averaged around 14 members and presently stands at 18 members, built up just over the last two years from only 9 with an aggressive membership drive using a unique ZING event. Nicola Inch is the club's 2014-16 President. The group is well-known in Niagara Falls for its annual fundraiser: My Funny Little Valentine Comedy Breakfast in February, with a comedian, silent auctions, raffles, and food and fun, presently in its 8th year. Previous fundraisers have included Euchre card and dessert parties, Fashion shows, lunch deliveries to workplaces, yard sales and a huge catered Gala with a live band at a Zontian's 110 year old Larkin House on the Niagara River.

Locally, the club has donated over \$600,000 through the years into the Niagara Region to support women and their families. That includes capital projects of over \$25,000 each for Women's Place of South Niagara (for the new shelter for abused women), and Family and Children Services. It has also prominently supported YWCA Niagara Region, literacy programs, camp sponsorships, Heart Niagara, the local hospital, Project Share (food bank), Out of the Cold, Hannah House (house for young pregnant girls), and WARM (Women's Addiction Recovery Mediation), among many other groups focused on women's issues. The club promotes YWPAA locally, and provides scholarships for mature women returning to school. One prominent deceased member, Pat Meikle, bequeathed a sum of money to the club over 10 years ago and it is still being used to assist young women to seek male-dominated career paths or studies, or to return to school. Club members have donated many hours to serve meals at Out of the Cold, build a house for Habitat for Humanity, volunteer at women shelters, teach reading skills to illiterate women, make Christmas baskets for women in shelters, and to Adopt a Street in the community, to name just a few things.

The club has eagerly participated in District 4 conferences throughout the years, and had several members serve on the District Board (Felicity Harrison, 1994-1998; Cairine Coulis Brown, Area Director 2014-16) and District Committees (June Mergl, Awards committee, 2002-2004). The Niagara Falls club co-hosted the District Conference in 1997 with the Zonta Club of St Catharines, and it was held at the Skyline Brock Hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The Niagara Falls club has also participated and helped plan the Birthing Kit assembly event held in Niagara since D4 began the project in 2009. As well, Niagara Falls has submitted a nominee every year for the YWPAA scholarship program, and the first year we participated (1993), our nominee, 17 year old Judith Parker from Niagara Falls, Canada, was the District AND International Winner. Many of our members have been guest speakers at District Conferences.

The Niagara Falls club also participates at the International level as well, attending International Conventions, and even having a Zonta member guest lecture on YWPA Awards program (June Mergl, 2002, Gothenburg, Sweden). Our club donates to Amelia Earhart, YWPAA , ZISVAW, and Rose Funds, as well as numerous general donations to the ZI Foundation, to an average of \$1,500 US each year. As well, individual members contribute to the ZI Foundation on their own, and in honour of others. We have had members attend International ZISVAW forums (in Washington, DC) and United Nations events (in NY City), and our club assisted with the running of the North-American Inter-District Meeting held in Niagara Falls, Ontario, in June, 2013, and ran the 50/50 draw, which raised \$700 for the ZI Foundation.

The Zonta Club of Niagara Falls has won many outstanding certificates from District 4 for its work, and most recently, at the 53rd District 4 Conference in September 2013 in Pittsburgh, PA, was awarded the Area Director's Certificate of Excellence for Service.

In 2017, The Zonta Club of Niagara Falls will be 50 years old, and we hope to continue to contribute our time and our resources to improve the all aspects of women's lives, locally and around the world. We are extremely proud to be part of Zonta International!