

A brief history of the Zonta Club of Oil City-Franklin

District 4, Area 6, Club 0250

The Zonta Club of Oil City-Franklin was founded on January 16, 1951 and received its charter on February 20, 1951, although it was organized the prior year.

The Club had 14 Charter members: President M. Harriett Allen, Vice-President Frances Eakin, Secretary Flora Bankson, Treasurer Elizabeth Murphy, Alma Weingard, Floretta VanDyke, Mabel Lynch, Ann Jorgenson, Nina Smiley, Florence Heckard, Esther Hart, Myrtle Fry, Gladys Bates, and Claire Gates.

Meetings: Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, except there is no meeting in July and the meeting is held on the second Tuesday in December. Since the club is a two-city club, the meeting place is rotated among different venues in the area. Each meeting includes dinner, a business meeting, and a program.

Club Board and Committees: The Board is comprised of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and four Directors. Committees include: Legal, Advocacy, and Awareness; Caring; Finance; Historical Records; Organization, Membership, and Classification; Program; Public Relations and Communications; Special Events; Status of Women; Service/Projects; Telephone; United Nations/International Relations; and Yearbook.

Membership: In the 1980's, membership reached over 50 members; At present, there are 30 members.

Advocacy Projects: In 2013-14, Club members advocated for the stop of violence to women by wearing orange. Funds raised by the Club members support Zonta's International projects, in addition to local service projects.

Service Projects: Since its inception, the Club has supported many community organizations and projects that advance the Zonta priorities of health, education, and economic self sufficiency of women and children. In the Club's early years, support was given to civil defense, hospital projects, Community Ambulance Service, area prom-to-dawn programs, an annual Career Night for local high school students, and received special recognition for promotion of the Mr. Yuk poison control program to children in kindergarten through second grade. In 1983, the Club joined with the Small Business Information Project at the local libraries in arranging a seminar entitled, "The Business Woman You Want to Be..." Through the years, support has been given to many local organizations, including the YWCA in support of their mission, Venango County Association for the Blind for the purchase of eyeglasses for women and vision screening for preschoolers and school age children, the local Crisis Center with supplies of paper products for their daily needs, the Salvation Army Dental Center, the Girl Scouts, the Venango County Home to assist with the needs of their female residents, Polk Center with Easter Egg donations and holiday cards for their residents, Operation Christmas Child, scholarships for women who attend Venango College of Clarion University, Youth Alternatives to assist with providing options for the youth in our community, adoption of families during the holiday season, and a LifeLine device for an elderly woman to be able to continue to live in her home, as well as many other service opportunities during the Club's sixty-three years of service.

Fundraising Activities: Fundraisers throughout the years have been creative in a number of different ways to raise monies for local service projects and have included fashion shows featuring members wearing apparel from stores owned by members, food tents at local festivals, bakeless bake sales, candy sales, Road Rallies where the profit is designated each year to a specific social service agency, purse auctions, art auctions, a bus trip to a casino, garage sales, candle sales, craft shows, Pizza Hut fundraisers, and requests to members for an end of the year donation.

Area Activities: The Club is represented at Area Meetings and has hosted several Area meetings. At least five members have served as Area 6 Director.

District Activities: The Club has always been represented at District IV Conferences, has hosted District Conferences, received a number of District IV awards, and has been well represented in a number of official District capacities through the years: Mary Lou Bower, District Director and District Treasurer; Barbara McKinley, Area Director, Lieutenant Governor, District Governor; Libby Williams, District Amelia Earhart Chairman and Area Director; Linda Morrison, Area Director; Patty Feroz, Area Director more than once; and Charlene Huber, Area Director

District Projects: The District's most recent project, the Birthing Kits, has been supported by the Club since 2011.

International Activities: Member Loretta Strawbridge served as District International Chairman for the "Circle of Friendship" international exchange program in 1985 which brought two Zontians from Germany to visit our District. The Club also participated in Operation Open House by hosting Zontian Eva Gripstrom-Molander from Finland for a week in 1980. In 1983, the Club participated in Zonta International's Friendship Cities initiative with a sister club, the Zonta Club of Vasteras, Sweden, and welcomed a Zontian from that Club to our Club. Margrethe Scholdberg became a friend of many of the members of our Club with communication and travel back and forth between the countries continuing after the initiative was completed. The Club also hosted another International Zontian, Janina Kiekens from Belgium, in 1986.

Through the years, many members have attended International Conventions all over the world. Our Club was especially well represented at the Sydney, Australia convention with 8 members attending accompanied by one husband, and attendance at conventions in and out of the states such as San Antonio, New York City, Dallas, Toronto, and Hong Kong.

Zonta International projects have always been financially supported by each member of the Club, either individually and/or through the payment of club dues.

Zonta International Foundation: The Club's budget is developed with one third or 33% of the annual budget targeted for support of Zonta's International Service Program.

Prepared by Kay Enslie, March 2014. Archival material held in Oil City, Pennsylvania