



Historians Report for District Conference September 2019

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As we all know, we are celebrating 100 years for Zonta International and the same for three clubs in our district – Buffalo, Rochester and Erie – each being part of the original nine clubs to form The Confederation of Zonta Clubs on November 8, 1919.

We also celebrate the woman who had determination to move forward with her vision for a service club comprised of women in the professions – Marian de Forest of Buffalo. Those nine clubs have grown to encircle the world and Zonta has built a steadfast partnership with the United Nations, to provide services to women and children in all nations. Marian would no doubt be humble and yet filled with pride that her idea has held strong for a century. Susan Cutrona, Special Collections Librarian, at the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library wrote an article about Marian de Forest for the summer 2019 issue of Western New York Heritage magazine.

We state with pride the fact that the Toronto club was chartered in 1927 and it was comprised entirely of women from outside the USA, thus making it the first “fully international” club. Although it has been nearly 70 years since a Zontian from our district has held the office of president, we can state that six presidents came from our district. Helen Cleveland of the Toronto club was president of both The Confederation of Zonta Clubs and of Zonta International. She and her Board of Directors guided the organization through the Great Depression when the loss of a job also meant loss of the required membership classification.

District clubs were encouraged to hold events and celebrate throughout the centennial biennium. They were encouraged to go through their own club's history – brief histories can be found on the district website. The district website has been redesigned making it more interactive for members. Some clubs held readings of the play *Little Women*, written by Marian de Forest (whose name is engraved, with other authors, into the sidewalk along-side the newly developed outdoor reading area adjacent to the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library). Community leaders have been honored during special club and public celebrations. With all these events, it was hoped that clubs would make use of media in all forms to share the history of their club and of Zonta International.

During the spring Workshops of 2019, attendees had the opportunity to create a square to be sewn in to a Centennial Quilt. The Governor, the Lt. Governor and six Area Directors have overseen the impressive “Traveling Flag” project – club presidents are signing a blue and white flag, with the centennial emblem on it. All clubs were asked to provide material to be placed in the Time Capsule that will eventually go beneath the statue known as *The Spirit of Womanhood* in Delaware Park, which honors Marian de Forest.

As part of the September Conference celebration, a video has been created to explain the beginning of Zonta as well as Marian's story, there will be a Zonta/District history power point during the conference, the Zonta International Service Projects display boards have been updated, tables will have items pulled from archives to share with attendees, a special 100 years' timeline of display boards was created showing development of the clubs. There are pre-conference tours: around the city of Buffalo, focusing on Marian (a wreath will be placed at her headstone) and to Seneca Falls to the National Women's Hall of Fame. The popular Zonta Store enables clubs to raise funds. It is also where basket raffles take place for our District to raise funds for the Amelia Earhart Fund. A special reception was held to honor our International Representative, Judy Gorton, from Australia.

An overhead shot of Zontians forming the number 100 along the Niagara River, the river which cannot divide our district as Zontians in the photo were from both sides of the river, was an opportunity to build friendships. We are a large district, covering two states and two countries, but there are other districts even larger than ours. Regardless of district size and distance between clubs, Zontians will travel and will connect - during her 1957-59 biennium, Governor Marguerite Thayer traveled well over 6,000 miles.

To be clear, this is a history report, it is not to be construed that the District Historians over-saw or did all the work mentioned. The work was done by all levels of membership; be it club presidents, District Board members, or those on the multitude of committees. Ideas to celebrate the centennial were shared, discussed, developed, with actions taken - long hours were put in by many.

The celebration is not over - Zontians will travel to Chicago in the summer of 2020 when an even bigger event takes place as part of the Convention.