



Brief History of the Zonta Club of Washington, D.C.

Area 4, District 3, Club 17

The Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. was chartered March 24, 1922.

March 1922, inspired by the Zonta Club of Buffalo, N.Y., Alice Buchanan, a publicity manager in a local store, arranged a dinner presentation by members of the Zonta Club of Buffalo to a group of business and professional women in Washington, D.C. Following the presentation, “Almost every woman signed the application for membership and an organization committee was formed.” Edith Salisbury led the organization committee and the Buffalo Zontians assisted with identifying the eligible members from the applicants.

Sponsor, Organize, and Mentor (SOM): In April 1922 an organizational dinner meeting was held at the [Grace Dodge Hotel](#), a historic hotel constructed near Union Station for women relocating to Washington, D.C. The hotel served in Washington, D.C. between October 1921 and 1972.

The Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. was organized with fifteen charter members. Edith Salisbury, an agent for the New York Life Insurance Company, was elected the first president.

Meetings:

Since 1922, the club meeting formats have changed from weekly luncheons to monthly dinners held at local restaurants on the 1st Wednesday of the month. Due to the 2020 pandemic, club meetings were conducted virtually via Zoom, a video communications platform. Meetings include guest speakers except in: May (installation of the club board); August (a social or hands-on service project); November (scholarship dinner); and December (a holiday social event and brunch).

Club Board and Committees:

Board consists of an elected President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and four Directors. Standing Committees consists of Advocacy, Communications, Edith SeVille Coale Medical Scholarship, Fellowship, Fundraising, Investments, Membership, Program, Scholarship, Service and Nominating (members elected by club). Ad Hoc Committees added, as needed, have included Bylaws, Club Anniversary and other special committees to support new Club efforts and/or District events, such as conferences. With the exception of the nominating committee, committee chairs and members are appointed by the President. Board meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month.

Membership:

By 1922 year's-end, the club was established with 25 members. The club continued to grow with membership peaking in 1970-72 at 120 members. Membership remained in the 100s through the 1970s and began to fluctuate in the 1980s-1990s holding in the high 80s. In the new millennium, membership began to decline and today stands at 36 members.

Advocacy:

Club supports activities to promote the advocacy goals of Zonta International (ZI). Past and Current activities include:

- Members served on the committee that organized the forum on eradicating violence against women held in Tysons, VA, which led to the establishment in 1996 of the Zonta International Strategies to End Violence Against Women (ZISVAW) program;
- Official supporter of the United Nations Association - National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) campaign for Cities for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Members attended multiple events associated with annual meetings of the UN Commission on the Status of Women; Distributed “Zonta Says No to Violence Against Women” ribbons during the 16 Days of Activism;
- Supported “Advocacy Quilts” project depicting stories of women survivors of wartime rape, other sexual violence, uterine prolapse and other health conditions and of women threatened by pollution and climate change;
- Supported programs to end Child Marriage.



NEPAL MAHILAKO SWASTHA ADVOCACY QUILTS DISPLAY

Service Projects:

First service project of the Club was a financial gift in 1922 to the Neighborhood House of Washington. A scholarship program was initiated in January 1924 which began the club's long history of and strong commitment to women's education. Funds "To support undergraduate women pursuing or planning to pursue a degree in areas such as but not limited to business, engineering, healthcare, education, technology, mathematics, or the sciences (social or basic)," were provided by an annual assessment from members plus contributions from fundraisers or other sources. Through members' bequests, the club later was able to

expand its scholarship program and award scholarships to medical students and to nursing graduate students; The Edith Seville Coale Medical Scholarship was established in 1965 and the Virginia Longest Nursing Scholarship in 2003. Approximately \$1,880,000 (US\$) has been awarded to local university undergraduate, medical and nursing graduate students since the club's scholarship program was established.



Every November, a Scholarship dinner is held with recent awardees of our three scholarship programs.

The club has supported local area organizations through direct funding, in-kind gifts and/or hands-on support. Some of the more recent include N Street Village, Mom's n Tots, Alive Shelter, Bethany Women's Center, CASA for Children of DC., Stanton School in Anacostia, Girls Inc., Rachael's Women Center, Our Place, Girls on the Run. Current projects are:

- *Kakenya's Center for Excellence*, boarding school for girls in fourth-eighth grades in Ensoaen, Kenya, established to empower and motivate young girls through education to become agents of social change;
- *The Advocacy Project* helps marginalized communities to tell their story, claim their rights and produce social change;
- *Calvary Women's Services* offers housing, health, employment and education programs that empower homeless women in Washington, D.C., to change their lives;
- *Greater DC Diaper Bank* "Monthly Program" provides feminine hygiene products to women in need;
- *My Sister's Place* domestic violence shelter in Washington founded in 1979 seeks to end domestic violence and empower survivors to live healthy, independent lives free from violence.
- *To Be Well Fed* fights child hunger in Washington, D.C.



Club members lunch with Kakenya Ntaiya (front right), staff and four 8th grade students from Kakenys's Center for Excellence. The students and staff were visiting Washington, D.C. following participation in the Model United Nations in New York City.

Zonta Club of Washington Foundation:

Incorporated April 27, 1981, the Zonta Club of Washington Foundation engages “in works of charity and community services of every description....” Annually, it provides funding to support scholarships, grants to local community organizations and the Zonta Foundation for Women service projects through an annual member assessment, fundraisers, individual gifts from club members and public/private donations.

Fundraising Activities:

Since 2015, the service budget funding base has been derived from an annual \$300 assessment paid by members of the club. Other fundraising has included special event galas, silent auctions, themed dinner parties, antique shows, theater parties, art auctions, flea markets, sales of member-made patriotic wreaths, raffles, teas, sale of holiday wreaths and 100th Anniversary ornaments commemorating the passage of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing and protecting women’s constitutional rights to vote in the USA.



Carol Widmayer & Deena Douglas at 2013 District 3 Conference hosting club’s fundraising table.



Larry & Marilyn Brekka hosting reception for Pakistani Women Prosecutors visiting Washington, D.C. in 2014

Zonta International District 3, Area 4 Activities:

Club actively participates in Area 4 programs including annual workshops, fundraising and leadership. Several members have been elected and served as Area 4 Director.

Zonta International District 3 Activities:

As the oldest club in District 3, has provided leadership at the District level:

8 governors (Jane Bartlett, Lida B. Earhart, Mabel Strider, Ruth Sheldon, Inez E. Wilbur, Eddie Kay Vest, Carol Beaver, Mary Ellen Bittner); various club members who served as secretary, treasurer, parliamentarian, Nominating Committee chair, Amelia Earhart chair, Advocacy chair, By-laws chair, Service chair, Centurion). Also, hosted District 3 Conferences beginning in 1927 and most recently in 2009 and supported District-wide service and advocacy projects.



Club members attending a District 3 Conference

Zonta International Activities:

International level activities include members' participation in International Conventions; service on Nominating Committee; service as chairman of Membership, Bylaws, Long Range Planning, and Service Committees; service as co-chairman of Capital Campaign and Convention committees, and director of Zonta International and the Zonta Foundation for Women (formerly, Zonta International Foundation). Marguerite Rawalt was Zonta International Second Vice President from 1962-1964 and two members served as Zonta International Presidents, Mary Moyers McElroy in 1940-1942 and Mary Ellen Bittner from 2004-2006. The club hosted the Zonta International Conventions in 1927 and 1980. Additionally, the club actively organized numerous Zonta clubs, the first being in Philadelphia in 1928.

Zonta Foundation for Women:

In its 99 years, the club, with a few exceptions has annually allocated a portion of the service budget to support Zonta Foundation for Women service programs. Additionally, over the years, individual members have generously donated to the Foundation.

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Sources: Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. Archives, Published 50 and 75 Year Club Histories; Zonta International Archives for 100th Anniversary of international organization, Chapter 7, District 03 – North America, 19 January, 2020
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