

Birthing Kits – 6 for 6!

Area 6 has been working together to produce 5000 birthing kits in the first four months of 2008 which along with the 1000 produced in 2007 by the Sarasota and Bonita Springs Club will mean Area 6 has produced 6000 kits in this biennium – 6 for 6.

While individual clubs may have hosted assembly days, this has very much been an area project. For example, when Sanibel-Captiva hosted an assembly day in January, members of the Ft. Myers and Bonita Springs Clubs came to help. In April, Bonita Springs and Naples are co-hosting an assembly day and Sanibel-Captiva and Ft. Myers will be working together as well. The goal is to complete all 6000 kits by this summer. Area 6 has also worked together to install plaques honoring Amelia Earhart in three area airports in Sarasota, Naples and Ft. Myers by sharing the costs of plaques and supporting and attending ceremonies in each of airports.

Following is an article which appeared in local newspapers about the first of the assembly days this year. Since then Punta Gorda/Port Charlotte and Sarasota have also held assembly days.

Zonta's Birthing Kit Assembly Day a Big Success!

The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva held its first birthing kit assembly day event on Saturday, January 26, 2008 at the Sanibel Library. Over 60 volunteers worked most of the day rolling, folding, inserting, checking and counting, creating over a thousand kits. Volunteers included Zonta members from Sanibel, Fort Myers, and Bonita Springs; prospective members and volunteers from the Sanibel community; volunteers from SWFAS, one of the club's local partners; midwives from the Foundation for Women's Health in Naples and even a vacationing mother and daughter. They came on a beautiful Saturday to assemble about 1300 kits.

The Sanibel Library meeting rooms proved to be the perfect place to organize an assembly line. The friendly library staff worked closely with Zonta to make this effort go as seamlessly as possible and we are all grateful for their assistance. Supplies for the birthing kits have been provided and delivered by Lee Sar, a local medical supply distribution company, which has contributed to many international missions and will contribute supplies to other local clubs. Many thanks to Robert Simpson, Lee Sar CEO, Kelly Duncan, Surgical Pack Operations Manager and Jeff Boyd, truck driver. Another assembly day will be held on Sanibel in the Spring to produce a grand total of 5500 kits assembled at events sponsored by Zonta Clubs in Southwest Florida.

Zonta is working with Miracles in Action, a Collier County based organization, which works to improve the quality of life in Guatemala and other Latin American countries.. These kits will be shipped free of charge by American Airlines, distributed by local in-country non-profits to midwife organizations for use in the poorest areas of Guatemala which have little to no health care facilities available to local women.

A birthing kit contains a large piece of plastic for the woman to lie on, iodine swabs and soap, latex gloves, gauze squares, a cord scissor, and 2 umbilical cord clamps.

Why birthing kits? Guatemala has the highest infant mortality rate in Central America, especially among its indigenous Mayan people. It is estimated that 51 of every 1000 births end in infant death, compared to 7 of every 1000 births in the US. Maternal mortality is 446 in every 100,000 births, compared to 12 in every 100,000 in the US. Over 70% of all Mayan babies are born at home with a midwife assisting if they are lucky. Over 80% of all the human trafficking victims found in Lee County have been from the poorest regions of Guatemala. It is thought that improving the lives of people in very poor countries will alleviate the need for them to take huge risks to immigrate to the United States. Improving maternal and infant mortality is one step toward that goal.

Zonta's mission is to enhance the status of women worldwide. Human Trafficking has long been an issue of concern to the Zonta clubs and this project is seen as one way to improve lives for women in Guatemala which, it is hoped, will mean that women will be less likely to leave their own country to seek a better life.