

## **Zonta Hosts Area Event**

**1-21-08**

### **Zonta Club Hosts Area 6 event, Celebrates 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

On Saturday, January 12, nearly 60 Zonta members from southwest Florida boarded the Captiva Cruises touring vessel the “Lady Chadwick” to enjoy a cruise of Pine Island Sound. Hosted by the Sanibel-Captiva club, which is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the event attracted participation from Zonta clubs throughout Area 6, including Sarasota, Fort Myers, Port Charlotte/Punta Gorda, Bonita Springs and Naples. Held semi-annually, these inter-city social and educational events offer opportunities to share ideas and updates about Zonta service projects and to foster the Zonta spirit.

Principal speaker on the cruise was Dr. Bruce Neill, co-founder of the Sanibel Sea School, who provided commentary about the islands and our waterways. Neill, who holds a doctorate in biology from Montana State University, an M.S. in science from the University of Guam and a bachelors’ degree in zoology from the University of Georgia, focused on describing the delicate ecosystem that is the Pine Island Sound. He stressed the critical importance of protecting sea grasses by maintaining the proper balance of salinity in the water, a process which has been severely impacted in recent years by excess releases from Lake Okeechobee. The non-profit Sanibel Sea School was founded by Dr. Neill and his wife Evelyn, a Zonta member, to teach children and adults about marine ecosystems.

Ginger Parker, a charter member and former president of the Sanibel-Captiva club, commented on the group’s twenty years of accomplishments and growth, and talked about the “wildfire of sisterhood.”

“Our club’s history is one of the fruits of sisterhood,” she said. “There’s no denying there is a bond among Zontians. In questionnaires, surveys and retreats, we have time and time again found that the most important part of being in the club is fellowship.

“Find out about each other,” she advised, “and your club will start the wildfire burning. We all join for the mission, but we stay for the members. Zonta is not a social organization. We have a specific, action-directed mission. But I firmly believe that mission can’t be accomplished without the wildfire of sisterhood, the sense that we are in this together. I hope each one of us will learn today something we didn’t know before

about another Zontian -- a Zontian from a different club. Some say knowledge is power, but I say knowledge is fire!"

An additional and charming presenter was Maggie Mullins, also a charter member from 1987, appearing as a famous former Zontian – pioneer aviator Amelia Earhart – whose contributions are recognized annually within Zonta by the awarding of scholarships to young women embarking on aviation or aerospace careers. Born in 1899, January 11 would have been Earhart’s 109th birthday.

The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva received its charter from Zonta International in September, 1987, and has grown to more than 70 members. The club won the Zonta District 11 Governor’s Cup in 2005 and 2006, and was runner up in 2007. District 11 includes 45 clubs in the southeastern United States, from Tennessee and South Carolina to Puerto Rico.

The Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva is a service organization of professional women working together to provide hands-on assistance, advocacy and funds to strengthen women’s lives on the islands, in Lee County and around the world through Zonta International. Additional information about Zonta is available at [www.zontasancap.com](http://www.zontasancap.com).

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Photo Caption: Dr. Bruce Neill, co-founder of the Sanibel Sea School, provided a wealth of background on the marine ecosystems as the cruise traveled Pine Island Sound.



Photo Caption: Ginger Parker, charter member, former president and currently recording secretary of the Sanibel-Captiva Zonta Club, described how friendship among Zontians drives the work and service projects of the clubs.



Photo Caption: Among the Zonta members from Sanibel-Captiva enjoying the cruise were, from left: Robyn Moran, Ruth Woodham and Claire Mallon.



Photo Caption: Welcoming Zonta members from seven Florida clubs were, from left, Carolyn Tongyai, Janice Caron, Carolyn Swiney, Janice McNeal, all from Sanibel-Captiva; and from Boca Raton, Jane Adams, currently serving as Zonta's Vice Area 6 Director and incoming District 11 Lt. Governor.



Photo Caption: Sue Denham, president of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva, welcomed members from seven Florida clubs.