

Zonta Club Article

October 14, 2007

### **ZONTA CLUB SHINES AT REGIONAL CONFERENCE**

For the third consecutive year, the Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva was in the spotlight at the annual Zonta International (ZI) District 11 conference. From providing seminar speakers to being the leaders in funds pledged for 2007-2008 to winning awards, the club brought back honors to the islands and maintained its position as one of the busiest and most successful clubs in the District. District 11 comprises 45 clubs in the southeastern United States, from Tennessee and South Carolina to Puerto Rico where this year's conference was held.

Representing the Sanibel-Captiva club at the conference were President Sue Denham, immediate Past President Nola Theiss, Past President Karen Pati, President-elect Linda Robison, Cyndy Lorry and Ruth Woodham. Nola Theiss and Karen Pati led a seminar entitled "Human Trafficking: Not One Minute Longer," focusing on the anti-trafficking activity that has brought renown to the club over the past three years. They were also influential in persuading Chief Assistant U.S. District Attorney Doug Molloy to serve as keynote speaker for the conference, and to participate in the seminar. Nola Theiss, the current Area 6 Director (Sarasota-Naples), is an instructor for the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute Trainings on Human Trafficking and the executive director of Human Trafficking Awareness Partnerships. Karen Pati is the current District 11 Anti-Human Trafficking Chair.

In his keynote address, Mr. Molloy stressed the challenges facing prosecutors when trafficking victims are fearful of reporting their situation to law enforcement or giving evidence in court, and when community awareness of the problem is lacking. He praised the work of the Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva in helping to spread awareness and in serving as advocates for the victims.

Mr. Molloy's remarks were expanded on by Robert Escobar, Deputy Special Agent with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), San Juan. Mr. Escobar also touched on the difficulties of prosecuting human trafficking cases and drew a distinction between this and human smuggling. One strategy by ICE, which is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is to target traffickers at the source, following the money trail and often working with travel agents to identify perpetrators. It is estimated that 600,000-800,000 persons are trafficked annually worldwide.

Attended by over 100 Zontians and guests from throughout the District 11, the packed, two-day conference covered topics of interest including membership development, successful service projects and how funds are spent by Zonta International in their global efforts. Sue Denham spoke on behalf of the club's work in hands-on service, funding and advocacy with Southwest Florida Addiction Services, a partner for the past six years. Elections also put the club in the spotlight, with Nola Theiss elected chair of the Nominating Committee and Karen Pati as Vice Director for Area 6. In addition to the many thousands of dollars contributed by the club to local service projects, a pledge was made of at least \$10,000 toward Zonta International service projects and scholarships. This represents nearly 20 percent of the \$53,000 pledged by all 45 clubs in District 1.

At a gala banquet on the final evening, the club learned it had earned the Runner-Up Award for the Governor's Trophy, placing it second in overall excellence. The trophy, given each year to the club that "best exemplifies the mission and goals of Zonta International," had come home with the Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva for the past two years. Club members were pleased to see it go this year to a smaller club, the Zonta Club of the Melbourne Area, which has also contributed some excellent and creative work to enhance the status of women. The Sanibel club also received the Rosa Fiol Award for Area 6, named after a former Zontian who provided a trust fund to reward the club in each Area with the highest net increase in membership.

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.

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Photo Caption: Receiving the Runner-Up Award at the Zonta District 11 conference are (from L) Cyndy Lorry, Ruth Woodham, Linda Robison, Nola Theiss, Sue Denham, Governor-elect Lynn Salvatore, and Karen Pati. In the background is outgoing Governor Bea Weaver.



Keynote speaker at the conference was Chief Assistant U.S. District Attorney Doug Molloy.