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4 **Local Zontians Attend International Convention in Rotterdam**

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6 Zonta Club members Linda Robison, Sue Denham and Nola Theiss were among almost 2,000  
7 Zontians from 67 nations who attended the 2008 Zonta International convention in Rotterdam,  
8 The Netherlands. Describing the experience as “amazing, inspiring and educational,” Denham  
9 and Robison, the club’s official delegates, were attending their first International convention.

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11 The active, six-day schedule included vivid pageantry, elections to establish Zonta’s leadership  
12 during the coming biennium, important changes to Zonta International bylaws, and keynote  
13 speeches, workshops and social events centered around the convention theme: “Global  
14 Empowerment Through Local Action.” One highlight was a series of events featuring “corporate  
15 responsibility,” at which attendees chose to learn from various leading businesses what that  
16 corporation or group is doing to promote sustainable living and most importantly to support  
17 Zonta’s mission “improving” the status of women, . Denham commented: “Rotterdam is  
18 Europe’s biggest port and the business center of The Netherlands, and the business community  
19 which includes many international corporations provided an outstanding welcome to us in their  
20 city.”

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22 Due to its status as an important port, Rotterdam was virtually razed to the ground during WWII  
23 bombing by enemy forces and has been completely rebuilt, to much civic pride. At a reception  
24 in the Laurenskerk, a glorious medieval church which was spared the worst of the bombing, the  
25 group was welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Rotterdam, Ivo Opstelten, the first time that a  
26 convention host city has staged such an unprecedented event.

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28 The featured speakers were all women in local high positions, who spoke on a variety of topics  
29 including women in power, human rights, equality, and diversity in the work force. They  
30 included an international criminal court judge, a European Union commissioner, a university  
31 president from Germany, and a professor of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction from The  
32 Netherlands. “The fourth”, Denham remarked, “was particularly effective in addressing the  
33 powerful role women can play in peacemaking. “

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35 Official presentations included descriptions of site visits to international projects supported  
36 through the Zonta International Foundation, with the goal of empowering women and reducing  
37 or eliminating violence against them. With powerful visual images, stories and personal  
38 anecdotes, the speakers affirmed Zonta’s role in making a true difference in women’s lives. Nola  
39 Theiss, who has attended three ZI conventions, commented: “The level of involvement by the  
40 ZI organization in developing and tracking the progress of international projects should make all  
41 contributors to Zonta proud.”

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43 Zonta focuses on various anti-violence projects:

- 44 • an initiative to end human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- 45 • an effort to combat violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone
- 46 • and a drive to implement laws protecting women from violence in Niger.

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48 International service projects focus on healthcare, education and economic opportunities for  
49 thousands of women and girls in Afghanistan, Bolivia, Niger and Sri Lanka.

51 During the 2006-2008 biennium, through its Foundation, Zonta International made \$900,000 in  
52 grants to approved service projects and \$413,550 to help prevent violence against women.

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55 Network opportunities abounded. Denham commented: "At a workshop on empowering  
56 women through education, I met women from the Australian club who created the birthing kit  
57 project. In just two years, this has become a global movement to provide pregnant women in  
58 poorer nations with these simple hygiene kits and reduce the high rate of infant and maternal  
59 mortality." The Zonta club of Sanibel-Captiva joined recently with five other clubs in Southwest  
60 Florida to assemble and distribute more than 6,000 birthing kits to women in Guatemala.

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62 The attendees came away from Rotterdam with renewed enthusiasm for the dedication of the  
63 more than 31,000 Zontians worldwide who are united in their resolve to improve the status of  
64 women and young girls wherever a need exists.

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66 The Zonta Club of Sanibel/Captiva is a 70-member service organization of professional women  
67 working together to provide hands-on assistance, advocacy and funds to strengthen women's  
68 lives on the islands, in Lee County and around the world through Zonta International.

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