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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.
39 Nola Theiss, who has attended three ZI conventions, commented: “The level of involvement by
40 the ZI organization in developing and tracking the progress of international projects should
41 make all 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.

