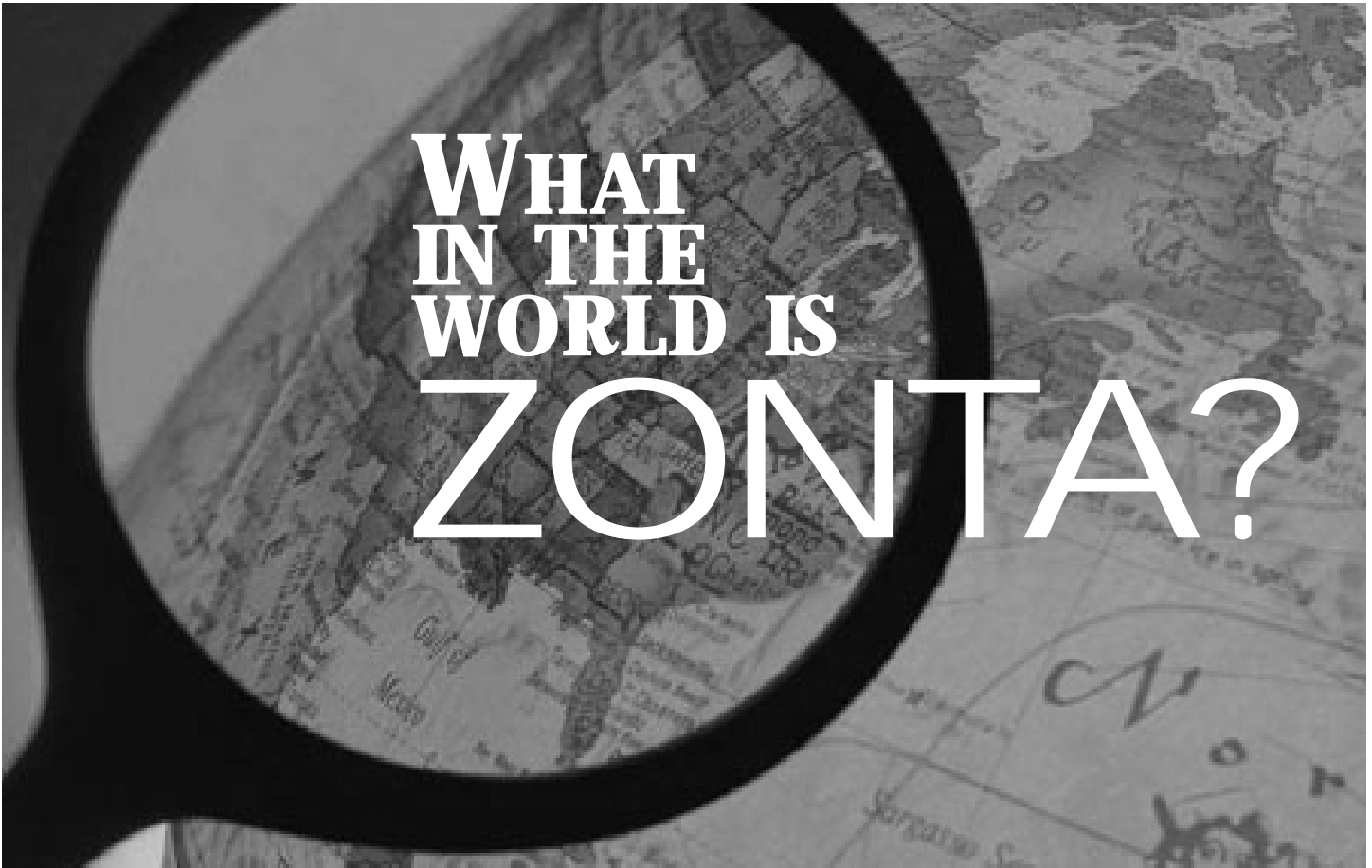


• **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF BOSNIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN IS RAPIDLY BECOMING A LUCRATIVE GLOBAL INDUSTRY.**

• **FEMALE CIRCUMCISION REMAINS A TRADITION IN THE AFRICAN COUNTRY OF BURKINA FASO.**

• **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN INDIA IS ON THE RISE WITH NEW FORMS OF DEPRIVATIONS AND VIOLATIONS EMERGING.**



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS ZONTA? RIGHT HERE IN OAK PARK.

A STORY BY KRIS BRUNST

You hear about these international issues in the news, but do you ever really stop and think about these inhumanities? How can they still be happening in the 21st century?

A group of women in Oak Park not only thinks about these issues, it tries to change them as members of a worldwide service organization.

“Our mission is to help women, here and around the world, achieve progress in key areas such as health, education, politics, economics and the professions,” said

Vicky Lekovish, public relations chair of the Zonta Club of Oak Park. Chartered in 1934, it is a local chapter of Zonta International, whose members volunteer their time, talents and energy to local and international service projects that are designed to advance the status of women.

Zonta International was first organized in 1919 in Buffalo, New York, and now has about 35,000 members in 70 countries. The Oak Park club has about 40 members including business owners, government officials, educators, adminis-

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trators, attorneys, health professionals and more.

“By having members from different professions, it makes a very effective group when we want to get something done,” said B. Ann Hageman, who has been a Zontian since the early 1990s, and is president of the Oak Park Club.

“I joined because it gives me the chance to interact with other professional women and it has a strong service component,” Hageman said. “Zonta has a purpose, it’s not just a social club. We network, but not for our individual benefit, for the benefit of the community.”

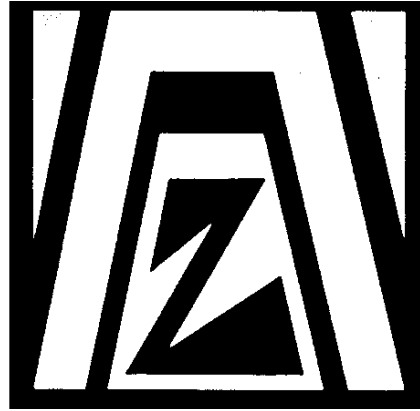
Laurie Freeman, who joined Zonta about 18 months ago, said she was intrigued with the club because it helps so many different causes, and not only locally, but internationally as well. “If we don’t try to elevate the human standards in some of these other countries, no one will,” she said.

Through service projects and fundraising efforts, Oak Park Zontians have donated thousands of service hours and raised more than \$250,000 for local and international programs and scholarships.

Locally, the club provides: ongoing support for Grateful House, a residential rehabilitation program for women with drug and alcohol issues; annual scholarships for high school and college women; and annual grants to agencies such as Oak Park Food Pantry, Sarah’s Inn, a shelter that helps those affected by domestic violence, and Literacy Volunteers of West Cook County. It also sponsors a Women’s History Month Essay Contest for 7th and 8th graders in Oak Park, River Forest and Forest Park schools.

The club also annually commits one-third of what it raises to fund Zonta International service programs that support work being done in the field by UNICEF (United Nations

WHAT DOES



IT MEAN?

The word “Zonta” is from the language of the Sioux Indian. It signifies “honest and trustworthy.” The Zonta emblem is an adaption and composite of several Sioux Indian symbols, which when superimposed take on a special significance for Zontians.

Children’s Fund) and UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women). This enables Zontians to address some of the most crucial and pressing issues affecting women, reaching to the causes not just the symptoms of the primary barriers to equality.

Some of the international projects include:

1. Prevention of female genital circumcision in Burkina Faso, West Africa, where this cultural practice, without religious basis, is seen as a right of passage, often resulting in permanent scarring, psychological trauma, hemorrhaging and even death.

2. Elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in Nepal, where in 1998, 7,000 mothers and babies died from tetanus, which is preventable by immunization.

3. Prevention of violence against women and girls in India, where blatant inequalities in power relations and distribution of resources between men and women exist.

“Zonta International raises a lot of money, but certainly not enough to change a culture. These projects are

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B. Ann Hageman (left), President of the Zonta Club of Oak Park, and Clara Pate (right), Zonta International District 6, Area 1 director, present the District 6 Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarship for \$400 to Rebecca Fitzgerald at the Club’s November meeting. Fitzgerald, of Lyons, is a senior majoring in International Business and Spanish at Dominican University. Last May, Fitzgerald received a \$1,000 Klausman Scholarship from the Zonta Club of Oak Park and she recently qualified for the additional \$400 scholarship from District 6.

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Left to right, Peg Dowling, chair of the Zonta Service Fund Allocation Committee, joins Dr. Harry Steckman, artistic director of the Steckman School of Music, Oak Park; Rose Meyer, Literacy Volunteers of Western Cook County; Jessica Yanow, of Sarah's Inn; B. Ann Hageman, President of the Zonta Club of Oak Park; and (back row) Susan Stearns, volunteer coordinator at the Volunteer Center of Oak Park at a recent Zonta meeting. The Club presented grants to these organizations to advance the status of women and girls. Not pictured: Grateful House, which also received a grant.

designed to be pilot programs that can be expanded by the country once they take off," Hageman said.

Another international service project is being developed to help improve the lives of women in Afghanistan. However, since current conditions make it impossible to develop a program in Afghanistan following Zonta's traditional method, this project will be further developed as the situation allows.

The Zonta Club of Oak Park meets the first Wednesday evening of every month at the 19th Century Club, 178 Forest, Oak Park. A program, either a guest speaker or entertainment, precedes each business meeting. For membership information, call Joyce Halvorsen, membership chairman, at 366-0911. The Oak Park club will soon have its own Web site at Zonta-OakPark.org.

For more information about Zonta International, visit www.zonta.org.



Fund raising can be fun as Zonta members and guests rolled up their jeans, slicked back their hair, put on their poodle skirts and raised money through a "Step Back to the 50's" fund raiser held earlier this year.

Pictured, Ann Roach (left) and Karen Herman DeMuro, Oak Park residents and Zonta members, with a replica of James Dean.