



ZONTA NEWS

Spring/Summer-2008

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2008 – 2009 Officers And Board Installed At May Meeting



President Sonia Shellito (l.) and Immediate Past President Sarojini Rao (r.)

At the May 17th meeting held at the Cleveland Yachting Club, the Zonta Club of Cleveland incoming officers and board of trustees for the club year of 2008 – 2009 were inducted:

Sonia Shellito	<i>President</i>
Adrienne Bailey	<i>Vice President</i>
Mary Ann Freas	<i>Treasurer</i>
Barbara Long	<i>Recording Secretary</i>
Patricia Hill	<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>
Sarojini Rao	<i>Immediate Past President</i>

Board of Trustees Beginning Two-Year Term:

Anjali Rao
Angela Wilkes

Zonta Club Welcomes New/Returning Members

Two members were inducted into our club at the May 17th meeting. Zonta Club members are thrilled to welcome our new member, **Melinda Smith Bilfield**, and reinstated member, **Dr. Sharon Citron Elman** to our club.

The Zonta Club of Cleveland welcomes **Melinda Smith Bilfield**. Melinda is the Director of Marketing for Bilfield & Associates, a prominent legal firm in greater Cleveland. She has a dual degree in psychology and anthropology. She has been active in community service with a number of local charitable groups and professional organizations. She is active in Park Synagogue in Pepper Pike as a member and fundraiser for several years. Melinda has participated in the Zonta Club of Cleveland's 2005 Spring Fundraiser as a model. She is a wife, mother and resident of Orange Village (con't page 2).



Melinda Smith Bilfield (l.) and Angela Wilkes (r.)

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Zonta Club of Cleveland**President's Message***Sarojini Rao*

When I first started writing my final speech as president, it sounded like many other speeches I had given. I detailed who and what we are and what we have accomplished over the last two years. Then, I realized that you already know all that. You know what we do, and you certainly know how great we are. I don't need to tell you that! That will be going in a separate report. So, at the risk being rather un-presidential, I'm going to do something different: I'll tell you what I really want to say.

Two years ago, I stood before you on a cool and rainy evening, terrified and daunted by the task before me. Angela had left very big shoes to fill and as you can see, I am a small person.

She left this club operating in the black, she left a legacy of projects and accomplishments, and most significantly to me, she left an office that she had filled with grace and precision. How on earth was I going to measure up to that??? There was only one thing for me to do: damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead. Which is what I did.

I suppose the prerogative of any president is to put in motion her own ideas and to shape the organization according to her vision. I know many of you have not agreed with all my ideas, but still, I thank you wholeheartedly for being trusting enough to let me try. Who knows where my ideas will go? Some of them will be discarded surely, and perhaps some will continue. Regardless of what happens, your flexibility and open-mindedness are what make this club strong and dynamic, and are what will keep it going.

So here I am, two years later, still standing and not a scratch on me. I have you all to thank for that. Being president is difficult- it is stressful, time consuming, and many times a thankless job. But this club knows how to support, and I can safely say that the two years went flying by thanks to you. Every one of you in this room has contributed in your own way to make my presidency a success. It truly has been an honor and privilege to serve as your president.

And that's it. The last thing I want to say is directed at Sunny Shellito, our incoming president. Sunny, while I cannot say that the shoes I'm leaving you are as big as those that Angela left for me, I can say that being president is not an easy job! So, my advice to you is to ask for help. Often. Because this club, like none other, has got you covered.

Thank you.
Sarojini Rao
President

Welcome New/Returning Members (Con't)

Zonta Club of Cleveland also welcomes **Sharon Citron Elman, GDMD** who has been reinstated after a leave of absence. Sharon is a general dentist in Lyndhurst, Ohio. She has been married for 24 years to Barnett Elman, who is a psychologist. Sharon and Barnett have two children. Emily will start NYU law school in August and Noah is interested in pursuing an automotive career.

Sharon says, "family issues prevented me from participating in Zonta to the extent I would have liked. I had enjoyed helping to select the scholarship recipient and look forward to co-chairing that committee now that I've returned."

Club's Annual Spring Fundraiser Meets Scholarship Goal

Zonta's annual spring fundraiser to benefit the college scholarship fund for women of academic merit and our local cause was held at The Cleveland Skating Club on April 26, 2008 from 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The theme of the event was “*Hot Jazz, Cool Style.*” According to benefit chair, **Barbara Long**, more than 100 guests attended the luncheon that featured, jazz pianist George Pearson, and fashions provided by *Chico's* of Crocker Park. **President Rao** presided at the event that met the membership goal of:



Sarojini Rao presiding

During the event, members and guests were treated to a silent auction that featured 35 themed baskets generously donated and assembled by club members, along with a drawing for gifts and door prizes provided by community businesses. Fashions were modeled by club members: **Sandra Hommel, Sunny Shellito, Angela Wilkes, Sylvia Johnson, and Patricia Hill.**



Joyce Birch (l.) and Shirlee Leathers (r.) at the auction table

After reviewing applications from area school and colleges, the following three scholarship recipients were selected to receive \$1,000.00 to pursue careers in Medicine, Nursing and Family Health, Computer Information Sciences and Biomedical Engineering. The scholarship winners are **Clarissa White**, a senior at Jane Addams Business Careers Center in Cleveland. Clarissa has received many awards for her academic work and has been active with many community projects. **Alexis D. Crosby**, a senior at Glenville High School in Cleveland. Alexis was prominently featured in the June, 2008 issue of *Ebony* magazine as one of their “2008 Top High School Seniors.” She maintains a 4.3 GPA and is ranked first in her class. She has received many awards, and is presently conducting research at Case Western Reserve University in the Department of Macromolecular Science and Engineering. **Maude Meulstee**, who is a native of Netherlands, arrived in the United States in 2006. She has done humanitarian work including working with the Red Cross, working with Mother Teresa in Calcutta in orphanages and the Home for the Dying. She is the 2007 recipient of the Phi Theta Kappa “Leaders of Promise Scholarship.”



(l to r) Scholarship winner Maude Meulstee. Club members Sandra Hommel, and Adrienne Bailey, and Scholarship winners Clarissa White and Alexis D. Crosby

Farewell Shirlee



The Zonta Club of Cleveland says farewell to **Shirlee Leathers** as she relocates to Florida where her family lives. Shirlee remains a friend of us all and we will not easily forget the part she has played over the past 18 years in dedication to our club. As a club member, Shirlee contributed her energy and creativity in numerous ways. She held the office of President and several other Zonta positions. She shared her special talent of Public Relations, managing the club newsletter and promotion of the club. We are especially sad to bid farewell to Shirlee as she has been an incredibly supportive Zontian. The following quotes clearly reflect the love and respect that fellow Zontians have for Shirlee.

Zontians Share Memories

Sandy Hommel says, "One of my favorite memories of Shirlee was about in 2000 or 2001. I hadn't worked with Shirlee much on committees at that point. I knew and liked her and thought of her as pretty much a "proper Southern belle." We went to a District 5 conference, and they had a costume party. Shirlee came as Zorro complete with black tights, cape, mask, and mustache. She accented the costume with some rolled socks placed in an anatomically correct place for a man. With some of the Zontians she knew well, "Zorro" flaunted his attributes. What a hoot! There are so many wonderful facets to Shirlee Leathers. She is irreplaceable!"

Shari Slawinski says, "I've known Shirlee for over 20 years. She used to work with my Mom Renee at the Academy of Medicine in the 1980s and Shirlee was always my favorite. I can remember as a teenager going on a business trip with my Mom, Shirlee, and my little brother to Baltimore. She is truly an amazing person and I'm going to miss her. It's a good thing that we go to Florida on a regular basis so I can still see her!"



Shirlee was the first member to offer me a warm hand of welcome when I first joined the Zonta Club. She has been a very active, involved Zontian through the years. She has always brought such wonderful ideas and support to the club. In addition to her usual role as publicity chair, she has been president. Shirlee brought the idea of gift baskets for our silent auction benefits. She made the first "classy" basket for a fall fundraiser. Since then, the baskets have raised thousands of dollars for our club. In addition, she has always graciously turned her home in to the "Zonta House" each spring for the preparations for the fundraisers. She has also prepared and hosted lunches for us. We have spent many joyous hours working and fellowshiping at her dining room table. This winter, she presented a new idea, the "Zonta Closet" at her home. I do not know how we will manage when she is in Florida. She will always be close to us in thoughts.

-Joyce Burch

Whatever You Need, Call Shirlee

I was looking for help on a benefit for which I was responsible. I called Shirlee. Zonta needed a program. I called Shirlee. Zonta also needed a mailing, a committee, a letter written, a project organized. You know whom we called. We needed good food (yes, Shirlee certainly can cook, too) and a place to host guests. We called Shirlee. I needed someone to take me to the doctor, the airport, to go with me to the movies, with whom to have fun and to laugh. There was Shirlee. I need a friend. No matter where she is, I will still call Shirlee.

- Germaine

Reflections on my Friendship with Shirlee

I am pleased to share memories of my friendship with Shirlee. I've known her since 1987 during our days at the Academy of Medicine. Shirlee was very welcoming of a new medical spouse and assisted me with my responsibilities for the M.D. Mates column of the Cleveland Physician Magazine.

Shirlee was kind to my sons, Stephen and David, remaining a dear friend over the years. Shirlee sponsored me into Zonta in 1998, and has served as my mentor and GRITS girlfriend with much appreciation and love.

- Angela Wilkes

Ode to Mrs. Leathers

Growing up on Bradford Rd. was like growing up in a little commune. There were children everywhere and grownups always watching out for us. One of those people was Mrs. Leathers (and no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to call her anything else). Mrs. Leathers was one of the most important people of my childhood. A soft spoken and generous person, she always exuded a motherly warmth that made me feel safe and at home. My favorite memories are of Christmas dinner in her house- a gathering of people who had no immediate family in Cleveland and who had come from as far away as Wales and, of course, India. And yet, in her house, we were our own little family. I will miss Mrs. Leathers terribly. Bradford Rd. will not be the same. And yet, I know that good friends are friends for life. I'm counting on that.

- Anjali Rao