



Alton-Wood River Zonta Club to receive Harvest of Hope Award

October 6 2015 3:50 PM



ALTON - The Alton Wood River Zonta Club will be honored for their work in the Riverbend community to support women and children. Zonta is made up of approximately 49 professional women from Alton, Bethalto, East Alton, Edwardsville, Godfrey, Maryville and other neighboring communities. They strive to improve the lives of women and children in our surrounding area in all possible ways including violence prevention.

Zonta's first club was chartered in Buffalo, New York in 1919 by playwright and journalist Marian De Forest. While working in a prominent role at the Buffalo Express at a time when women rarely held leadership positions, De Forest conceived the idea of an organization that would bring together women in executive positions. She envisioned

a strong network that would help women reach their rightful places in diverse professions. By 1920, a confederation of nine Zonta clubs had formed with 600 members.

While Zonta shared a common vision with hundreds of women's clubs in the first part of the 20th century - encouraging women's teamwork, courage, risk-taking, and self-reliance - it also represented something of a departure. Zonta's strict business and classification system required its members to be employed at least 50 percent of the time at an executive or decision-making level in a recognized business or profession. In addition, each club could have just one member per business classification, a requirement that ensured clubs would consist of "experts" in a broad range of fields. The founders foresaw the benefits of having clubs made up of architects, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, executives, doctors, government officials, lawyers, pilots, scientists and more. This diverse expertise meant clubs could offer their communities and the world optimum service, backed by a broad range of understanding and insight.

The Zonta Club of Alton-Wood River had its beginning in 1948 when Dr. Saidee Stark visited her friends Ruby Giehl of Wood River and Jane Henry of Alton. Dr. Stark, a prominent District IX Zontian from California, was enthusiastic in suggesting the organization of a Zonta Club in our area. Mrs. Etta Preston, a member of the Evanston Zonta Club, and former member of the International Board, was appointed as Field Representative and interviewed prospective members. Harriet Richards and Meta Steinfort, Chairman of District VI, were also helpful.

The Alton-Wood River Zonta Club was chartered on April 19, 1949 with 23 members. As Zonta Celebrates its 65th Anniversary this year, the objectives of their 49 members are to improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women through service and advocacy and to promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The The Zonta Club of Alton-Wood River has historically provided support to a wide variety of projects and continues to support the following programs:

- Oasis Women's Center and their Caravan Resale Shop to help victims of domestic violence;
- Zonta Closet of comfort clothes at the Alton Memorial Hospital Emergency Room to help victims of domestic violence and sexual assault;
- Madison County Child Advocacy Center to assist victims of child abuse;
- The Covering House to provide refuge and restoration for girls who have experienced sexual exploitation or sexual trafficking;
- School Supplies drive providing needed items to local school children to help them learn;

- And educational scholarships to local women pursuing higher education.

The Madison County Child Advocacy Center is pleased to honor the Zonta Club of Alton-Wood River at the Harvest of Hope event on Friday October 9th, 2015 at Willoughby Farm in Collinsville. Harvest of Hope is a benefit event to support the Child Advocacy Center, and will also take time to focus on the incredible work the Zonta Club has done in the community. Carrie Cohan, Child Advocacy Center Executive Director says that, “The Zonta Club has been an integral part of helping to fulfill the mission of The Child Advocacy Center. We are pleased to honor them for their dedication to women and children of this community and their willingness to serve.” The Madison County Child Advocacy Center conducts forensic interviews of children involved in allegations of severe physical or sexual abuse and works to raise awareness about child abuse in the community. The event will feature a food truck dinner, auction, and live entertainment by the Smash Band of St. Louis. Tickets are \$65.00 per person and may be purchased online at www.madco-cac.org. For additional information please contact the Center at 618-296-5398.

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