

Governor's Message
November, 2011

With tears in her eyes she said, "I wonder if the women who made these pillows really know how much something like this means to you when you're going through it." This statement was made by a breast cancer survivor who is an American Cancer Society (ACS) employee when she saw over 200 handmade mastectomy comfort pillows donated by the four Lansing area Zonta clubs. During the month of October in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, 18 Zonta clubs and the Brace-Lederle MacArthur Southfield Z Club donated mastectomy comfort pillows handmade in caring service for distribution by the ACS and hospitals to women who have had breast cancer surgery. What a privilege it is to know that the efforts of almost half of the District 15 clubs and a Z Club will be a source of comfort for 625 women. An ACS representative was presented with 180 pillows at the October District 15 conference and 445 pillows were donated throughout that month in other communities throughout the district. Our service resulted in press coverage at the conference and in some of our communities while also resulting in an interest in membership being expressed by several women who became aware of this project.

Not only were many District 15 Zontians focused in October on being of service to women who have had breast cancer surgery, during that same month at the district conference we also greatly enhanced our knowledge of some major types of violence against women. In recognition of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 3 Zontians provided very informative presentations regarding domestic and sexual violence against women. They shared concrete examples of how we can address this violence through service and advocacy to effect social change and assistance to victims.

Other informative presentations regarding another form of violence against women were made by persons with expertise in human trafficking issues. They also provided concrete examples of service and advocacy efforts we can pursue as individuals and clubs. At the 2010 district conference Zontians were very touched by the keynote speech made by Teresa Flores who was a victim of human trafficking while a teenager. Following that conference several clubs and individual members expressed interest in learning more about this terrible crime while also requesting information on what actions they could take to combat it. In response to the interest expressed, presenters with a varied and extensive expertise were invited to further enlighten us at the conference this year.

Let's not just talk about **breast cancer, domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking. We need to make it a point to ensure there is a Zonta District 15 impact!!** I encourage you to review the suggestions described in this newsletter and on the district website and decide how as individuals and as clubs we can make a difference. Also, every October we should help women with breast cancer through service projects such as the donation of comfort pillows and/or by supporting a breast cancer awareness event. Additionally, it was truly encouraging that at the district conference club delegates approved the proposal for District 15 to establish a cooperative affiliation with the Michigan Human Trafficking Task Force. This action will allow the district to formally lend its name and effort to work jointly with the Task Force to combat human trafficking through service and advocacy. In the future members will be informed of initiatives discussed by the District Board for pursuit with the Task Force.

Be sure to review the remainder of this newsletter for other highlights of the District 15 conference.