

## Ink on Independence

# Zonta Club seeks to aid women around the world

The women of Zonta want Independence residents to know they're here.

The Zonta Club of Cleveland is a group of successful women who plan and organize fundraisers and other awareness methods to help improve the lives of women worldwide. Their mission statement reads, in part, "Helping to improve the legal, political, economic, educational, health and professional status of women through community and international services."

Formed locally in 1921, the Cleveland chapter joined with Zonta International as a global organization to bring women's advocacy issues to public attention.

This is no small feat when you consider how women are still treated as property in many nations. The group the Islamic State, known as ISIS, from the acronym of its former name, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, has recently publicly announced its intention to perform female genital mutilation on more than 4 million women and girls.

The real irony is that ISIS in Egyptian mythology was actually a highly revered goddess. Isis, which translates to "throne," was considered the patroness of nature and magic. She was considered a friend to all downtrodden Egyptians such as sinners, artisans and slaves. She was also the goddess of children.

A strange fate for what began as a kind and benevolent icon.

Understanding the perils for women around the world, the women of Zonta assist by providing information through a series of seminars and workshops. Zonta annually awards college scholarships to qualifying high school and college women.

An association with Cuyahoga Community College has resulted in the Women in Transition pro-



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gram, which focuses on raising awareness and helping victims of domestic violence, as well as mentoring programs to help girls develop self-esteem, a good work ethic and academic skills. This program also helps raise awareness of human-trafficking practices.

Many women in the United States take for granted the terrific medical care we receive. I'm not naive enough to believe this care is fair to every woman of every economic stature.

Women in other countries still face tremendous risks when having babies, as they are often so poor that basic tools such as scissors and string for tying off the umbilical cord are unavailable, often resulting in painful pelvic infections and sterility.

The women of Zonta have recently organized the development and distribution of birthing kits to be sent to women in Third World nations.

These kits are meant to provide comfort for women through the birthing process. These kits contain the aforementioned string, a razor blade, soap, gloves, a receiving blanket and a plastic sheet.

The women of Zonta meet regularly in the offices of Bilfield and Associates, at 6300 Rockside Road, Suite 204. They are still developing their 2015 calendar of events, but their annual fashion show will be held at the Crown Plaza building, 5300 Rockside Road, on Nov. 8.

For more information about Zonta, visit [zontacleveland.org](http://zontacleveland.org).