

For Your Calendar

**Saturday, May 2**  
District-wide Spring Retreat  
Hampden Inn, Wells, Maine  
All members and guests are invited.  
[www.zontadistrict1.org/spring-retreat/](http://www.zontadistrict1.org/spring-retreat/)

**May 11 ZQV Meeting—**  
Ludlow Country Club \*  
Program: Zonta in Action -  
Connecting Communities,  
Changing Lives See Page 2  
Business Meeting

**Thursday, June 11**  
**PotLuck Dinner** Gathering -  
final meet before summer  
break at the Keough-Huff  
home in Belchertown

**July 11-14**  
Zonta International  
Convention in Vancouver  
British Columbia, Canada  
[www.zontaconvention.com](http://www.zontaconvention.com)  
Registration is open for  
INPERSON and VIRTUAL  
attendance. Check it out!

**September 12 Golf**  
**Tournament fundraiser**  
**Cold Spring Country Club**

\* RSVP required Dinner is  
\$30 - 35. Please see a board  
member if help needed.

Club Members and Friends:

This is my last message as president of the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley. Karen Keough-Huff will succeed me in the next biennium. I am so grateful to her for her leadership and look forward to see where she stays the club over the next couple of years.

I end my term the same way I began: deeply honored to be entrusted with this role and so proud of to be a part of Zonta locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

The work we do advocating for and supporting women and children is so vital. It often feels like an uphill battle but we make a difference. Our work changes lives and our work saves lives.

Professionally I have spent the vast majority of my career working for colleges and non profit organizations. For 40 years I have written "now more than ever" in appeals for support and I have always believed it to be true at the time. I say it again, not asking for money, but rededicating ourselves to the mission we have chosen: now more than ever the world needs Zonta.

Thank you again for your trust and support.




Cynthia Melcher, President

**Board Meeting Highlights**

**May Calendar Raffle Fundraiser –**  
Kudos to our members for collecting 31 gifts valued at over \$1400 and selling 128 tickets to families and friends. We raised \$3200 for service funds to support the work of Zonta locally and globally!

**District 1 Spring Retreat May 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
We are excited that Cherie's husband Charlie will be one of the presenters!

**ZI Convention Voting 2026**  
Mary Knight was named Club Delegate for the Quaboag Club. She will be reviewing ByLaw Amendments, Service Project choices and all other business activity that will need to be voted on at the Vancouver Convention, and share her thoughts at the June meeting.

Support the Equal Rights Amendment TODAY!  
Click and share.



**Advocacy Alert**

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) prohibits the denial of equal rights on the basis of sex as one of our foundational constitutional principles. 38 States have ratified the ERA; 50 Years since the ERA was passed by Congress; and 3 out of 4 of all adults favor adding the ERA to the Constitution.  
**SIGN THE PETITION** telling Congress it must immediately recognize the Equal Rights Amendment and pass the United States House and Senate resolutions making it part of the Constitution!



## Zonta in Action: Connecting Communities, Changing Lives



Curious about Zonta and what it's all about? We'd love for you to join us! RSVP by May 4, 2026 at [info@ZontaQV.org](mailto:info@ZontaQV.org).

**5:30 Reception, 6:00 Dinner followed by the Program.**

**Pay at the door for the buffet (\$30) or pay online (\$35).**

**On May 11th at the Ludlow Country Club, learn about the local and global reach of Zonta.**

Locally, we will award the **Young Women in Leadership Scholarship to Assala Ali of Springfield Central High School** and three **Service Grants to organizations working with women and girls: The YWCA of Western MA, Girls Inc of the Valley, and Girls on the Run.**

Globally, we will learn from Zonta Foundation of Women Ambassador Mary Ann Rubis about Zonta's international projects to end gender-based violence, combat child marriage, and increase access to education.

We also are proud to show our Zonta Spirit as we welcome new member **Melissa Carbone** and install our new board for the 2026-2028 Biennium.

**Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley  
District I, Area II,  
Charter 1317 of Zonta  
International  
Club Officers 2025—2026**

President: Cynthia Melcher  
Vice President: Karen Keough-Huff  
Treasurer: Joanne Turner-Chiacchia  
Pam Albertson  
Secretary: Mary Knight  
Directors: Patricia Pupek  
Andreea Rotaru

Website: [www.zontaqv.org](http://www.zontaqv.org)

**Committee Chairs/ Members 2025—2026**

Finance/Audit: Pam Albertson,  
Membership: Mary Knight, Cherie Braun  
Visibility: Mary Knight, Andreea Rotaru  
Advocacy—Zonta Says No, Climate Action: Karen Keough-Huff  
Service—Hands-on projects, Grants: Mary Ann Rubis, Liz Reeves  
Scholarships: Patricia Pupek  
Poinsettia Fundraiser: Liz Reeves,  
Golf Fundraiser: Karen Keough-Huff, Debra Wood,  
Spring Fundraiser: TBD

Nominating: Joanne Turner-Chiacchia, Patricia Pupek

ZONTA BOG NEWSLETTER

Info @ [zontaqv.org](mailto:zontaqv.org) Zonta of Quaboag Valley ~ PO Box 1034, Belchertown, MA 01007

## April 13, 2026 Quaboag Valley Business Meeting - Ludlow CC

Present: Cyd Melcher, Liz Reeves, Joanne Turner-Chiacchia, Mary Knight, Debbie Wood, Pam Albertson, Karen Keough-Huff, Mary Ann Rubis, Pattie Hallberg, Chris Keough-Huff, Kris Goold, Trish Pupek, Deb Alm, Cherie Braun, Crystal Rondeau, Sue Seaver

Absent: Connie Mahoney, Marge Cavanaugh, Andreea Rotaru, Colleen Moynihan, Melissa Carbone

Guest: Anne Gobi (Guest speaker), Bonny Rathbone, Jessi Petrie-Cummings (Guest Entrepreneur), Brian Cummings, Billie Jean Petrie, Lori Goldbach (Director Top Floor Learning), Elaine Sai

Our program tonight celebrated Earth Day with a look at gender equity in rural MA and an online, local, farm-to-door delivery service connecting Quaboag Valley to the freshest farm products, bakeries & specialty food shops.



**Anne Gobi** became Massachusetts's first **Director of Rural Affairs** in January of 2023, after many years of political life, including 25 years as a member of the MA House of Representatives and Senate. She spoke to us about the opportunities and challenges of Women in Rural Massachusetts. Over 50% of the 351 cities and towns in MA are rural communities, but they contain only 15% of the state's population, so the inequities start there when it comes to the distribution of local aid. The lack of public transportation and long drives to access higher education, health care and childcare exacerbate imbalances, as does accessing high-speed internet, creating a persistent "digital divide". Among the positives that she bragged about are the many small business entrepreneurs and farms, and the sense of neighbors stepping up to support one another.

One of these entrepreneurs is **Farmer At The Door** entrepreneur **Jessica Petrie-Cummings of Petrie Family Farm, Brimfield MA**. Her online, local, farm-to-door delivery service connects Quaboag Valley with the freshest farm products, bakeries & specialty food shops. Jess shared her story and brought a sampling from the 35+ small farms and businesses she represents.



### BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes from February 21, 2026, were approved (note: there was no March business meeting).

Treasurers Report – Susan distributed these to each table and they were approved.

Mary announced the receipt of \$500 Donation to Quaboag Valley club for the Zonta Foundation for Women in memory of **Aurora Fleming**, a long-time member of Zonta in the former Springfield Club.

Our incoming slate of officers and nomination committee for 2026-2028 were voted unanimously. The Installation Ceremony will be held at the May meeting.

#### Slate of Officers:

**President:** Karen Keough-Huff  
**Vice President:** Connie Mahoney  
**Treasurer:** Susan Seaver  
**Secretary:** Cherie Braun

#### Directors:

**Debra Wood**  
**Elizabeth Reeves**  
**Patricia Hallberg**  
**Cynthia Melcher, Past President**

#### Nomination Committee

**Mary Ann Rubis**  
**Patricia Pupek**  
**Mary Knight**

## **BUSINESS MEETING continued**

Voting for Zonta International Convention 2026 – Mary Knight was voted as Delegate for the club. The Zonta International Slate of officers for 2026-2028 will be chosen by online vote this month. The remainder of voting, such as for bylaws changes and biennial goals, will occur in-person at the Vancouver Convention. Mary will be responsible for keeping us informed on the outcomes of this biennial event.

Fundraising – May calendar sales are underway – All members are encouraged to sell as many \$25 chances as possible. Every penny raised is pure profit for funding our scholarships, service grants, and advocacy and service initiatives locally and globally.

Scholarship Committee – Trish announced we had 8 applications for the 2026 Young Women in Leadership scholarship, The winner chosen by the committee: Assala Ali from Springfield Central High School. Assala will join us in May to introduce herself and get her award.

Service Committee – Spring Grant Applications were announced by Mary Ann and Liz: YWCA of Western MA, Girls Inc. and Girls on the Run. Representatives will be invited to attend the May meeting.

Membership – Melissa Carbone of Chicopee has submitted an application and was voted unanimously in as a member. She will be inducted at the May meeting.

### Discussion Items

- 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration – The new board will discuss how we might celebrate this milestone – send your suggestions!
- Relay for Life – May 30 10am-10pm on the Belchertown Common – interest in putting a team together?
- Proposal for help in improving our social media presence – The new board will get the details to review.

May 2 – District 1 Spring Retreat in Wells, Maine – All are welcome!

May 12 – This is a membership meeting at the Ludlow Country Club. Dr. Mary Ann Rubis, District 1 Ambassador for the Zonta Foundation for Women, will speak about the international aspects of Zonta and how clubs in 64 countries work together to make the world a better place for women and girls. We will also install our new board, induct a new member, present the YW Leadership scholarship, and award Service Grants. Please invite a guest.

June 11 @ 5:30 – THURSDAY – Pot luck dinner at the Keough-Huff home – wrap up of this biennium!

July 11-14 – International Convention – Hybrid

### **REMINDER from Debbie Wood:**

Tickets on sale now for a partner fundraiser!

Check out Basket #15 contributed by ZQV!



# Zonta Club Awards Service Grants to Local Nonprofits

Western MA - Grants ranging from \$100 to \$2000 are awarded biannually, in May (4/1 deadline) and November (10/1 deadline) by the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley, as part of Zonta's mission to make a better world for women and girls.

Service Committee Chairs Dr. Mary Ann Rubis of Chicopee and Liz Reeves of Ludlow are proud to announce that the Spring 2026 round of Service Grants have been awarded to three organizations. Join us at the presentation on May 11<sup>th</sup> to help celebrate the great work being done in our communities! [www.zontaqv.org](http://www.zontaqv.org)

## Girls on the Run Western Massachusetts

Girls on the Run (GOTR) is the only national out-of-school-time program of its kind, underscoring the important connection between physical and emotional health and empowering adolescent girls to build healthy physical and mental habits that last a lifetime. GOTR inspires girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using fun, experience-based curricula that creatively integrates running. Trained, caring and qualified coaches deliver a life-skills curriculum to small teams of girls during twice-a-week lessons. Learn how our club's award will help support the youth participating in this program, train coaches and introduce families and girls to different college environments through a 5K event!



## YWCA of Western Massachusetts

With a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all, the YWCA serves women and children who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and homelessness. Knowing the challenges that low-income women face as they rebuild their lives and seek to feed themselves and their families, our club is honored to once again award a grant in support of the Y's food pantry. At our May meeting we will receive an update on the inroads made to feed area families since receiving a fall grant and how this current award will impact local women and girls.



## Girls Inc. of the Valley

Girl's Inc. of the Valley is a positive youth development organization serving Hampden County girls and young women ages 5-18 with data-driven, hands-on programs that focus on long-term academic/literacy support and enrichment, social emotional skill-building, college and career readiness, and leadership training to empower youth and prepare them for successful futures.

Learn how the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley's Service Grant will support a youth led community cultural and educational event focused on human rights.



The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley partners with nonprofits serving women and youth from Sturbridge to Westfield and has contributed over \$150 thousand in cash and in-kind donations in the area since its inception in 1991. The club raises fund for Service Grants by sponsoring an annual Golf Tournament in September, selling Poinsettia plants in November and doing a calendar drive in the spring. **The next round of Service Grants will be announced in November. Grant applications are available at [www.zontaqv.org/service-grant](http://www.zontaqv.org/service-grant) or by emailing [info@zontaqv.org](mailto:info@zontaqv.org).**

# 2026 Young Woman in Leadership Award Announced



## Assala Halez Ali: 2026 Young Women in Leadership Scholarship Winner

Western MA ~ Patricia Pupek , Scholarship Chair for the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley, is pleased to announce that **Assala Ali** is this year's Young Women in Leadership scholarship award recipient.

Assala is a senior at Springfield Central High School where she participates in Student Government and Key Club, contributes to theater productions both on stage and behind the scenes, and volunteers her time supporting school and community activities. She is also one of the founding members of the Central High School Mock Trial Club.

According to her school advisors, Assala's character has been influenced by having personally experienced domestic abuse in her native Egypt and economic inequality in getting resettled in the United States. She has distinguished herself as a compassionate and empathetic young woman who is a natural leader and treats others with kindness and respect.

The Young Women in Leadership Award recognizes young women, ages 16-19, for demonstrating leadership skills and commitment to public service and civic causes and encourages them to continue their participation in public and political life. As an awardee, Assala will be presented with a certificate of accomplishment and a check for \$2000 to use toward college expense. She is also eligible to compete for the Zonta District 1 and Zonta International award of \$5000.

Assala wants to study Film and Psychology in college and plans to stay active in community organizations, using her creative and technical skills to support initiatives and volunteer projects that make a positive impact.

*The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley ([www.zontaqv.org](http://www.zontaqv.org)) is part of Zonta International - a global community that works for gender equality, empowerment of women, access to all resources and a life free of violence. Since 1923, it has provided more than US\$41 million to empower women and expand their access to education, health care, economic opportunities, and safe living conditions. More information on all of Zonta's education awards is available at: [zonta.org/web/Programs/Education](http://zonta.org/web/Programs/Education).*

# New Member Welcomed

**Melissa Carbone** is a long time resident of Western Massachusetts. She grew up in the Northampton area and currently lives in Chicopee. Melissa is proud to be a registered nurse that works in the home care setting for a visiting nurse agency. She loves to participate in community events and has spent many years volunteering in various capacities.



Melissa enjoys spending time with both family and friends, traveling, reading, and gardening, and is already making positive contributions to improving the lives of women and girls.

## 2026-2028 Leadership Elected

### Board Officers:

President: **Karen Keough-Huff**

Vice President: **Connie Mahoney**

Treasurer: **Susan Seaver**

Secretary: **Cherie Braun**

Directors:

**Debra Wood**

**Elizabeth Reeves**

**Patricia Hallberg**

**Cynthia Melcher**, Past President

### Nomination Committee:

**Mary Ann Rubis**

**Patricia Pupek**

**Mary Knight**