

For Your Calendar

Saturday, February 21

Period Project
Assembly 10-12, then lunch
meeting @ Venture Way in
Hadley—Thanks Andrea!

Monday, March 9

Women Making a Difference
event @ Ludlow Country
Club 5:30 Social 6:00 Dinner
*

March 9-19

Join Zonta at Commission on
the Status of Women

April 13 ZQV Meeting—
Ludlow Country Club *

Saturday, May 2

District-wide Spring Retreat
Hampden Inn, Wells, Maine
Hotel rooms available for
Friday and Saturday.

May 11 ZQV Meeting—

Ludlow Country Club *
June 8 ZQV Meeting—details
TBA

July 11-14

Zonta International
Convention in Vancouver
British Columbia, Canada
www.zontaconvention.com
Registration is open for
INPERSON and VIRTUAL
attendance. Check it out!

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

Club Members and Friends:

As we begin 2026 in earnest, I'm reminded again of how proud I am to be a Zontian and a member of the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley. We have two traditions coming up that I think show how even as a small group we can have a significant impact on our community.

In February we focus on The Period Project, providing kits of menstrual products to organizations in our area. Period poverty has a stunning impact on people's ability to work, get an education around the world, or participate in other aspects of daily life. Through this program we are able to help make this a little easier for people in Central and Western Massachusetts.

In March we will again recognize Women Who Make a Difference. I know I say this every year, but this year's group is made up of truly amazing people who have worked so hard to help women and girls stay safe, express themselves, and participate fully in the world around them.

In April, we welcome Massachusetts Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi, who many will remember from her time representing parts of this area as Massachusetts State Representative and then as a State Senator. She will be speaking to us about the challenges faced by women in rural Massachusetts.

I look forward to seeing you at any--or all--of these events.

Many thanks for your support.



Cynthia Melcher, President

Board Meeting Highlights

Scholarship - See Page 5.

We need your help in getting the word out to like-minded organizations and targeting communications to specific contacts in area high schools. Please contact Trish if you can assist.

Period Project – See Page 2. Please share information about the Period Project and see the “Member message.”

March Women Making A Difference - See Page 4. Please share - we want to get as many guests as possible registered by March 2nd.

Nominations for 2026-2028 Board and Nomination Committee. We will publish our nominees in March and voting will take place at the April meeting.

May Calendar Raffle – We need to collect 31 gifts valued at \$25 + by March 25 –in time to get calendar ready for April newsletter. Every \$25 sale will be pure profit, so it is up to members to get the word out and sell, sell, sell in April.

Cyd Melcher

Happy Valentine's Day to everyone! It's a season of love and celebration, and there's even more reason to rejoice with the birthdays of some special individuals. Wishing a joyful birthday to Cyd Melcher on February 3rd, Andreea Rotaru and Patti Hallberg on February 6th, Patricia Pupek on February 13th, Kristin Gould on February 14th, and Colleen Moynihan on February 24th. May your birthdays be filled with love, laughter, and cherished moments.





Period Project 2026

The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley has begun its annual Period Project collection. This fundraising and supply-drive program purchases and collects women's hygiene supplies for packaging and distribution to shelters, food pantries, schools, and organizations serving women and teens in need.

Feminine hygiene products are considered non-essential by the federal government, so they are not covered by SNAP and WIC programs. The project seeks donations of sealed boxes of individually-wrapped pads and tampons, cleansing wipes, hand sanitizers or soap, and panty liners. Also in need are toiletries like hair products and lotions.

Find addresses/maps for drop-off locations throughout Hampden and Hampshire counties, and a link to an Amazon wish list at zontaqv.org/period. Cash to purchase items in short supply are gratefully accepted. Checks can be made to Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley, and sent to PO Box 1034, Belchertown MA 01007-1034.

Period Project kits will be assembled Saturday, 2/21/26 beginning @10am at the Venture Way Collaborative, 200 Venture Way, Hadley MA. The public and organizations needing these products are encouraged to join us. Contact Mary Knight at 413-219-8260 or info@zontaqv.org for any questions about donations or pickup.

Members:

- Please send email to Mary on or before 2/19 with approximate count of products collected so we can determine what we need to supplement.
- Plan on staying after the assembly for pizza lunch and a short business meeting.

**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

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:info@zontaqv.org) Zonta of Quaboag Valley ~ PO Box 1034, Belchertown, MA 01007

January Program: Amelia Earhart Tribute



AE - Zonta Amelia Earhart Fellowship

US\$10,000 Fellowship awarded annually to up to 30 women pursuing Ph.D./doctoral degrees in aerospace engineering and space sciences

Since 1938

1,794 AE Fellowships
More than US\$12.2 million
1,365 women
80 countries

Amelia Earhart

We were proud to learn that three of the 30 2025 Amelia Earhart Fellows are right here in District 1! They are:

- **Myrella Cabral** (Brazil) is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she researches aerothermoelastic phenomena in hypersonic flow. Working under Dr. Wesley Harris and Dr. Earl Dowell, her research focuses on improving predictive models for fluid-thermal-structural interaction, an area critical to the safety and performance of high-speed aerospace vehicles.
- **Palak Patel** is a Ph.D. candidate in mechanical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conducting research in necstlab within the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics. A NASA Space Technology Graduate Research Opportunities Fellow, she works under Professor Brian Wardle at MIT and Dr. Valerie Wiesner at NASA Langley Research Center to develop multifunctional materials for extreme environments that will support human deep space exploration.
- **Fatima Zaidouni** is a Ph.D. candidate in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she studies the environments surrounding supermassive black holes using high-resolution X-ray spectroscopy. Her research focuses on modeling the signatures of outflows in active galactic nuclei to better understand how black holes influence the evolution of their host galaxies. She uses state-of-the-art X-ray telescopes—including XRISM, XMM-Newton and NuSTAR to explore the physics of highly ionized gas near black holes.

At our Zoom Business meeting January 12th, we were honored to have with us one of the awardees, Fatima, and two members of the Zonta International Amelia Earhart Fellowship Committee: Nicole Zellner – a ZI supporting member, and Candace Kohl – a Zontian from District 9 in California.

Nicole and Candace were both recipients of AE Fellowships; we learned about their amazing career paths, and how Zonta was a major lifeline for each. Both are long-term AE Committee members and spoke about the challenges of whittling down the superior applicants to reach the maximum of 30!

Fatima, from Morocco, explained her journey into the field of physics and astronomy after attending space camp as a young girl. She is studying black holes in her doctoral degree path. Outside of academia, Fatima mentors younger students and is dedicated to promoting accessibility and equity in science.

[January Business Minutes](#)

Please click on the button to read
the January 12 minutes;
notify the Secretary of any edits or
omissions.

Women Making A Difference

On March 9th at the Ludlow Country Club we celebrate International Women's Day. The public is invited to join us in honoring four women who are making a difference in our communities.

RSVP by March 2, 2026 at info@ZontaQV.org.

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

Pay at the door for the buffet (\$30 for table of 8; \$35 individual) or [pay online](#).

Each year in March, the global community celebrates International Women's Day (IWD), recognizing women for their achievements regardless of national, ethnic, linguistic, economic or political divisions. The Zonta International community also celebrates Zonta Rose Day, a time to reflect and give tribute to the women who have empowered us.

In this spirit, the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley proudly announces its Women Making a Difference Award dinner on March 9th at the Ludlow Country Club. The theme of this year's International Women's celebration "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls." calls for inclusive legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, and addressing structural barriers to justice and opportunity for women and girls. Our honorees for 2026 are champions for this theme.



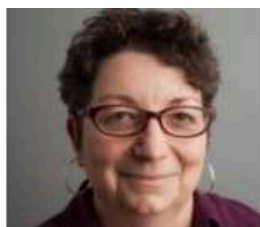
Samantha Hamilton

As Director of Coalition Building and Community Engagement at the Public Health Institute of Western Mass and co-founder of A Queen's Narrative, she leverages over 22 years of experience to advance health equity, address environmental and social disparities, and



Jacqueline Velez

With over sixteen years of experience, this Lead Organizer for Holyoke's Neighbor to Neighbor and Community Project Coordinator for Live Well Springfield drives campaigns for criminal justice reform, climate action, and housing justice.



Marianne Winters

With a career dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault, she has held executive leadership roles at Jane Doe, Inc. and the Rape Crisis Center of Central Massachusetts prior to her nearly 15-year tenure as Executive Director of Safe Passage.



Darlene Elias

A social worker, writer, and activist with over 33 years of advocacy in child welfare, and community organizing; a cofounder of the Writing Sisters collective; and a board member of Alianza and the Strawdog Writers Guild.

2026

ZONTA YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



5

Recognizing young women for their commitment to volunteerism, volunteer leadership achievements and dedication to empowering women worldwide



Applications for Leadership Award due by March 15th

Western MA ~ Applications for the 2026 Young Women in Leadership Award are available from the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley. A local recipient will receive a \$2000 award, funded by the Zonta Club of the Quaboag Valley and will be entered for the District YW award. The District recipient will be eligible for a \$5,000 award from Zonta International.

Applicants must be between the ages of 16 and 19 on April 1st studying at a secondary school, college or university in a Zonta District.

According to Zonta Club Scholarship Chair Patricia Pupek, the goal of the Leadership Award is to encourage young women to participate in leadership positions by recognizing a young woman's commitment to the volunteer sector, evidence of volunteer leadership achievements and dedication to building a better world for women in girls. "Applicants are asked to reflect on their voluntary commitment to their school and to their community and the problems limiting the empowerment of women in their own country and worldwide. The Zonta Young Women in Leadership Award looks to the young women of today to be the leaders of tomorrow." notes Pupek.

Applications can be obtained from high school guidance counselors or on its website: ZontaQV.org/scholarships and must be submitted electronically with supporting documentation no later than March 15th.

Questions can be directed to info@zontaqv.org.