

# LAKE PLACID NEWS

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## **ROTARY CLUB NEWS: ‘The Quiet Strength of Women – A Force to Change Their World’**



Susan Friedmann presents at the Zonta Women's Leadership Conference, Cebu, Philippines. (Provided photo)

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January was my fifth visit to Southeast Asia and my third trip to the Philippines.

As part of a small group of professional speakers and trainers from around the world, we represent Together We Can Change the World (TWCCTW), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of disadvantaged children and abused and trafficked women.

Each year, we spend several weeks in S.E. Asia raising money to support various projects, such as schools, group homes, women's shelters and HIV care facilities.

During this year's trip to the Philippines, we played an integral role in a ground-breaking women's leadership conference. Sponsored by the Zonta Club of Cebu, 240 women from all walks of life came together to celebrate the "The Quiet Strength of Women – A Force to Change Their World." A major focus of the event was to consider what each participant could do to change the world of the women they knew. From helping a neighbor learn to read, to taking on a more far-reaching task of setting up a refuge for women escaping domestic violence.

Due to the lack of earning power for Filipino women, approximately 10 percent of the female population works overseas primarily as nurses and caregivers. The money they earn, they send back home for their larger family to survive. At the same time, they make great sacrifices, having their mother take care of their children. Naturally, this causes great loss and loneliness.

Zonta strives to change this situation by funding education and job-skills training so women can remain in the Philippines and achieve independent, self-sustaining lives.

Since this concept aligns with the core mission of TWCCTW, the day-long conference was a fitting collaboration.

Together with four of my female team members, we each presented our experiences and challenges in becoming successful women leaders as well as the multitude of rewards that being a leader brings.

As part of the build-up to this pivotal event, we attended a press conference where we were interviewed and photographed by 22 eager local journalists.

In addition, the Zonta president together with several of her Zonta board members hosted us for a lavish meal at her magnificent home.

Many of the Zonta women we met before, during and after the conference are influential leaders and entrepreneurs. From owners of the local newspaper, hotels and clinics, to the president and vice president of one of the local universities, each one of them displayed a quiet strength and gentle demeanor. However, they all have one thing in common; they know they can and are making a difference in the Cebu community.

Surrounded by an environment filled with women who endure immense hardship and are disadvantaged by a lack of formal education, the Zonta women understand that their “quiet strength” is a force that can change their world.

On this trip I was wearing two hats, one as a member of the Zonta Club of the Adirondacks and the other as president of the Rotary Club of Lake Placid.

This year, the Lake Placid Rotary Club generously donated \$500 to the SOS Children’s Village in Cebu City. This is a family-based care program that provides a home for orphaned children or ones who cannot be raised in their own family due to abuse or immense poverty.

This was our third visit to the village. It was wonderful and gratifying to see the children as they grow and blossom each year. Talking to some of the older girls, they shared their desire to become teachers and doctors.

The Rotary Club donation which I personally delivered will fund school supplies and uniforms which the children must wear to attend school.

The Rotary Club of Lake Placid is part of a global network of 1.2 million people who come together to make positive, lasting change in communities locally, nationally and internationally. The club meets every Thursday at

7:20 a.m. at the Marriott Courtyard. For more information, go to  
[rotarylakeplacid.org](http://rotarylakeplacid.org).

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