

## Zonta Club of Pittsburgh – Our History

Founded in 1919, [Zonta International](#) was formed to advocate for women's place in business and professional fields. Central to the organization's mission was raising the status of women in the workplace and furthering the interests of female professionals across the globe. The Pittsburgh Chapter of Zonta was established on April 19, 1934.

Dr. M.A. Graham Mitchell served as the first chapter president. The Zonta Club of Pittsburgh was comprised of women working in Pittsburgh who had risen to high positions within their professions. The professions of the original chapter members included education, medicine, oil manufacturing, law, advertising and banking.

From its founding, the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh served professional women by organizing various outreach and education events. Beyond educational events the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh became actively involved in current issues surrounding women's rights in the workforce. In one example of this involvement, the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh became engaged in legally contesting a 1937 Pennsylvania state bill that would limit women's work week to 40 hours. Ruth Forsht, a member of the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh, was the attorney who led the protest against this bill. Forsht heralded the injustice surrounding this bill, stating that limiting women's work hours in this way was discriminatory and would spur employers to hire men over women. To place this effort in context, it was not until 1938 that President Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Act limiting the standard workweek to 44 hours.

Other prominent Pittsburgh women who were Zonta Club of Pittsburgh members included Dr. Zoe Johnston, Pittsburgh general chairman of the Radiological Society of North America; Sandra McLaughlin, first female vice-president of Mellon Bank; and Virginia Lewis, the first director of the Frick Fine Arts Museum.

Today, the Zonta Club of Pittsburgh remains a vibrant and active club. Embracing the current Zonta International mission of advancing the status of women locally and globally through service and advocacy, the club has adopted two major projects: [Assembling Birthing Kits](#) for women in Africa, and recognizing female high school students who have overcome obstacles to become better students and citizens through the [Amelia Earhart Awards and Scholarship program](#). The Pittsburgh Zonta Club also recognizes [women who have made a difference in their community](#) and [women who have succeeded in traditionally male dominated fields](#). Fundraising is an integral part of the club's activities.