

New club, new store

Food, fashion to benefit First Step project

By CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

A new club and a new store are banding together to help raise funds to combat a not-so-new problem.

The new Zonta Club of Farmington and Novi is hosting a fashion show and taste fest at Parisian at Livonia's Laurel Park Place to benefit First Step, the Western Wayne County project on domestic violence and sexual assault, Sunday, March 26.

"It's a new store and I thought it would attract people," said Beverlee McAllister, Zonta president and First Step volunteer, of her reasons for choosing Parisian. The Zonta Club is made up of executives in business, working together to improve the status of women. That club along with First Step have formed a partnership to promote an awareness of domestic violence. They are hoping to raise \$20,000 through ticket sales and raffish.

More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the event that will include food from the Golden Mushroom of Southfield, the Botford Inn of Farmington Hills, Villa DeRoma of Livonia, Joe's Italian Bakery of Plymouth, D.

Dennison's Seafood of Livonia, Macaroni Grill of Livonia, Coffee Beanery of Livonia, the Good Food Company of Canton, DeRoe Delicacies of Redford, and Schuiz's Cap 'n' Cork of Plymouth. The Redford-based Catering by Sayers is also expected to participate.

The \$25 tickets for the show are available by calling (313) 453-0822 or (313) 538-8043.

A variety of fashions will be shown, according to Jane Bassett, Parisian's special events manager.

"We'll show casual work clothes (since) that's the big hype and I know I'll do something on Easter because it's timely," Bassett said.

The benefit is also timely for the Canton-based First Step because of recent funding cuts coupled with an increased demand for services. The number of women seeking help has risen 30 percent during each of the last three years.

"(First Step) needs to grow to meet the demand for services," said Judy Ellis, executive director of First Step. "The funds are crucial to just keep up, not so much

to grow and expand but to keep up."

In addition to the fashion and food, First Step will be handing out brochures about how individual people may help end domestic violence on their own.

First Step, which also has an office in Southgate, offers a number of programs for women, children, men and community members, including a 24-hour help line and rape crisis response team, emergency shelter up to 90 days, counseling, court advocacy and legal services.

It also offers counseling for men who batter, speakers for community presentations, training for community professionals, internships for undergraduate and graduate students and volunteer opportunities.

First Step can be reached by calling: (313) 459-5900 or (313) 453-9595.

As the numbers of women who seek help rises, the crimes are getting more heinous, Ellis added.

"The majority of the people take a position to end domestic violence," Ellis said. "We need every single man, woman and child to make a big dent in violence."



Stylish fashions: Judy Ellis (from left) of First Step, Pauline Jowsey and Bev McAllister of Zonta of Farmington and Novi show off some of the fashions that may be shown at the First Step benefit at Parisian March 26.

Local Zonta Club chartered in June

The Zonta Club is new locally, but it's not a new organization. Zonta started in 1919. The Farmington-Nowi Area Zonta Club was chartered in June.

Zonta is to women what Rotary is to men, according to Beverlee McAllister, president of the new local chapter.

Some 36,000 business and professional women belong to Zonta clubs worldwide. The new local group has 35 members — so far. Other area Zonta clubs include the Southfield club and the Northwestern Wayne club.

McAllister, vice president of Sun Coasting Company in Plymouth, had belonged to the Northwestern Wayne Zonta Club.

Five members left that club to form the nucleus of the Farmington-Nowi club.

Members meet at 6 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Embassy Suites at 1-275 and Seven Mile Road in Livonia.

Potential members have to either live or work in Farmington, Farmington Hills or Novi. They must also be in executive positions with the power to hire and fire. And like Rotary, a name is submitted for membership and has to be voted on by the membership. Also, each club chapter may only have so many people in certain job categories.

"The goal or mission of the

club is to improve the status of women," McAllister said.

The club aims to help women politically and financially through scholarships, mentoring and networking. Women in need of help can often find out whether they like certain professions by networking with club members.

Zonta "started with a handful of women in New York, USA, wanting to create an organization that they could not find elsewhere; one in which they could thrive as female professionals, while also giving something back to the communities that supported them," according to an article on the 75th anniversary of the club in Zontian magazine.

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