

International Women's Day

Women from the Chicago area observed International Women's Day 2003 during a fair and luncheon Friday, March 7 at the Club.

Twenty-three organizations had an informational booth at the fair and nearly 200 women helped to commemorate the event. The day brought together a group of Chicago-based organizations that focus on a wide range of issues affecting women, both domestically and internationally.

International Women's Day, officially observed March 8, is commemorated by the United Nations and marked by women's groups around the world. It was first observed in the early 1900s as a remembrance and celebration of the struggle faced by women worldwide in the name of equality, justice, peace and development. International Women's Day has continued to evolve celebrating the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political diversity of women around the world. It is a national holiday in many countries.

Among the organizations that participated in the Women's Fair were Illinois for CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Zonta International, a worldwide organization of executives in business and other professions working together to advance the status of women; and the Gender Equity Fund of AAUW-IL (American



Association of University Women, Illinois), an organization established to promote equity for women and girls through educational outreach programs. The purpose of the fair was to share information about women's issues and programs among women's groups.

Midwest Correspondent for *The Economist* Julie Sell served as the session's mistress of ceremonies. She began the program by reading a proclamation issued by Mayor Richard M. Daley that declared March 8, 2003 to be International Women's Day in the city of Chicago. It also "encouraged all Chicagoans to recognize and honor the achievements of women in our community and nationwide."

Illinois State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, the first woman in Illinois history to hold the state treasurer's post, was the keynote speaker at the luncheon. Topinka talked about equality, justice, peace and development for women around the



world. She said that "International Women's Day began as a remembrance of the struggles women have faced. Although the role of women has continued to evolve, women in the 21st century still face many obstacles in the advancement of their status worldwide. Despite ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, the desire and need for progressive change is universal."

Topinka urged women to "get out there at any time and at any age and become involved (in politics) because the opportunities are out there." She explained that women are naturals for the world of politics because they are used to juggling and balancing many important projects – their kids, spouses, careers and other commitments.

She concluded by stating that if "every woman comes together on specific issues, the voting public could move mountains" in bridging the disparities

between the number of women versus men in politics, and in promoting equal rights for women in the work force.

Consul General of Austria Elisabeth Kehrer and Anna Kroupnova a Russian Fulbright Scholar and volunteer program officer with the Community Connections Program at the International Visitors Center of Chicago, also spoke at the event. Both women provided insight into the traditional celebrations of Women's Day in their own countries. Kehrer commented that many Austrian towns combine local traditions with universal symbols of the day. Kroupnova recalled the day as one in

a. Representatives of the sponsor organizations included Peggy Parfenoff, executive director of the International Visitors Center of Chicago, Paula Maguire a ULC director and chair of the ULC Membership Committee and Laura Meyer of the International Trade Club of Chicago.

b. Speakers, Anna Kroupnova(l) a Russian Fulbright Scholar and Consul General of Austria Elisabeth Kehrer(r) are shown with Illinois State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka.

c. The Chicago affiliate of the Y-Me Foundation was represented by Rebekah Brooks and Pat Morley.

d. First Vice President and Chair of the Public Affairs Committee Michael Chioros is shown with Topinka and Alderman Mary Ann Smith of the 48th Ward.

e. Vernice Oliver promoted the programs of the U.S. Department of Labor.

f. Janis Frenchak and Karamjit Virk were on hand to answer questions regarding the Cook County Economic Development Agency.

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FEATURE STORY

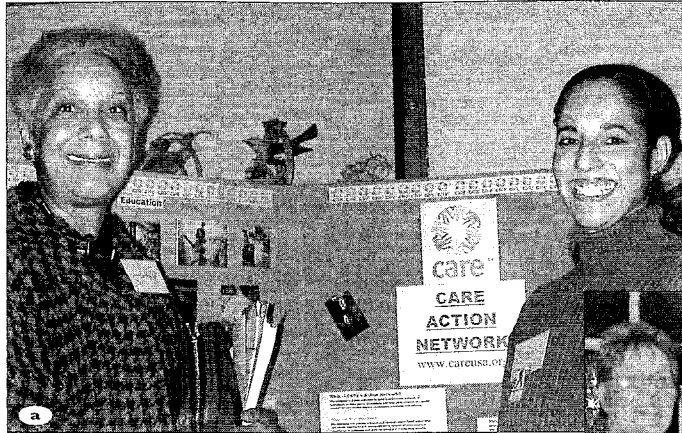
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which Russian men participated in women's housework and young boys make presents for their mothers and female schoolmates.

The event was co-sponsored by the Union League Club, the International Visitors Center of Chicago and the International Trade Club of Chicago. The IVCC is a member of the National Council for International Visitors. The IVCC has served as the city's official host for U.S. government-sponsored visitors since 1952. Each year, the organization serves as a liaison between approximately 800 international visitors and their Chicago-area counterparts.

The International Trade Club of Chicago, founded in 1919, is the oldest international trade association in the United States. Members represent a



broad range of corporations, educational institutions, government agencies and members of the diplomatic corps. ©

a. Loren Leiding Avila of Care Action Network (CARE) talks with Isabel Stewart of the Chicago Foundation for Women. The two groups often collaborate in promoting women's issues in Chicago.

b. ULC member Rose Ann Grundman also represented the Chicago Musicians Club of Women. She arranged for entertainment provided by Tracy Figard on piano and Kristin Figard on the viola. Kristin Figard was the 2001 Union League Civic & Arts Scholarship winner in the young adult string division.



c. Club member Brooke Wiseman and Gwen Ferguson of the Girl Scouts of Chicago discuss the organization with Karen Snow.