

## 2024-2026 Zonta District 11 Nominees

### Governor Candidate



**Name:** Maria Crowley

**Zonta Club:** Zonta Club of Miami Lakes

**Years in Zonta:** 11

**Positions in Zonta:**

**Club:** President, Vice-President, Director, Gala Chair

**Area:** Area Director, Vice-Area Director

**District:** Amelia Earhart Chair, Lt. Governor

**International:** N/A

**Other Activities:** I enjoy volunteering to improve my community, participating in tennis, running half-marathons and mountain biking. Also love food and attempting to cook.

**Classification/Business or Profession:** I am a graduate of the University of Miami - School of Architecture and have an MBA in Management and Labor Relations also from UM. I am an Architect and Professor of Architecture, serving as Chief of Community Planning for Miami-Dade County and Director of Planning and Zoning for Miami Lakes. Recognized by the Florida Association of Planning and Zoning and awarded several NACO awards for National Association of Counties outstanding development of Rapid-Rail Plans.

I truly love our mission and I want to use my time and energy to uplift the lives of women and girls. It's an honor to serve as your Lt. Governor and work along your side to implement Zonta's projects and plans! As your Governor I want to see Zonta have greater recognition and greater impact through our growth! We need to target and implement actions that will improve our brand recognition! I will strive to support ALL our Clubs, small, large, and mighty!

## Lt. Governor Candidate



**Name:** Bernadette Gibson

Bernadette has been a member of the Zonta Club of Nassau for the past 23 years. She has worked assiduously to support her community and has served in many positions including President in 2006-2007 and again for the biennial 2014-2016. In October 2017, she was elected as Area 3 Director for District 11, for the biennial 2018-2020. She also chaired the District 11 Leadership Committee during the biennial 2018-2020. In October 2020 Bernadette was appointed to serve as Recording Secretary for Zonta District 11 Board for the biennial 2020–2022 and re-appointed to this position for the biennial 2022–2024. To further add to her list of accomplishments, she is a mentor to a young lady from Germany as a part of the “Great Girls Meet Great Women” Zonta International program. She travels extensively to attend area meetings, district conferences and international conventions and is an active participant.

Bernadette’s stellar contribution to “Building a Better World for Women and Girls” speaks to her commitment to looking to the needs of others with her loving and caring spirit. As a leader, she imparts wisdom freely and is very calm, serene, diplomatic, and reliable.

Bernadette is a human resources specialist and currently serves as Senior Manager, Human Resources at the Securities Commission of The Bahamas. She holds a bachelor’s degree in public administration from the University of Windsor, Canada, a Master’s Degree in Business Administration from the University of Miami, Florida, as well as the American Board Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, (C.Ped), and the Senior Professional in Human Resources International designation (SPHRi).

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Bernadette has a long history of church, community, and civic service. She currently serves on the finance and outreach committees of Saint Mary’s the Virgin Anglican Church in The Bahamas. Her hobbies are travelling, reading, Pilates, dancing, cooking, and gardening. Bernadette is the proud mother of three (3) adult sons and three (3) grandchildren.

## Treasurer Candidate



**Name:** Nora Haydon

I started my venture in 1977 with Zonta during high school when I joined the Z-Club.

In 2002 I became a member of the Zonta Club of Montgomery/Fulton Counties. I was the club Treasurer within a year and remained in that office for 13 years. I resigned from the position when I moved to Greenville, SC in 2015. I continued as a member of the club and participated in meetings through social media. I also was the Chairperson of our club's Young Woman's Education Award and District Chairperson for the Jane M. Klausman Women in Business Scholarship.

In 2016, I transferred to the Zonta Club of Columbia where I became Treasurer within a month of joining.

In 2022, the current President resigned, and the VP was not able to step into the position at that time. The club was on the verge of folding and to prevent that from happening, I became President.

I have a long work history in finance/administration including IBM Corporation, the NY State Senate, and a NY based IT company. I retired in 2015.

I am originally from Bronx, NY, but have lived in New Jersey, Texas, and Connecticut. I retired when I moved to South Carolina with my husband. I have 4 daughters. One lives here in South Carolina and the others live in Connecticut. I have 13 grandchildren. Three of them live close by and I am the primary babysitter when my daughter and her husband are at work.

## Area Director, Area 1 Candidate



**Name:** Susan Sheppard

Birmingham is the birthplace for Susan. She graduated from University of Montevallo with a B.S. and M.S. in Speech Pathology. Susan pursued her career in Florida, California, Tennessee, and Texas. She returned to Alabama in 2005. Before returning to work, Susan joined the Birmingham Zonta Club. She was Program Chairman and Co-President with Kathy Johnson.

Following that year, she pursued a full-time Speech Pathology career. In 2018, Susan rejoined the Zonta Club in Birmingham. She became active working on the Communications and Service Committees. The club elected Susan as Co-President in 2019. She served as President in 2020-2021. She was elected Area Director in 2020. In 2023, she was appointed Floundation Ambassador for District 11.

She is excited to continuing to support Zonta as the Area 1 Director for 2024-2026.

## Area Director, Area 2 Candidate



**Name:** Tina Alexander Johnson

**Zonta Club:** Hilton Head Island

**Years in Zonta:** 12

**Positions in Zonta:**

**Club:** President, Vice President, Committee Chair, Board member

**Other Activities:** Have been a member of St. Andrew By-the-Sea United Methodist Church since 1996 and have served in several capacities as a volunteer. Have served on the Advisory BOD of the Island Recreation Center (which is the “entry level” of BOD membership) since 2018.

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Have worked as an Accountant in several industries for over 30 years. Currently work as the Controller for a Law Firm in downtown Savannah, GA.

**Comments:** Originally from Indianapolis, IN. Moved to Hilton Head Island, SC in 1993. Have worked as an Accountant in several industries for over 30 years. Currently work as the Controller for a Law Firm in downtown Savannah, GA. Have a daughter, son-in-law, two grand dogs and one grand cat, who all live in Bluffton, SC. Rescued my current cat when we evacuated to Augusta, GA, for Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Her name is Augusta Hope. Have been a member of St. Andrew By-the-Sea United Methodist Church since 1996 and have served in several capacities as a volunteer. Received certification as a Stephen Minister (through the training program with my church) in 1997 and have served the church membership off and on since certification. Have served on the Advisory BOD of the Island Recreation Center since 2018. Joined Zonta in 2011 and have served as the Chairperson of every committee for at least two years each. Have also served on the BOD in almost every position for 10.5 years of out of the past 12 years that I have been a member (a half year to fill in for someone who resigned). Served as President in 2017-2018. Currently serving as Vice President.

My Zonta WHY? To make a difference in the lives of women and girls who are not only in my little corner of the world, but nationally and internationally. To contribute to something bigger than myself and to combine efforts with others who are like minded, where **together** we can make a change for the better.

## Area Director, Area 3 Candidate



**Name:** Carmen Nieves

Carmen Nieves settled in Florida in 2005 after living in New York, New Jersey and Maryland. She majored in Psychology and Physiology at Hunter College in New York City and has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from New York University.

Carmen was the Coordinator for the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Center for Minority Health Research and co-organized a two-day statewide conference for 200 minority leaders focusing on the Human Genome Project in the late 1990's. She was the Executive Director of Centro de la Comunidad in Baltimore, Maryland, an agency which provided health, education, employment, housing, and social services to low income residents of the city.

In 2005, Carmen settled in Florida as Clinic Director of the Caridad Center in Boynton Beach, Florida, which provides health, dental, and social services to the uninsured and underinsured residents of Palm Beach County, Florida. She retired from Caridad in 2015.

Carmen is a charter member of the Zonta Club of Deerfield Beach, established in 2012. She has since served as Treasurer, President, and is currently Membership Chair. This past year, she has been instrumental in recruiting 10 additional members and has a few more in the wings. Carmen participates in all committees and Board meetings. Her motto is "We rise by lifting others" and is dedicated to Zonta's mission of women supporting women in all aspects and goals they may have. She has attended several District 11 conferences and Area 3 workshops.

## Area Director, Area 4 Candidate



**Name:** Rachel Lazarus

### **ZONTA PROFILE**

Rachel has been a member of the Zonta Club of Tallahassee (ZCT) since 2012. During the ensuing years she has participated in many of the local projects organized and executed by the Club and taken a leadership role in the projects that furnishes clothing and personal care packages for victims of sexual assault. She served on the ZCT Board from 2015-2023 as a board member, secretary, president-elect, and president.

### **CAREER PROJECTORY**

Ms. Lazarus has worked in the private and public sectors in civil engineering, construction, and public works projects throughout her career. She has applied the same zeal to her work in philanthropy and the organizations she has supported as she has in industry. She has been able to provide substantial contributions that have enhanced the effectiveness, and for private entities profit, as well as the success of those organizations.

### **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

Ms. Lazarus is a team member, politically astute, detailed oriented, and quality driven whether volunteering with a non-profit or working in a professional capacity. An experienced team builder who coaches and empowers subordinates while holding them accountable for outcomes. She has held leadership positions in professional organizations such as the American Public Works Association and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators as well as non-profit organizations such as the Southwest Germantown Partnership, Temple University Pan-African Community Education Program, and the Zonta Club of Tallahassee. She is especially proud of the twelve years she served as a math instructor with the Pan-African Studies Community Education Program at Temple University. She has had experience in government in progressively responsible positions in the library, water, stormwater, right-of-way management, highways, bridge design/construction/maintenance, engineering design and construction, building code plan review and permitting, municipal solid waste management, and project management.

### **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

Ms. Lazarus was born and spent much of her childhood in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has lived in Tallahassee since 1999. She has three siblings: a brother and a sister in Atlanta and a brother in London, UK. She is the mother of two daughters, grandmother of four and great-grandmother of five, all of whom are a tremendous source of pride and love. Her free time is filled with helping others, cooking, traveling, and reading. Ms. Lazarus is active in church ministries and a trustee at the Second Baptist Church of Germantown. She has been recognized by a Women of Achievement Award by the Philadelphia Tribune Newspaper, and a Gold Star Honoree of the National Hook-Up of Black Women among other distinctions

## Area Director, Area 5 Candidate



**Name:** Ivonne Diaz Figueroa

**Zonta Club:** San Juan

**Years in Zonta:** 19

### **Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** Secretary

**Area:** Vice Area Director

**Other Activities:** Zone IV Director Alliance of Pan American Tables, President Ponce Señorial Lions Club, Lions Clubs Friendship Day Advisor, Former President Puerto Rico Business and Professional Women Association. I have occupied positions in other organizations such as: Civic Ladies, Women of the Americas Union (UMA), Catholic Daughters of the Americas, etc. I am also a Melvin Jones Fellow.

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Associate Professor (Higher Education-English)



## Area Director, Area 6 Candidate



**Name:** Judy Langley

**Zonta Club:** Sanibel Captiva

**Years in Zonta:** 18

### **Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** President, Secretary, Fundraising Chair

**Area:** Vice Area Director

**Other Activities:** Guardian Ad Litum Volunteer 17 years

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Marketing and sales

## Vice Area Director, Area 1 Candidate



**Your Name:** Kathleen Johnson

**Zonta Club:** Birmingham

**Years in Zonta:** 15

### **Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** Past President  
Board member past and current

**Area:** Past Area Director

**District:** Chair By Laws Committee (past)  
Current Advocacy Committee Chair  
Alternate representative to the USA Caucus

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Lawyer

## Vice Area Director, Area 2 Candidates



**Name:** Elaine Braeuning

**Club:** Zonta Club of Greenville

**Joined Zonta:** 2012

**Profession:** Personal Trainer, Swimming Teacher, and Pilates Coach

### **Offices and Chairmanships**

#### **Club:**

- 2014-2015 Initiated & Chartered Zonta Club of Landshut
- 2015-2016 Founding President Zonta Club of Landshut
- 2015-2020 Chairlady of YWPA Committee
- 2019-2022 Co-Chairlady of Orange the World Committee for Munich Airport
- 2020-2021 President Zonta Club of Landshut
- 2023 Together with Ulrike Stroebel, Initiated & Chartered Zonta Club of Greenville
- 2023-2024 Founding President Zonta Club of Greenville

#### **Area 02 / District 14:**

- 2022 Vice Area Director, due to my husband's transfer to the USA , I unfortunately had to step down from my role.

#### **District 14:**

- 2017-2019 Member in Centennial Anniversary Committee
- 2018-2022 Z and Golden Z Chair for 2 Bienniums

#### **Other significant contributions and activities:**

Happily married for 22 years.

Mother of 2 boys, 15 and 12 years of age. Zonta District 11 Document August 2023

Educational establishment to a mentee during her course of study "Bachelor in Fitness Economics" at the German University of Applied Sciences for Prevention and Health Management in Stuttgart.  
Supervision of several internships during scholar Internships.  
Membership in Sailing, Golf, Swimming and Sport Clubs  
Member of German Federal Association of Personal Training

**Qualifications for the position of Vice Area Director:**

Sport, being the essence of my existence, has taught me the soft skills that every athlete needs and life skills that every leader requires namely commitment, dedication, resilience, time-management, stress-management, communication, and teamwork. I am a team player and assisting our future Area Director, when she expresses the desire for me to do so, would be a great honor. I strongly believe in the power of role models, and I personally have 4 very strong Zonta ladies (Ursula Werner, Ina Wässerling, Maria Becker und Yoko Schräge-Nozanki) that I mimic, ask for advice and that guide me along my Zonta path. I invest a great deal of time in youth development and think that it is fundamental that we promote young leaders. I had to learn to be a mentor and how to be a role model and not just follow role models. Being Chair for Z and Golden Z Clubs for 2 bienniums in Germany, I recognized that young people are important to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls around the world. In my search for an extensive network, I can say that Zonta is the right place. We are a local and global community. Coming from South Africa, where education is the highest domestic priority and the single greatest long-term challenge, I feel lucky that my parents encouraged me to study to the highest level that I held to be appropriate. I can only emphasize the importance of educating women and girls. Chartering Zonta Club of Landshut in Germany in 2015, restructuring it in 20/21 as president, and now chartering Zonta Club of Greenville this year has led to my general knowledge of the Zonta bylaws, projects, and the worth of the new ZI Website. These are the fundamental basics of our being Zontians. Future leaders need to be motivated by personal values and motivate Zontians to build up their strengths, recognize their potential and guide them to overcome hardships. This is what I would like to do.

## Vice Area Director, Area 3 Candidate



**Name:** Marisa Mason-Smith

**Zonta Club:** Zonta Club of New Providence

**Years in Zonta:** 20 years

### Positions in Zonta

**Club:** Four 2 terms as President

Chairman of the Advocacy Committee for Zonta Bahamas – A global campaign to advance the status of women and girls.

**Area:** 3

**District:** District 11

**International:** UN Zonta representative for Advocacy and Women Affairs for Area 3

District 11 including Bahamas; Florida; Atlanta; Mississippi; Puerto Rico; British Virgin Islands.

**Other Activities:** Zonta Bahamas National Advocacy Chairman for the past eight years. leading the national Say No to Violence Campaign and the 16 days of advocacy for the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls, a United Nations initiative where no woman or girl lives in fear of violence.

ZONTA Area 3 District 11, UN Committee Chair

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Ombudsman, University of the Bahamas

### Comments:

Ms. Mason Smith has led Zonta Club of New Providence as President for three bienniums and has held several Directorship positions on its Board. Zonta envisions a world in which women's rights are recognized as human rights and every woman is able to achieve her full potential. In

such a world, women have access to all resources and are represented in decision-making positions on an equal basis with men. Ms. Mason Smith continually advocates for the empowerment and advancement of women and girls to ensure that women are able to achieve their full potential.

Marisa Mason-Smith is a leading Human Resources Professional, Training Specialist, Conference Speaker, Facilitator, Executive Coach and Adjunct Faculty at the University of the Bahamas. This outstanding leader has been branded as a top-ranked multi-talented and skilled human resources professional who walks the talk amongst her peers and communities. She is a certified and qualified Human Resources (HR) professional, and Executive Coach, whose experience and expertise spans the United States, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Bahamas. Despite her notable achievements, she is focused and enthusiastic about people's development and growth, always seeking ways to create opportunities to encourage, motivate, inspire, and support humanity with her time and treasures. She is a trusted mentor and respected coach to many people both locally and internationally. Additionally, she is a Justice of the Peace within the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

A very civic-minded individual she multitasks her various activities through lecturing and working in a leadership role with several national committees including the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation, where she serves on the Human Resources and Training Committee, the Department of Gender and Family Affairs; the National Women's Advisory Council, Caribbean Institute of Women in Leadership (CiWiL) and Focused Women International.

She also holds professional membership in several professional organizations including the Society of Human Resources Management, the Bahamas Human Resources Development Association, the American Society of Management and holds the office of President (3rd time as President) of the Zonta Club of New Providence, an international service club made up of executives and professionals that seek to advance the status of women through service and advocacy.

In July 2019, Ms. Mason-Smith was appointed as the first Ombudsman at the University of the Bahamas and the first one designated with the title in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. She has been recognized and awarded for her invaluable contributions to society, some of these include **Justice of the Peace; Zonta International Centennial Leadership and Advocacy Award; The International Woman of Value and Wealth Award; Focused Woman International Award; The National Boss of the Year Award**

A distinguished Chevening scholar, Ms. Mason-Smith holds a Master's of Science degree in Human Resource Development and Productivity Management from the University of Manchester, England and Manchester Business School, a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management with a major in Human Resources Management from Florida Atlantic University in the United States, Trans World Tutorial College, Great Britain, the University of the West Indies, Columbia University, and from other institutions in the Bahamas.

On December 11, 2020, under Ms. Mason-Smith's leadership and in collaboration with the Department of Gender and Family Affairs and CiWiL, Zonta Bahamas led its first women in Parliament session commemorating the Women's Suffrage Movement; The 58th Anniversary of Enactment of the Right for Women to Vote and the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This initiative brought together 33 women throughout the Bahamas that participated in a non-partisan discussion that resulted in two distinct resolutions: (i) to increase women Parliamentary and national leadership representation by instituting quotas to government and all political parties; and ii) to strengthen and enact laws to address intimate partner, gender based, domestic and sexual violence, marital rape, sexual harassment, cyber violence, and online stalking.

## Vice Area Director, Area 4 Candidate



**Name:** Donna Melcher

**Zonta Club:** Melbourne, FL

**Years in Zonta:** 18

### **Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** Director, Secretary, President, Treasurer

**Area:** none

**District:** none

**International:** none

**Other Activities:** Very involved in giving back to my community: food and clothing drives, Habitat for Humanity, Adopt-A-Family, and toy drives during the holidays and enjoy playing Mah Jongg in my spare time. Have partnered with many local organizations in our community with the like-minded mission for more exposure.

**Classification/Business or Profession:** System Pharmacy Coordinator

**Comments:** Succession planning is very important for all clubs.



**Vice Area Director, Area 5 Candidate**

*VACANT*

**Vice Area Director, Area 6 Candidate**



**Name:** Sandra R Miller

**Zonta Club:** Sarasota

**Years in Zonta:** 18

**Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** President (2 times)

District 11 Stem Leader

**Other Activities:** traveling, reading, swimming, Member of AAUW, film screener for TWE.

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Statistician (Data Analytics)

**Comments:** Zonta allows me to assist women and girls advance in education, economically. Preventing violence is a focus for me. Enjoy connecting with women throughout the world. Former employment - Market Research (ret).

## Nominating Committee Candidate (Three to be elected)



**Name:** Helen A Brown

**Zonta Club:** Miami Lakes

**Years in Zonta:** 23 years

**Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** President, Vice President, currently Treasurer3

**Area:** 3

**District:** Treasurer

**Other Activities:** [Type here]

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Government Planner (building construction development)

**Comments:** Helen joined the Zonta Club of Downtown Miami in 2000 and served as the Treasurer for the club for 4 years. She was elected in 2004 as Treasurer for District 11 and served 2 terms. In 2004 joined the Zonta Club of Miami Lakes. During her tenure with the Zonta Club of Miami Lakes she has served as Vice President for two years, served as President for 2 years, and currently serving as Treasurer in her fourth year. Helen retired in 2019 from Miami-Dade County Government holding numerous professional positions in the area of planning, zoning, development regulations, code enforcement and contractor licensing. Helen holds a Bachelor Degree in Criminal Justice, a Master Degree in Public Administration, and numerous Specialty Certificates. She is very knowledgeable in IT and developed several programs during her work career. Helen enjoys spending time with family and friends. Helen continues to be active in the community volunteering hours for several other organizations. Helen enjoys swimming, walking, pickleball and golf. Like many Zontians she enjoys travel!

I have continued my membership for all these years as I believe in Zonta's mission and see serving others as a duty for a good meaningful life! It is an honor to be asked to be part of the Nomination Committee for District Positions.

## Nominating Committee Candidate (Three to be elected)



**Name:** Linda Pearson

**Zonta Club:** Naples, FL

**Years in Zonta:** 8

**Positions in Zonta**

**Club:** Club President , Club VP, Vice Area 6 Director, Area 6 Director, District 11 Public Relation Chair, Club Membership Chair, Club Fundraising Chair, Club Treasurer.

Area: 6

District: 11

**International:** N/A

**Other Activities:** Golf, Reading, Teaching Sunday School, Mah Jongg, Exercise

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Community Service

- Area 6 Director
- Past Area 6 Vice Area Director
- District 11 Public Relation Committee Chair
- Zonta Club of Naples Immediate Past President
- Zonta Club of Naple -Board of Directors
- Zonta Club of Naples Past Treasurer
- Zonta Club of Naples Membership Chair
- 'BRIDGES' Co-Founder
- Pastoral Executive Assistant ~ New Image Tabernacle
- Empowerment Academy Teacher/ Facilitator

**PROFESSIONAL SKILLS:**

- Adaptability and Flexibility
- Critical Thinking
- Data Analytics
- Technology Proficiency

**Comments:** "It would be an honor to serve"!

## Nominating Committee Candidate (Three to be elected)



**Name:** Regina M. Vetto

**Zonta Club:** Greater Deerfield Beach

**Years in Zonta:** 40 years

### Positions in Zonta

**Club:** Charter President

**Area:** Area 3 Director (1986-1988)

**District:** District 11 Governor (1996-1998)

**Other Activities:** District 11 YWPA Chair (2021-2023)

**Classification/Business or Profession:** Owner, 21st Century Auto in Deerfield Beach, FL

**Comments:** I look forward to working on the Nomination Committee to identify amazing leaders for the next biennium, and to meet many Zontians I don't already know.