

\$2 FOR A BETTER BIRTH OUTCOME

Every female in the room at some point during the day must have drawn the comparison in her mind or even articulated it out loud in conversation while assembling Birthing Kits recently at the Martin de



Porres School, Elmont, NY. The kits were being packaged in preparation for their delivery overseas to the rural stretches of Haiti and Nigeria.

Here in the United States when we think of birthing kits the images that come to mind are usually of carefully sealed

sterilized instruments and supplies that have been packaged and handled under the guidelines of health and safety standards; and found in the most sterile conditions such as the dedicated setting of a certain floor, or special wing of a hospital within which there is a or high tech labor and delivery suite with access to all the necessary medical specialists, equipment, and medications; oh, yes, medications.

In countries like Haiti and Nigeria a sterile environment comes through meeting criteria that includes that which is provided through a “Birthing Kit” and satisfies what is known as the “six cleans.” This includes one piece of 1m x 1m plastic (for the mother to lie on), one bar of soap, one pair of surgical gloves, one razor blade or a sterile scalpel blade, three pieces of string or two clamps, and three gauze pads. All are contained in a small press seal plastic bag. These are the necessary items to achieving clean hands, clean perineum, clean delivery surface, clean cord-cutting implement, clean cord tying and clean cord care. These are the items that produce better birth outcomes for the mothers and infants born by the hands of midwives in Haiti and Nigeria. There are no hospitals, no doctors, and no medications.

In the USA, where practically nothing can be had in the health care system for the price of two dollars, that is all it costs to produce the Birthing Kit and better odds during childbirth, and a chance to save one life- or possibly two, in countries like Haiti and Nigeria. In 2013 the World Health Organization estimated that 289,000 women, mainly in developing countries, died as a result of complications during pregnancy or childbirth. About 10 million more suffered injury, infection or disease; complications that are painful, disabling, embarrassing and life-long.



For the third year in a row, the Zonta Club of Long Island, whose immediate past president is Daughter of Wisdom, Sr. Evelyn Lamoureux, coordinated the assembly of 503 birthing kits. It took place at the Martin De Porres Elementary School in Elmont, NY where the auditorium was transformed into a factory

for a few hours. Sr. Evelyn who has been a Zonta Club member for 6 years was joined by Daughters of Wisdom, Srs. Diane Capozzi, Cathy Murtha, Peggy Kelliher, Mona Haig (from Haiti), Marie Josée Seide, Fabiola Louis- Jean and Associate of Wisdom, Maryse Haig in addition to Girl Scouts, the St. Boniface Church youth group and men and women from the community. All came together to volunteer a few hours to help in preventing something we rarely think about in the USA, as death, disease or disability during childbirth is not typically a daily occurrence in our culture, we don't spend a lot of time thinking about negative outcomes when it comes to childbirth. In fact, we have so much to help us prevent it and support healthy outcomes. "I was touched by how primitive this small bundle in a plastic bag was. And by how powerful and practical it can be in saving lives," said Sr. Cathleen Murtha. Sr. Evelyn Lamoureux added, "I always like to contribute my time and energy when it is promoting women. In this case, we are helping women who do not have the advantages we have in the US. We take so much for granted.



Since we had cooperation from so many young women in the community, we were able to raise the consciousness of people who do not realize the plight of women in the developing world. What two dollars could not do in our economy brought together a community of people with pure concern to produce a life-sustaining package for women in villages that they will likely never come to know. It's a small price to pay

for life. Working alongside Sr. Diane Capozzi, DW, Girl Scouts, Elisa and Faith were uncertain how the packages would be used. "It provided a perfect opportunity for education, not only on childbirth, but also on world poverty, inequity among nations and the need for greater justice." said, Sr. Diane.

403 kits will be sent to the Haiti Province of the Daughters of Wisdom and from there they will be delivered to associations that help women. Maryse Haig, an Associate of Wisdom with the Daughters of Wisdom, USA Province and Sr. Mona Haig, DW, Haiti, who are blood sisters, will organize a network of volunteers to transport the kits from the USA to Haiti when they travel during the upcoming months. The other 100 kits will be delivered to a health team called Project Uplift in Nigeria. Sr. Marie Josée Seide, who was born in Haiti and is one of the newest Daughters of Wisdom in the USA Province, having made her first profession in August 2014, commented, "It was my first experience with the Zonta Birthing kit assembly and I enjoyed being there.



It was a good cause which was worth the trip from Port Jefferson, NY and the effort. It was such tremendous team work and it was amazing to feel the joy and the energy in this auditorium this Saturday morning among this multicultural and intergenerational group of volunteers. I felt good to be able to contribute some effort in helping less fortunate women in Haiti and Nigeria get access to health care at their time of delivery. Reflecting on her experience of the day, Sr. Fabiola Louis-Jean said, "Participating in the Birthing Kits

project was a meaningful experience for me; I was happy that God gave me the opportunity to do something good for others. On the other hand, I was sad to become more aware of the problem facing the world. My question is: what are the structural conditions that lead to people being in need in the first place?

This project has drawn my attention to situations that reflect persistent structure of injustice and inequality in our society. I thank God for all the good people who have concern for the poor and for the common good." Founded in 1919, Zonta International is a global organization of executives and professionals working together to advance the status of women worldwide through service and advocacy. For more info visit <http://www.zonta.org>.