

Report:
BPW NZ CONFERENCE 25-27 APRIL 2008, HAMILTON.

BPW Huntly & Districts, assisted by BPW Te Awamutu, were the 2008 conference conveners and did a marvellous job in organising a well balanced mix of work and fun. The conference began on Friday evening with 140 attendees and invited guests attending the President's reception at 6pm followed by the formal gala dinner at 7pm. Official guests included the Minister of Women's Affairs, the Hon. Steve Chadwick, Mayor of Waikato District Peter Harris and Mayoress Annette, Mayoress of Huntly Janet Livingstone, and BPW International Officers President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan from Thailand, Vice President Liz Benham from New York, Executive Secretary Freda Miriklis and Projects Chair Susan Jones from Australia, Immediate Past President Dr. Antoinette Ruegg from Switzerland; Australian Officers President Marilyn Forsythe and Young BPW Alicia Curtis, and the Director of the BPW International Office Deon Naphaphen Wejjjiva from Thailand. Representatives of major sponsors were also present - Julie Rickman of Price Waterhouse and Rod Gardner of RGM Ltd., along with keynote speaker Hannah Samuels.

The Opening Dinner speaker was the Hon. Steve Chadwick, Minister of Women's Affairs, who gave a clear message that much remains to be done to ensure that women enjoy true equality in power and decision making with men. She sees BPW NZ as having a vital role to play in preparing women to take their places in decision making forums, and in advocating for equal opportunities for all women. After dinner, the BPW NZ Awards were presented.

The conference programme for Saturday was a mixture of speakers, panel discussions and business. There were two speakers - Hannah Samuels, who inspired us all with great ideas for raising the profile of our Clubs and of BPW NZ, and Dr. Antoinette Ruegg who presented her research on the gender differences between the leadership styles of men and women.

There was a panel on "Challenges and Actions for the Future" after lunch, ably chaired by Young BPW Rachael Clarke. Six topics were addressed - Gender Equity by Shenagh Gleisner, CEO of the Ministry of Women's Affairs; Eliminating Violence Against Women by Anne Todd-Lambie, Family Lawyer; Protecting our Environment by Linda Shaw, Mecologist; Empowering Young Women by Judit Klein, student delegate to the Global Young Leaders Conference in New York in June; Lowering Barriers to Leadership by Jackie Blue MP; Enhancing the BPW Profile by Hannah Samuel.

The speakers each had ten minutes to present their topic and then participated in workshops aimed at identifying what BPW NZ could do about these issues. MPs Georgina Te Heu Heu and Diane Yates also attended to hear the panel and join the discussions.

Saturday concluded with a military themed dinner and concert party at which the "Andrews Sisters" and a number of our members provided great entertainment and a sing along of songs from the 1940s.

Federation business included seventeen resolutions this time and took up the remainder of Saturday afternoon and a large part of Sunday morning. At times debate was vigorous and stimulating and at other times voting was unanimous.

On Sunday the conference was addressed by BPW International Officers President Dr. Chonchanok Viravan, Vice President Liz Benham, Projects Chairperson Susan Jones, and BPW Australian President Kay Morrison. Pauline Gapper reported on behalf of the Asia Pacific Coordinator Ambica Shretha who was unable to attend due to ill health. Australia Young BPW Alicia Curtis gave a presentation describing the benefits of the

Keys to Achievement Programme and how NZ clubs can use it to promote membership, participation and personal development of members.

The annual election of BPW NZ officers was held and resulted in a great team of enthusiastic women ready to work for BPW and for women. The new BPW NZ Committee can be found on the Contacts Page of the Web Site. We thanked and farewelled Elizabeth Horrell, retiring as Executive Secretary, Diana O'Brien retiring as Projects Convener, Pat Sivertsen retiring as Marketing Convener, and Moira McLean retiring as Technology Convener. We also elected our Delegation for the BPW International Congress in Mexico City on 24-29 October. .

An attractive selection of raffle prizes resulted in \$670.00 being made from the Conference raffle, and \$410.00 from the Nepal raffle for the Nepal Women's Literacy Project. Gwen Needham also generously donated \$10 to this project from each sale of her book. Hannah Samuel likewise donated \$5.00 to BPW NZ from each sale of her book. Their support for the work that we do was much appreciated.

Much was achieved at the Conference, not the least of which was new friendships made and old friendships renewed. The venue at Glenview Hotel presented a few challenges but the Manager and staff bent over backwards to sort them out as quickly as possible, and members are thanked for their patience. The BPW Huntly & Districts Conference Committee, assisted by BPW Te Awamutu, and particularly the committee chairperson Claire Gregson, and secretary Diane Dean, are to be congratulated on organising such a successful Conference, their efforts ensuring that it was enjoyable for all who attended.

The 2009 conference will be hosted by BPW Wairarapa in Masterton, and the 2010 Conference will be hosted by BPW Gisborne in Gisborne

Faye Gardiner
BPW NZ President