

## Women's Club President's Message

Judith Feltz

*“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” ~ Nelson Mandela*



The Women's Club is a staunch advocate of educational ventures recognizing that knowledge is our assurance to progress, positive change and a better future.

Two \$500 Stonebridge Women's Club Brenda Belgard Memorial Scholarships were presented to Monroe Township High School graduates Mia Baldassano and Jacqueline Christie. These students wrote poignant essays about the social and academic challenges they faced during the pandemic and granted the Women's Club permission to share them with our community.

Socially, Mia referred to the “aloneness” and the “scant communication” which she found to be “deadening,” and Jacqueline indicated not being able to visit a loved one in the hospital “took a toll” on her. Academically, Mia stated, “The words of my teachers are spoken so loudly, yet I feel nothing is processing through my head.” Jacqueline agreed that prior to the pandemic, “It was easier to learn and get visuals of what you're being taught.” However, in the end, both girls realized their strength and resilience. Jacqueline appreciated having learned “a lot about staying healthy” as the world “came together to stay safe.” Mia concluded that “negative effects bring positive opportunities, but it's in our hands to take them.” We salute Mia, Jacqueline and all students and teachers for overcoming struggles and obstacles created by the pandemic.

A “Back-to-School Gift Card Collection” was conducted, and residents generously contributed \$1,250 in Walmart, Target and Visa gift cards. NJ-Rise advised it was gratifying to witness the excitement on the eager faces of over 700 students as they received their backpacks filled with school supplies knowing they have the resources they need to begin the school year!

The Women's Club actively promotes school volunteerism projects, i.e., the elementary *RAVE* reading and summer tutoring programs. The high school socialization *Transitioning into Adulthood Program* or *TAP*, formerly called *Bonnie's Kids*, is scheduled to resume in mid-September.

We recognize the tireless efforts of Co-Chairwomen April Furst and Joanne Redell and the members of the *Stonebridge Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Committee*. We are grateful for our community's support of this Committee's fundraising through the purchase of snacks, 50/50 raffle tickets, custom-designed rocks, pink bows, as well as direct contributions and participation in an upcoming Walk. The Women's Club has sponsored their work with a donation for the purchase of breast cancer awareness bows and supplies for rocks sold by the Committee.

Our scholarship pledge, gift card collection and school volunteerism programs are incentives for our youth to remain focused on learning. Donations made to the American Cancer Society through our Breast Cancer campaigns help to fund vital breast cancer research and disseminate information about the risks of getting breast cancer. **These endeavors, along with many other Women's Club educational initiatives, secure opportunities for enriched and healthier lives, represent our “most powerful weapon” for a better society, and reaffirm our motto, “Together we can do anything!”**

